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**Contraportada:** Un *h-meen* del poblado maya de Nunkiní (Campeche), prepara el altar para realizar la ofrenda anual de alimentos a los *Yum k'aaxo'ob* o Señores del Monte (Fotografía de David de Ángel).

# The Pre-Classic Ceramic Sequence of Punta de Chimino, Petén, Guatemala

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## RESUMEN

Recientes descubrimientos del sitio de Punta de Chimino, que se sitúa en el sector suroeste del departamento de Petén en Guatemala, brindan la oportunidad de refinar la historia de la cerámica preclásica del sitio. Temas como el origen y la escala del asentamiento del Preclásico Medio en el sitio, la continuidad de la alfarería Chicanel, la composición de las colecciones protoclásicas y el fechamiento y naturaleza de los acontecimientos del Clásico Temprano, se pueden entender ahora con más claridad que antes. Los resultados aclaran no sólo Punta de Chimino, sino también los eventos que tuvieron lugar en el Petexbatún y, en general, en la región del Río Pasión.

**Palabras clave:** Cerámica maya, región de Petexbatún, Preclásico, Protoclásico, Clásico Temprano.

## ABSTRACT

Recent findings at Punta de Chimino, in Guatemala's southern Petén district, present an opportunity to refine the site's pre-Classic ceramic history. Topics addressed with greater clarity than before are the origin and scale of the site's Middle Preclassic settlement, Chicanel ceramic continuity, the composition of Protoclassic assemblages and the dating and nature of Early Classic events. The results shed light not only on Punta de Chimino, but also on happenings in the greater Petexbatún-Pasión River region.

**Key words:** Maya ceramics, Petexbatún region, Preclassic, Protoclassic, Early Classic.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2003 and 2004 two of Punta de Chimino's largest mounds yielded a well preserved, magnificently stratified pottery sample associated with numerous radiometrically datable cultural features (Bachand 2006, n.d.a; Bachand *et al.* 2006; Bachand *et al.* 2007). This situation provided an opportunity to re-examine and refine Punta de Chimino's early ceramic history. The current discussion results from both type-variety and attribute/modal analyses of approximately 4000 potsherds and nine whole or partly restorable vessels. The aim was to relate Punta de Chimino to other Maya centers in the Petexbatún-Pasión River region and beyond, emphasizing the pre-Classic ceramic phases (700 B.C.-A.D. 420), which were only vaguely understood in the Petexbatún.

The University of Arizona project addressed some persistent questions relating to Punta de Chimino. It confirmed that the site did indeed have a sizeable Middle Preclassic occupation, as indicated by the Middle Preclassic ceremonial construction found beneath Mound 6. Prior test excavations yielded only small quantities of Middle Preclassic Mamom pottery from indiscernible cultural features (Foiás 1989; Morgan 1995; Velásquez 1994). The project also isolated and defined the nature of the peninsula's Protoclassic occupations (75 B.C.-A.D. 400). Protoclassic evidence was garnered from a series of superimposed constructions, eroded and repaved surfaces, burials, symbolic architectural elements and termination deposits within the Acropolis (Bachand 2006). This record enabled testing of Lincoln's (1985) hypothesis of Chicanel ceramic continuity in the Early Classic period, a phenomenon believed to be commonplace in the southeastern Petén (Laporte 1995a, 1995b, 2002: 511, 2007: Cap. 5). Finally, the unex-

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pected discovery of a peculiar burial and large ritual deposit provided the best glimpse yet of initial Early Classic events in the Petexbatún (Bachand n.d.b). Accurate documentation of these ceramic periods

helped settle the ceramic continuity problem as far as it pertained to Punta de Chimino.

Punta de Chimino occupies a peninsula in the center of Guatemala's Lake Petexbatún (Figure 1). The lake is

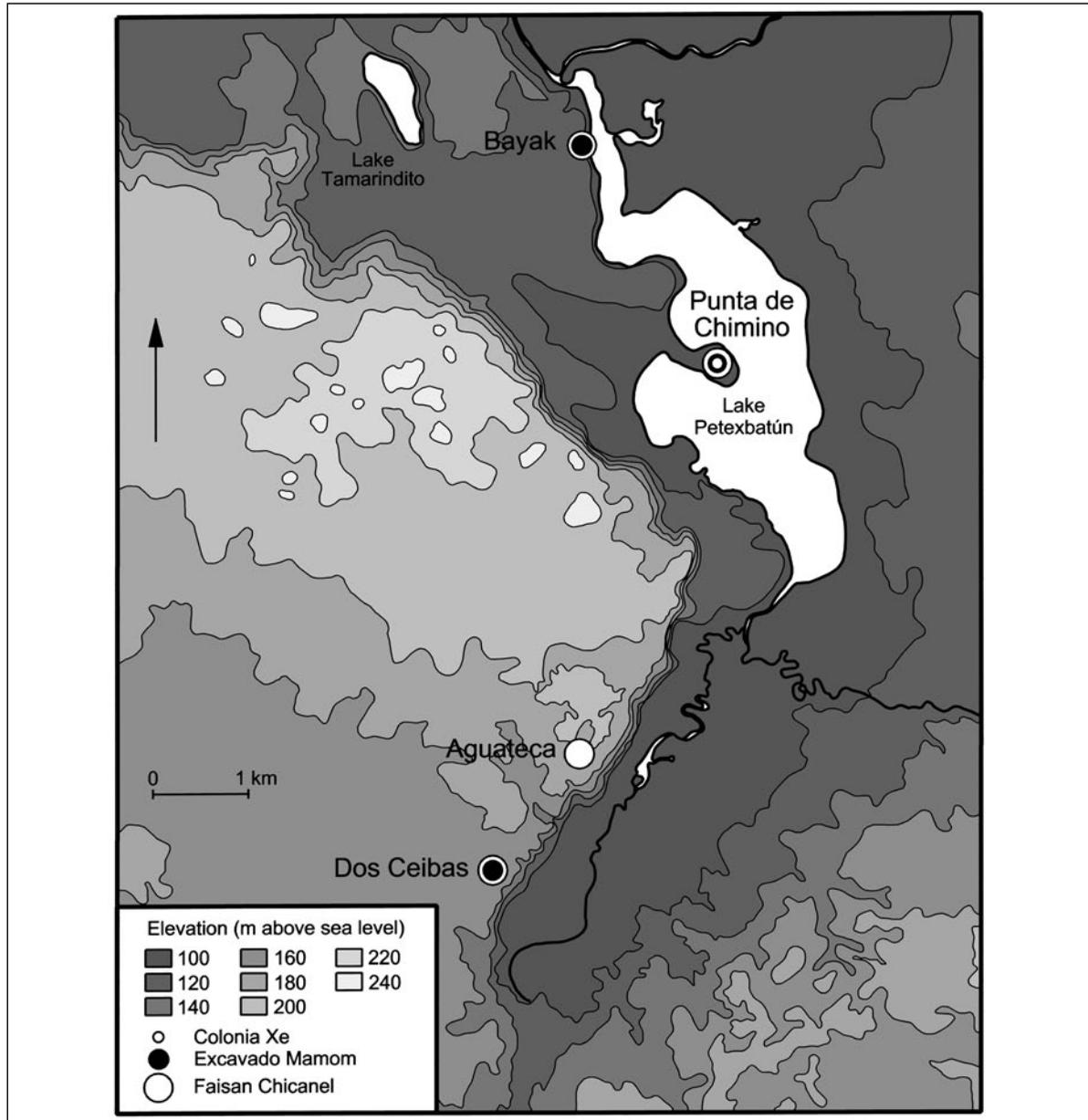


Figure 1. Preclassic settlements in the Petexbatún region.

located on a tributary of the Pasión River in the Petén forest at 16° 25' 48" N longitude and 90° 11' 18" W latitude. The meandering river system, limestone escarpment and archaeological sites surrounding the lake comprise the Petexbatún subregion. Heavy rains on the western upland horst or Petexbatún Escarpment trickle into sinkholes and caverns and reemerge in springs at the base of the precipice. The region's richest soils are found along the margins of Lake Petexbatún, an upper Oligocene graben where thick organic soils, the so-called Sarstun Series sediments, have accrued in a perennially wet or swampy environmental regime.

The site is comprised of two monumental zones, a pyramidal terrace platform or «Acropolis» on the peninsula's east side and a large open pyramidal plaza to the west (Figure 2). The pottery described herein derived from Acropolis Mounds 6 and 7. No unmixed ceramic levels were encountered in either mound. Even the earliest levels overlying bedrock contained a mixture of Xe and Mamom pottery. Despite this mixture, superb stratigraphic layering made it possible to determine the initial appearance and duration of many ceramic traits.

Prior examinations of Punta de Chimino's pottery were either preliminary in nature (Castellanos 1996; Foias 1989; Velásquez 1994), or subsumed within a larger regional study (Foias 1996), but they provided the general outline for the ceramic sequence described in this paper. An unremittable debt is owed to former ceramicists in the Petexbatún, Pasión and other Lowland Maya regions, who laid the descriptive groundwork for the present undertaking. Described here for the first time are the Petexbatún Colonia Xe complex and three ceramic facets or stages for the Faisán Chicanel complex.

In the following description considerable emphasis is given to ceramic modes since types have already been described in detail by previous investigators. A mode, as used here, is any attribute or attribute cluster capable of crosscutting ceramic types, groups, or complexes. Modes are found in a pot's form, finish, decoration, paste, or temper. They are related to vessel style, production, or use and are thus material manifestations of behavioral norms and choices tied to social identity. Modes may be long or short-lived, vary in frequency over time, and be subject to revival. As such, they present another way to assess human rela-

tionships through time and space (Sabloff and Smith 1969; Smith *et al.* 1960: 331-332, 334-335).

## THE CERAMIC SEQUENCE

### Early Middle Preclassic – Colonia Xe

Though found only in mixed contexts with later Mamom pottery, Punta de Chimino's Colonia Xe sherds represent a complete ceramic complex. Present are the hallmark Abelino Red, Crisanto Black and Huetche White slipped types with their well known decorative spin-offs. The three colors are present in proportions of 3:2:1 respectively. Achiotes Unslipped pottery occurs in a wide range of paste colors, something less typical of Mamom and Chicanel Achiotes examples. The Punta de Chimino sample lacks only minor or rare Xe types. One dichrome sherd, Datile Red-on-black and seven Jocote Orange-brown sherds are probably of this date. Baldizón Impressed sherds derive from the same contexts. Their impressed appliqué bands are indistinguishable from those appearing on red slipped Yalmanchac Impressed, an Abelino Group type (Figure 3e, i)<sup>2</sup>.

Colonia Xe vessels are thin-walled and generally more delicate than Mamom vessels. Shallow bowls or dishes with flat or rounded bottoms are the norm. *Ollas* or short-necked jars occur, but few *tecomates* rims are present. Thin, pre-slip incision, horizontal fluting and lip modification are commonplace. Slips are generally dull (i.e., matte or non-lustrous), thin, and poorly adhesive. This last attribute is especially true of Huetche White pottery, which may eventually be divisible into two distinct types: one with a powdery ephemeral white finish that resembles a wash rather than a clay-based slip, the other with a hard, semi-lustrous cream-colored slip that seems to anticipate Pital Cream. Abelino Red slips tend to exhibit superior preservation to Crisanto and Huetche slips, a feature doubtless attributable to differences in slip formula or firing. Quartzite temper is very common, especially but not solely in Achiotes utilitarian vessels. Fine calcite temper is most frequent in thin-walled slipped vessels.

A striking feature of Colonia pottery is its wide assortment of pastes. These range in color from black to light brown, orange, red, pink, yellow, tan and gray.

<sup>2</sup> The appliqué fillet decoration on unslipped Baldizón Impressed jars or *tecomates* and slipped Yalmanchac vessels is a diagnostic trait of early Middle Formative Jocote group pottery (Gifford 1976) and unslipped *tecomates* in neighboring Chiapas (Clark *et al.* 2005: 71).

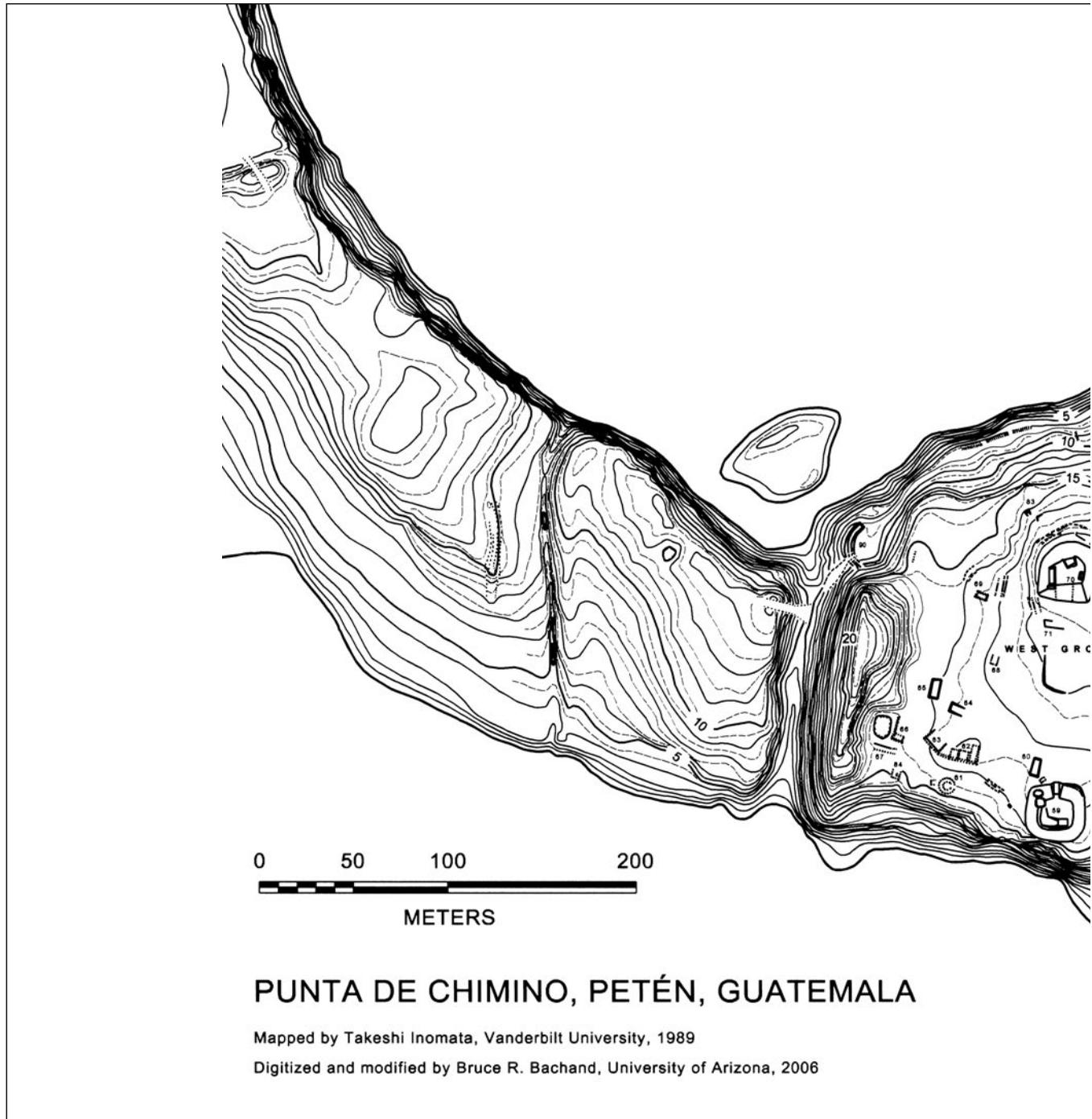
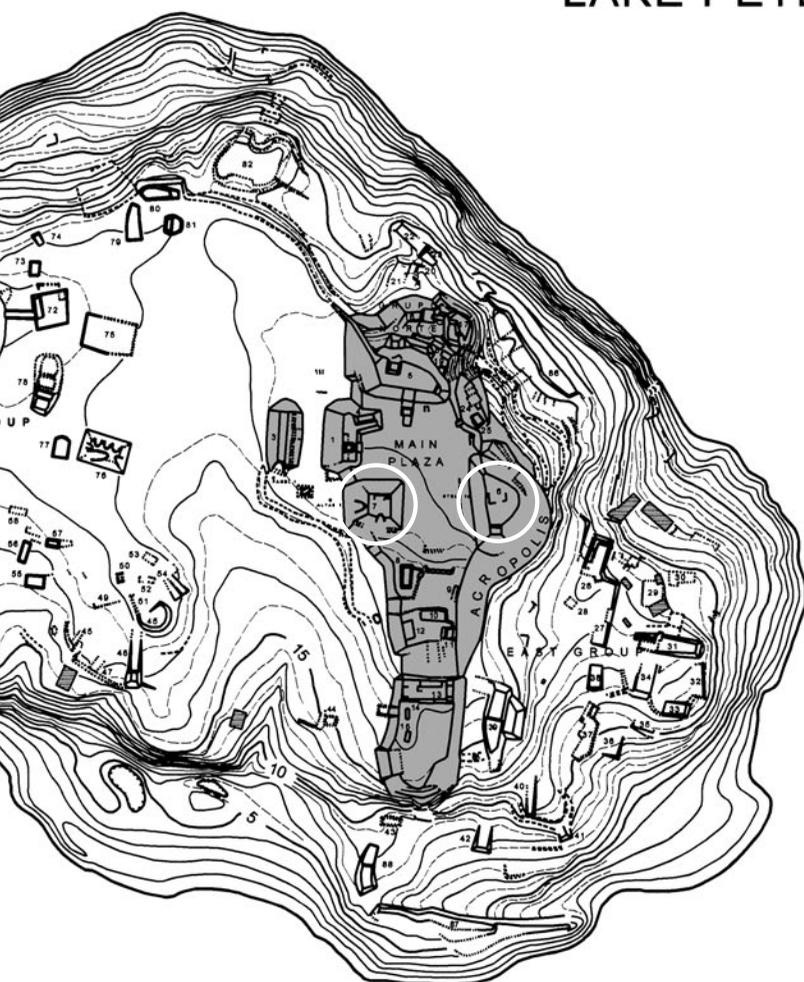


Figure 2. Map of Punta de Chimino with the Acropolis highlighted, with Mound 7 (west) and Mound 6 (east).

# LAKE PETEXBATÚN



3°56'  
↑  
MAGNETIC NORTH  
↑  
TRUE NORTH  
DECLINATION ON  
JUNE 1, 1989

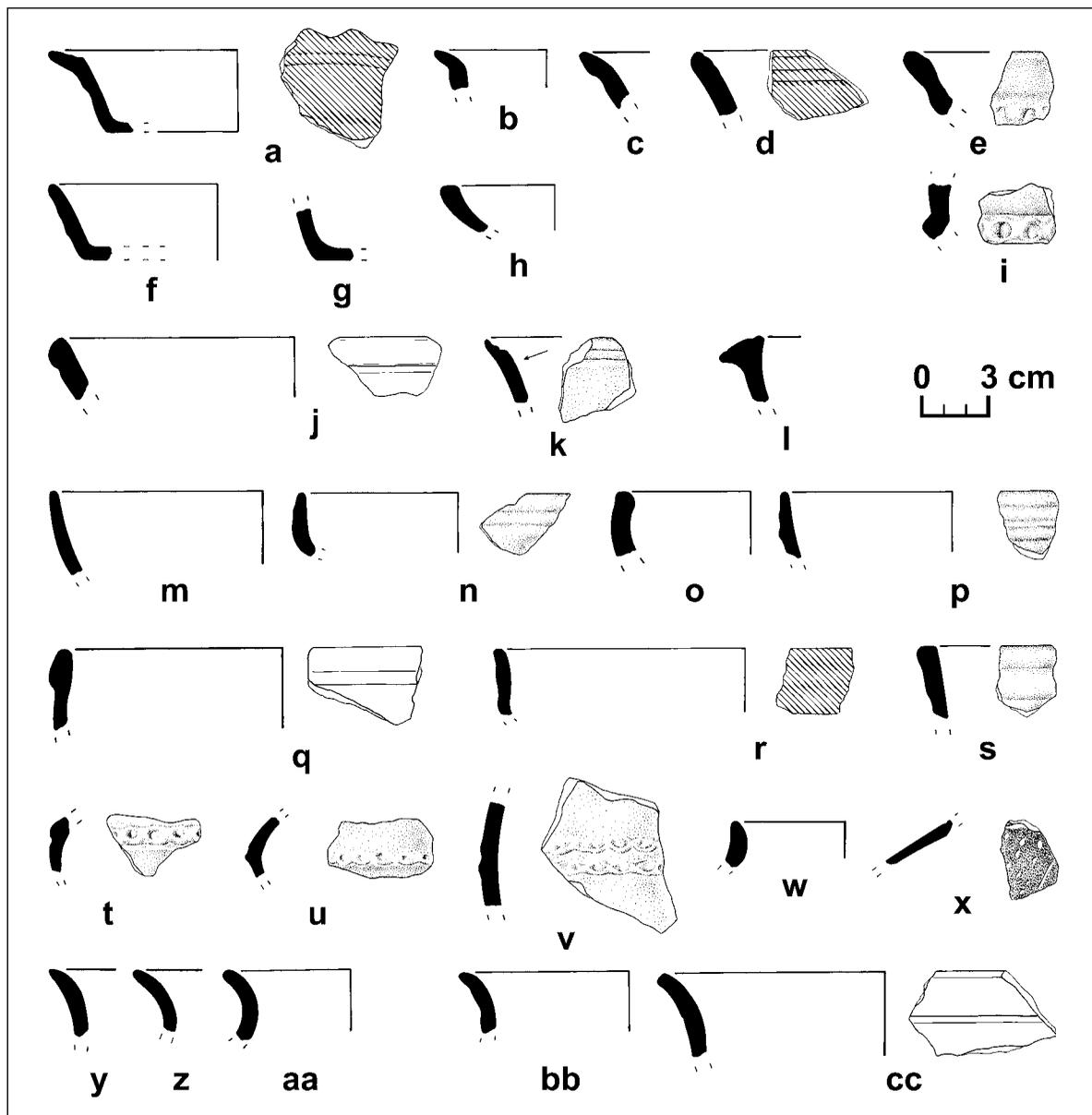


Figure 3. Colonia Xe. Abelino Red: a-c, l, m, w, y, z, bb; Setok Fluted: r; Pico de Oro Incised: d; Yalmanchac Impressed: e, i; Crisanto Black: g, h, o, aa; Valdemar Fluted: f, s; Asunto Impressed: x; Huetche White: j, q, cc; Edmundo Fluted: n, p; Comistun Incised: k; Baldizón Impressed: t-v. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

Many have a sandy, gritty, or crumbly texture that seems to aid or catalyze slip erosion. This variety of paste colors and densities seems to imply inconsistent

firing conditions and/or access to a dizzying array of clay sources. This variety is especially evident in unslipped work-a-day pottery. Thick, dark unoxidized

cores are prevalent in Achiotés Unslipped vessels. In some cases the core is so thick that only a thin sliver of oxidized paste is visible on one edge of the sherd profile. This feature likely result from a short firing time or extremely low firing temperature below 600 °C. Other unslipped sherds possess a thick exterior soot that penetrates the vessel wall. Regardless of whether this «smudging» results from vessel manufacture or use, it is less common or absent altogether on later Achiotés examples.

The physical and technological differences between Xe and Mamom pottery are stark in comparison to the seamless blending of Mamom traits into Chicanel. Ceramic (and thus cultural) continuity between Xe and Mamom is not a certainty. Although a red, cream and black slip triad is shared between the two complexes, non-Maya groups bordering the lowlands also shared this preference in Middle Formative times. In truth, technological changes in slip hardness, vessel thickness, firing techniques and paste are dramatic in Mamom. Waxy-ware pottery undoubtedly has superior tensile strength, slip durability and hue retention.

#### Late Middle Preclassic – Excavado Mamom

Punta de Chimino's Excavado Mamom sample exhibits splendid preservation. Both early and late Excavado levels are present in Mound 6. Pottery in the later ceramic level is unfortunately too sparse (only 65 sherds) to permit subdivision of the complex. The red, black, cream/white trio is repeated in Excavado, but cream displaces black to become the second most common color in the 3:2:1 color proportion scheme. The Tierra Mojada ceramic group is added to the Juventud, Pital and Chunhinta groups, to signify the appearance of resist-decorated red pottery. Achiotés Unslipped jar forms continue, but no changes are discernable due to the stratigraphic mixture of Excavado with earlier ceramic materials.

The thick, durable, smooth surface finish of «waxy» Mamom pottery is likely achieved by applying multiple, clear fine clay suspensions or slips (Coggins 1975: 46 citing Robert Sonin personal communication). The crackle or crazing effect so commonplace on Mamom slips is probably produced by deviating rates of expansion and hardening that occur between vessel

body and slip during firing (Coggins 1975: 46; Shepard 1968: 67). Crazed surfaces result from an imperfect «fit» between vessel body and slip. Crackling occurs rarely in Colonia Xe and is always fine, analogous to a hairline. Conversely, crackled surfaces are common in Excavado and the gaps between cracks are often much wider.

Important changes are also discernible in paste density and color —Excavado pastes are consistently more dense, cohesive and pallid, spanning the light pink to reddish-brown range. Calcite temper becomes standard<sup>3</sup>. Quartz, sherd and volcanic aplastics are used sparingly. In sum, Excavado is a more standardized, and perhaps more expertly developed, ceramic tradition.

Few slipped Excavado vessels have a uniform color. Ubiquitous is the clouding and splotchy fading of vessel finishes from what appears to be a fire clouding or oxidation-reduction technique. On Juventud Red, for example, reddish-orange areas grade into light orange, cream, olive, brown and black on the same vessel<sup>4</sup>. Boundaries between these differently colored zones are not abrupt or sharply delineated, suggesting the absence of pre-fire organic resist coatings and serendipity in the visual outcome.

Another recurring feature is black staining. The staining is not usually blotchy (though it can radiate from blotchy areas). Rather, it has a fine speckled appearance as if sprayed on. The black specks are achieved from within the slip and are not painted on. Black staining occurs on 45% of all Juventud Red sherds. A small number of Pital Cream sherds also exhibit this trait.

As for plastic modification, fluting, gadrooning and incising are present but infrequent in Excavado. Chamfering and modelling are nearly absent (but see Figures 4o, y). Dichrome types like Muxanal Red-on-cream are exceedingly rare, as are Jocote Group types, Palma Daub, Chicago Orange and Mars Orange. As for vessel shapes, everted rims are infrequent and never wide. Composite-silhouette bowls with medial breaks/ridges are far less common than bowls with flaring or rounded sides. The paucity of these traits sets the Petexbatún-Pasión region apart from the northern Petén, central Yucatán, Belize Valley and northern Belize. Their scarcity may alternatively suggest that Punta de Chimino's Excavado complex is late in the Mamom cultural continuum.

<sup>3</sup> Excavado lacks the sand temper of Altar de Sacrificios's San Félix complex, sharing instead the white calcite inclusions typical of Ceibal's Escoba/Mamom complex.

<sup>4</sup> This quality led Adams (1971: 20-21, 84-86) to define a distinct Juventud Red variety, Mocho, for the early facet of San Félix (~ 600-450 B.C.).

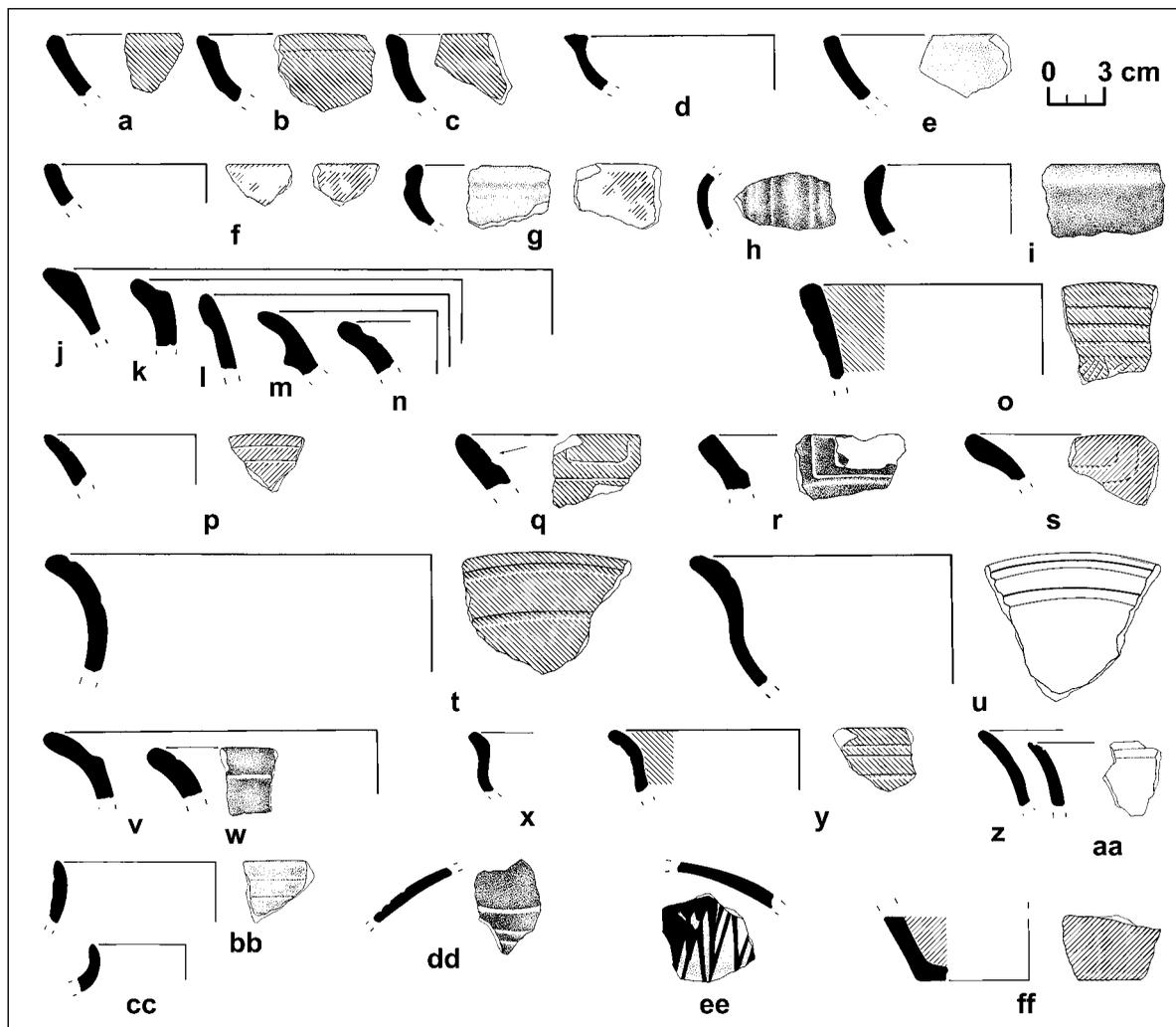


Figure 4. Excavado Mamom. Juventud Red: a-d, j-n, ff; Guitarra Incised: o, q, s, t, y; Pital Cream: e, v, x; Paso Danto Incised: u, aa; Chuhinta Black: i, z, cc; Desprecio Incised: r, w, dd; Centenario Fluted: h, bb; Tierra Mojada Resist: f, g; Timax Incised: p; Palma Daub: ee. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

Minor quantities of Tierra Mojada Resist (7% of slipped Excavado types) are present in the current sample. Foias (1996: Fig. 5.1) reports a much higher percentage of this type in her regional Petexbatún sample. Region-wide, roughly 30% of slipped Excavado pottery is Tierra Mojada Resist. Resisted areas, though amorphous, display sharply demarcated edges-in profound contrast to the cloudy or patchy areas found on other slipped types. Mottled, fire

clouded surfaces and polished orange-resist pottery, are principal late Middle Formative ceramic traits in neighboring regions of Chiapas, Tabasco, Highland Guatemala and El Salvador. Orange cloudy-resist pottery is «the most widely distributed Middle Preclassic pottery in southern Mesoamerica,» with its densest concentration lying between La Libertad and Chiapa de Corzo in Highland Chiapas (Miller *et al.* 2005: 148). Though ardently produced and consumed in the

southern Maya lowlands, such pottery appears less commonly in the central and northern lowlands. The present evidence from Punta de Chimino supports Andrews's (1990: 14) observation that «this mottled orange pottery represents continued interaction between the southern Maya Lowlands, the Maya Highlands, and probably the Mixe-Zoquean areas to the west and south».

### Late Preclassic – Faisán Chicanel 1

The Sierra, Flor and Polvero groups dominate the Faisán 1 assemblage. They are local outgrowths of the previous Juventud, Pital and Chunhinta ceramic groups. Achiotés Unslipped pottery remains the main utilitarian ware. It is unlikely Baldizón Impressed continues to be manufactured—all recovered examples have Xe-like paste colors, wall thicknesses and aplatitics. The Late Preclassic unslipped striated type, Sapote Striated, appears in modest quantities. Also present is a minor quantity of Matamoró Bichrome, a prevalent Chicanel type in the southeastern lowlands or adjacent Dolores-Poptún Plateau (Laporte 1995b: 38, 40).

A number of sherds in Faisán 1 exhibit transitional Mamom-Chicanel attributes, illustrating the historical continuity between complexes. For example, black staining continues to occur on red pottery, but the vessels are thicker and exhibit Chicanel-like rim modifications. A thick-walled Sierra group vessel with wide groove on the everted rim has a thick waxy-brown slip with crackling and black staining that is concentrated into dark, fire-clouded zones in some areas. One Sierra bowl has a deep red slip with speckled black staining characteristic of Juventud Red. Another sherd has a light streaky red slip characteristic of Sierra Red: Society Hall Variety (Culbert n.d.: Ch. 19-20) with a Juventud-like medial flange, but the flange is closer to the rim. The above combinations reflect the application of old features to new vessel designs.

At Punta de Chimino, Sierra Red slips are, on average, thinner and lighter in hue (i.e., more orange) than Juventud Red slips. Patchy, resist-like clouded spots are replaced by more general, non-resist zonal clouding. Black staining is rare and widely spaced crackling is all but absent. To distinguish between Juventud Red and Sierra Red in mixed ceramic lots with rea-

sonable consistency requires reliance upon a cluster of surface and form attributes, using traits in unmixed Juventud lots as a yardstick.

A new paste appears in small quantities with arrival of the cream type Flor—a friable gritty orange with no oxidized core. Red pastes also appear with Sierra Red and Achiotés Unslipped. These pastes often have an abundant, even sorting of very fine calcite inclusions. Among the new form modes are flanges and mushroom pots. Labial flanges and medial ridges are particularly common (Figure 5l, n-p). A Sierra Red mushroom pot sherd is assigned to Faisán 1 (Figure 5q). Inset ring bases (Figure 5w) and concave bases (Figure 6) also occur at this time.

In conclusion, Faisán 1 is similar to other Lowland Maya Chicanel complexes. The presence of Matamoró Bichrome provides a link to the Dolores-Poptún Plateau and Belize. Rare decorative types such as Repasto Black-on-red, Mateo Red-on-cream, Lagartos Punctated and Correló Incised (Forsyth 1993) are equally if not more rare in the Petexbatún-Pasión region. Ceramically then, Punta de Chimino was fully encompassed within the Late Preclassic lowland ceramic sphere.

### Early Protoclassic – Faisán Chicanel 2

Stratigraphy, radiometric dates and ceramics provide good evidence for a second Faisán Chicanel facet starting before or around the time of Christ and ending by A.D. 175. Close correspondence is found with Brady *et al.*'s (1998) Protoclassic 1 ceramic stage. The beginning of Faisán 2 is arbitrarily set at 75 B.C., the hypothesized start date for Protoclassic 1. All Faisán 1 types continue into Faisán 2. But because the Faisán 2 sample is small and mixed with earlier pottery, we still lack a solid understanding of how Faisán 1 types change modally in Faisán 2. Nevertheless, a number of new ceramic types debut in minor quantities in Faisán 2. These are Sacluc Black-on-orange, Caramba Red-on-orange, Metapa Trichrome, Caribal Red, Iberia Orange and San Martín Variegated Brown (Figures 7 and 8). There is some indication that Sacluc Black-on-orange, Metapa Trichrome and Caramba Red-on-orange appear first in Faisán 2 with Caribal Red and San Martín Variegated Brown appearing toward the end of the facet<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Sacluc Black-on-orange and Metapa Trichrome are positive-painted Usulután types generally thought to occur at the beginning of Protoclassic 1 ca. 75 B.C. (see Brady *et al.* 1998: 20, 28). Higher frequencies of Caramba Red-on-orange, Caribal Red, and San Martín Variegated Brown occur in succeeding Faisán 3 facet contexts.

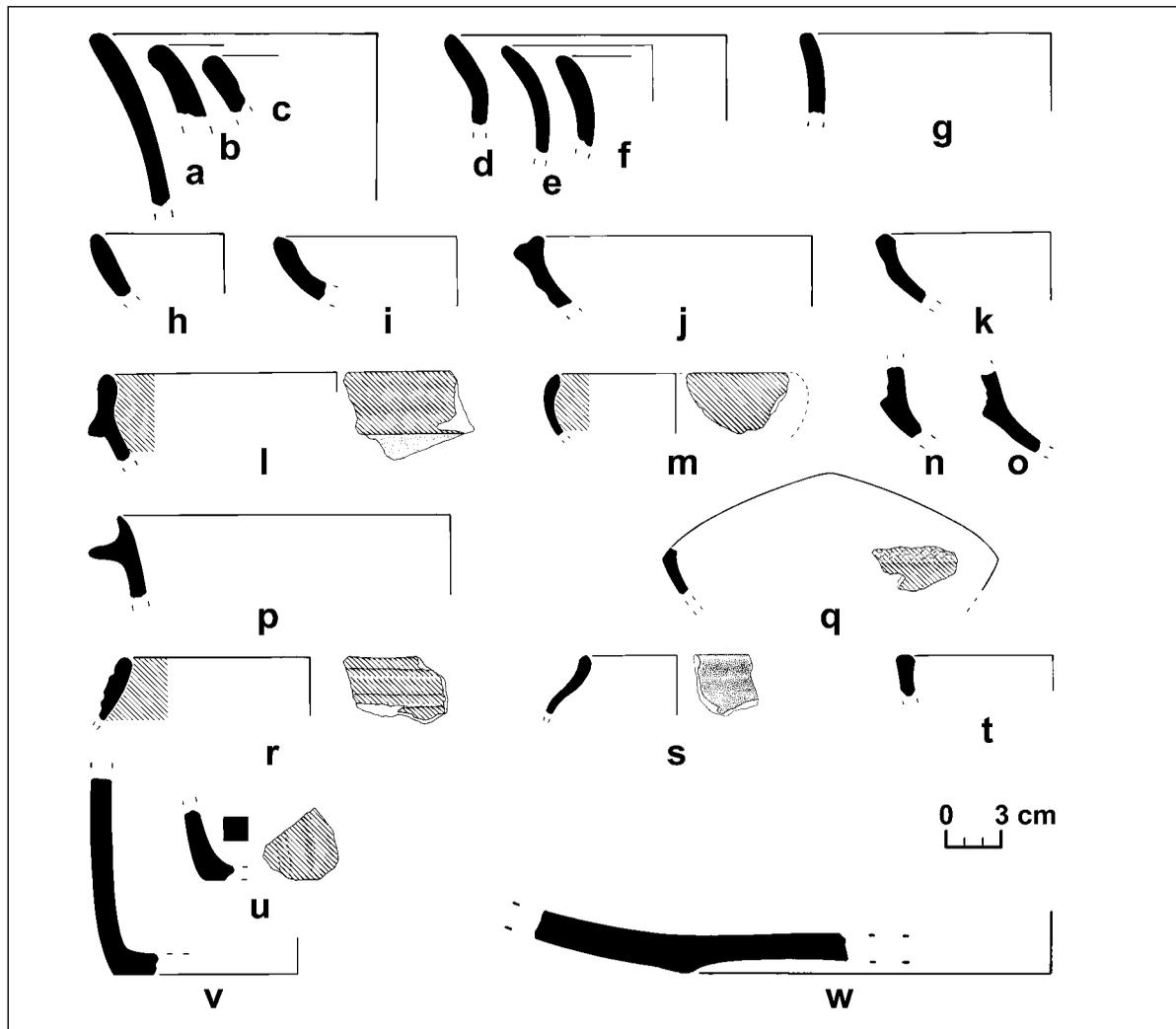


Figure 5. Faisán Chicanel 1. Sierra Red: a, e-i, l, m, q, t, v, w; Laguna Verde Incised: r; Flor Cream: b, c, j, n; Polvero Black: d, o, p, s; Matamoro Red and Black: k, u. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

Sacluc Black-on-orange was notably rare in the Petexbatún region. This pseudo-Usulután type was doubtless a symbol of international ties and probably a valued item in Protoclassic 1. Rim forms nearly identical to the one illustrated in Figure 7o, have been reported at Salinas de los Nueve Cerros (Dillon 1979: Fig. 24A) and Itzán (Johnston 2006: Figs. 16-6, 14). The form clearly dates to Protoclassic 1. At most lowland sites Sacluc Black-on-orange does not continue into Protoclassic 2 (Brady *et al.* 1998: 20-24, 28).

Two Faisán 2 types, Metapa Trichrome and San Martín Variegated Brown, are now documented for the first time in the Petexbatún region. According to Adams (Adams 1971: 28-29; see also Sabloff 1975: 98-99), Metapa Trichrome is a rare Protoclassic type whose unusual tuff-like temper makes it a possible import from Chiapas. The Punta de Chimino examples have red rims and pink pastes like those from Altar de Sacrificios. The black design on one Metapa sherd (Figure 7p) is different from the Usulután wavy-

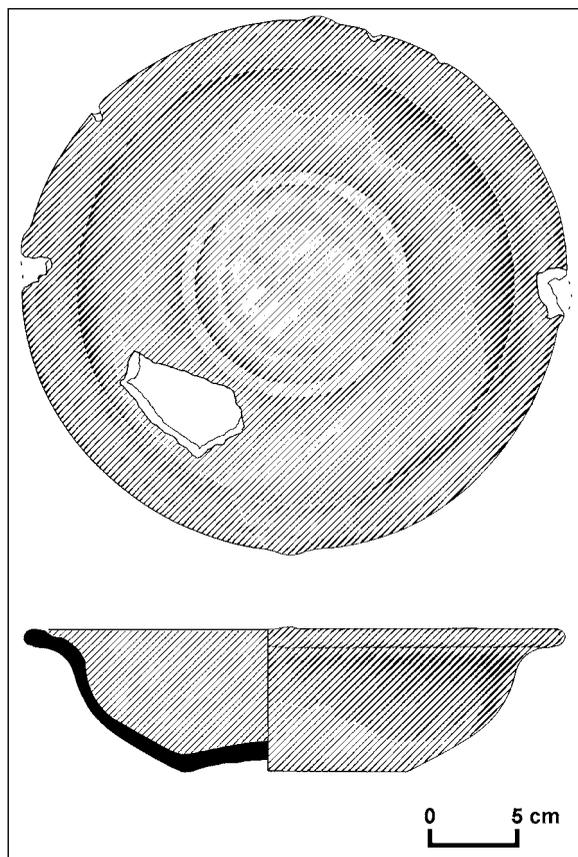


Figure 6. Fire clouded Sierra Red bowl from Faisán 1 skull cache in Mound 6. Drawing by Alfredo Román.

live design normally associated with this type. San Martín Variegated Brown is not reported by Foias (1996), but is common at Ceibal where Sabloff (1975: 102-105) assigns it to the weakly represented Early Classic Junco phase. At Punta de Chimino, this type is commonly found in Protoclassic 2 (Tzakol 1) contexts and is thus an excellent marker for this time period. One sherd, however, comes from a sealed early Protoclassic context in Mound 6, and for this reason the type is believed to originate in Faisán 2. The San Martín slip is invariably tan-brown; it is thick, but has a dull feel and luster justifying assignment to a distinct ceramic ware, Playa Dull Ware. Surfaces are bumpy or

pimpled due to the penetration of the underlying chunky calcite temper strongly correlated with this type. San Martín forms are quite uniform and unmistakable: thick-walled bowls with thickened, interiorly-folded rims and flat lips, often with a central groove (Figures 8d-h), and short-necked jars (Figures 8a-c).

Caramba Red-on-orange was also found in a sealed early Protoclassic context in Mound 6. This type is exceedingly rare in the Petexbatún region. Iberia Orange is only slightly more common. Caribal Red is the most common among the three. One sherd apiece of Iberia Orange and Caribal Red was found in early Protoclassic levels, indicating a Faisán 2 origin for these types. Greater quantities of each are found in Faisán 3 construction suggesting they were more common in the late Protoclassic along with San Martín Variegated Brown<sup>6</sup>.

Important modal changes are associated with Faisán Chicanel 2. Chief among these are hollow mammiform supports, cream underslips, rim bands, hooked, bolstered and *gancho*-shaped rims, ring bases, solid nubbin supports and positive painted Usulután decoration. A sixth mode, chunky calcite temper, may also begin at this time but is more common in the succeeding Faisán 3 facet. Decorative types tend to have harder, usually pinkish-red pastes and thinner vessel walls. Waxy-slips begin to give way to glossier colloidal slips underlain by a cream primer or underslip. Underslips are observable in Iberia Orange and Sacluc Black-on-orange. A mammiform weld is associated with a Sierra Red base found in a late Protoclassic context in Mound 7, but mammiforms are otherwise notably absent in construction fill<sup>7</sup>. *Gancho* or Y-shaped rims appear on Flor Cream bowls (Figures 7a-h). A number of ring bases are also assigned to this facet, though relevant examples are heavily eroded.

Tentatively identified in this paper is a probable change in rim design on Sierra and Flor group vessels (Figure 7i-n). The design is characterized by a slightly outflaring wall with an upturned, slightly outflaring rim. The rim is pinched (i.e., grooved or channeled) to either reduce the thickness of the lip or make it bulbous. The lips are usually rounded, but can sometimes be pointed. Similar rim modification is evident on a Metapa Trichrome sherd (compare Figures 7j and 7p) and a Quintal Unslipped sherd (see Figure 11x).

<sup>6</sup> However, it must be remembered that Faisán 3 contexts consist, in part, of refuse collected from the previous Faisán 2 occupation.

<sup>7</sup> Remarkably, Foias (1996: 269) notes that only two eroded mammiform supports were found in the entire Petexbatún region. Fewer than half a dozen are now known from Punta de Chimino, several on a Sacluc Black-on-orange vase from a Mound 7 cache (Demares *et al.* 1996: Figure 14.1; Escobedo 1996, 1997) and three mammiform sherds, one a Sierra Red vessel, discovered during the Arizona excavations.

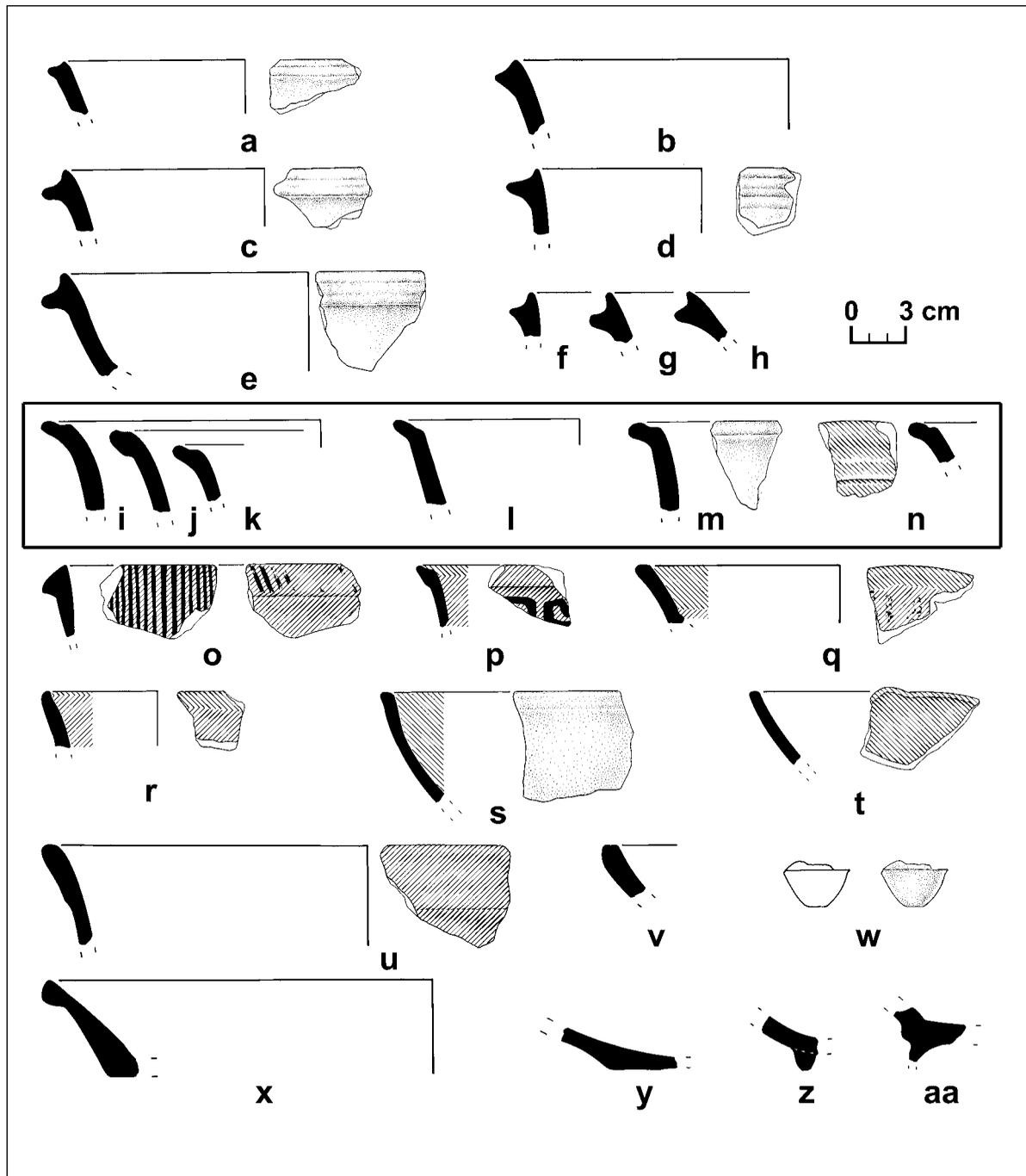


Figure 7. Faisán Chicanel 2. Sierra Red: i-l, aa; Laguna Verde Incised: h; Flor Cream: a-h, m, w, z; Sacluc Black-on-orange: o; Caramba Red-on-orange: r; Metapa Trichrome: p, q; Caribal Red: s, t; Iberia Orange: u, v, x, y. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

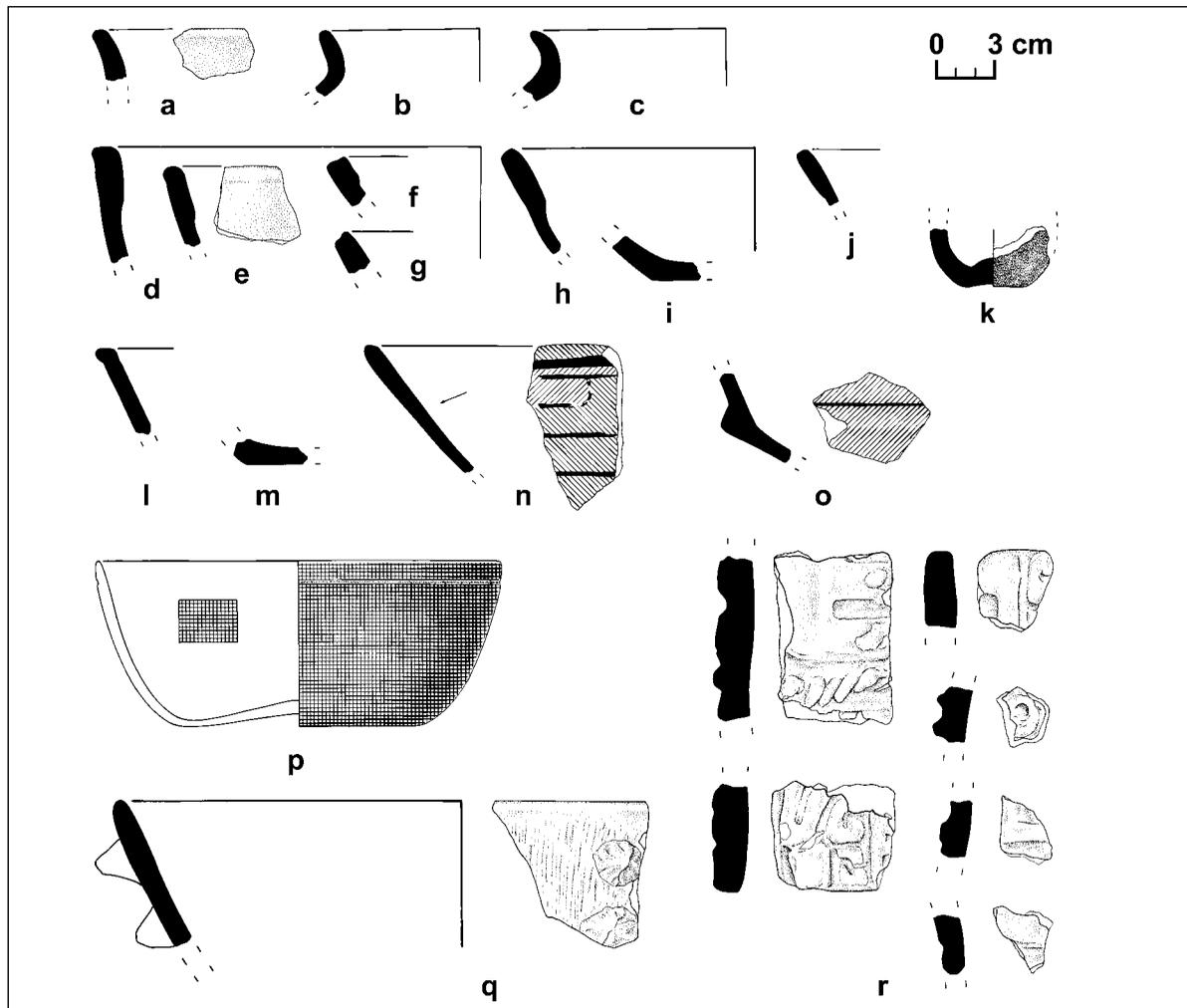


Figure 8. Faisán Chicanel 3. Sierra Red: j; San Martín Variegated Brown: a-i; Balanza Black: k; Pucte Brown: l, m; Actuncan Orange Polychrome: n, o; Mottled-incised brown slipped bowl from Burial 111, Mound 7: p; Candelario Appliqué: q; Miseria Appliqué censer fragments: r. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

Such lip modification appears on horizontally everted rims in Faisán 1 (see Figure 6), but seems strongly correlated with upturned, outflaring rims in Faisán 2<sup>8</sup>. The described mode appears quite regularly in Ter-

minal Preclassic/Protoclassic contexts at other sites (e.g., Ball 1980: Figs. 6p, q, s, y, 9m, n, 15m; Hansen 1990: Figs. 90s, 91c, l, 93aa, 96n, q, 97r, t, 98f, 102d, e, q, 103e, f, q, 104o; Howell 1989: Figs. 43k, 45f;

<sup>8</sup> Forsyth's (2005: 63) recent mention of the *gancho* rim form as a Protoclassic trait caused me to re-examine and alter my dating of Structure 7-Sub 4 (the earliest construction in Mound 7), and venture the modal observation made in this paragraph. Structure 7-Sub 4's eroded surface, stratigraphic location beneath a Faisán 3 construction, and suspiciously late ceramic modes (ring bases, *gancho*-style rims, etc.) suggest that it dates to early Protoclassic times. This dating would make 7-Sub 4 contemporaneous with 6 Sub-4 not with 6-Sub-5 (see Bachand 2006: Table 1), suggesting delayed arrival of the full E-Group form at Punta de Chimino until the first century B.C. As it stands, I have little reason to doubt this interpretation. If it is correct, my prior statements regarding Late Preclassic social change at Punta Chimino require amendment.

Kosakowsky 1987: Fig. 6.29d). This rim style and the *gancho* form were abundant at neighboring Ceibal (Sabloff 1975: Figs. 124, 126-128, 152, 157, 159, 161-163, 167).

Subtle yet distinct changes in Achiotes Unslipped vessels probably begin by the end of Faisán 2. Faint lip grooves on some examples (Figures 11r, t), unusual lip forms (Figures 11v, w) and a square lip (Figures 11q, s), seem to anticipate Quintal/Triunfo features. One rim has sublabial circumferential incisions on the interior (Figure 11u). Finally, unslipped bowl forms appear (Figure 11n, o, u, v), which may signal changes in domestic activities or dining etiquette.

### Late Protoclassic – Faisán Chicanel 3

Faisán 3 is taxonomically and temporally equivalent to Brady *et al.*'s (1998: 34) Protoclassic 2 ceramic stage or the weakly defined Tzakol 1 ceramic facet at Uaxactún (Smith 1955: 23). Faisán 3 begins with (site-wide?) reoccupation of the site after a possible desertion of the ceremonial core between A.D. 150 and 200. Radiometric analyses indicate that construction fills from which these ceramics derive predate 380 A.D. Continuation of Chicanel types justifies treating this span as a terminal Faisán facet. Faisán 3 could, however, be alternatively viewed as an Early Classic Tzakol 1 phase, i.e., as an early facet of the Jordan ceramic complex (see Foias 1996: 269). I prefer, however, to associate this pottery with the Faisán Chicanel complex for three reasons: 1) Chicanel pottery continues to be made, albeit in dramatically reduced quantities, 2) Faisán 3 exhibits considerable continuity with the Preclassic in the function and use of the Acropolis (see Bachand 2006: 480-485), and 3) the abandonment episode concluding Faisán 3 represents a stronger, more permanent cessation of cultural activity than the occupational disturbance preceding it.

Among the three major constructions dating to Faisán 3, one possesses large quantities of Middle and Late Preclassic pottery in its fill—a clear indication of early refuse acquisition. The remaining two have much lower percentages of waxy Middle and Late Preclassic pottery. Ceramic profiles from these constructions imply a considerable reduction in the

quantity of Chicanel pottery produced or consumed at the site during Faisán 3 (see details in Bachand 2006: 299-300).

In other respects as well, Punta de Chimino's findings challenge the notion that Chicanel pottery continued to be produced in large quantities after A.D. 300 or 400. The appearance of new glossy-slipped types beyond those introduced in Faisán 2 confirms an increased preference for non-waxy pottery. Also, abundant replacement of Achiotes utilitarian wares with Quintal and Triunfo unslipped types in Faisán 3 signals a major change in the domestic assemblage. It would appear, then, that only Chicanel vessels in the Sierra, Flor and Polvero groups continued to be produced in Faisán 3. The Acropolis findings suggest that a modest, if not minor amount of waxy-slipped pottery was in circulation at Punta de Chimino during Faisán 3. Data also indicate that by the latter half of Faisán 3, production of Paso Caballo Waxy Ware pottery probably ceased altogether—a phenomenon that may have increased the social value of waxy ware pots and explain their occasional appearance in late Protoclassic burials and caches. In truth, by the end of this facet we have a ceramic complex that fits more neatly within the Tzakol ceramic sphere.

As mentioned, San Martín Variegated Brown (Playa Dull Ware) and Caribal Red (early Petén Gloss) probably reach their maximum popularity in Faisán 3. These types are joined by initial, minor quantities of the first true Petén Gloss types—Actuncan Orange Polychrome, Águila Orange, Balanza Black and Pucte Brown (Figures 8 and 9)<sup>9</sup>. Cream underslips are common, especially on orange slipped vessels. Basal flanges, basal ridges and ring bases occur with minor, yet increased frequency (the last of these being more popular at the end of Faisán 3 or the beginning of the ensuing Jordan complex). Z-angle flanges appear for the first time (Figure 8o). The first miniature vessel, a Balanza Black bowl with dimple base, dates to this facet (Figure 8k). Noteworthy is the sudden appearance of a wide-range of ritual censer pots: ladle censers, modeled face censers, spiked/horned censers and a square incense burner base (Figures 8q, r). Chunky calcite temper, a key diagnostic of San Martín Variegated Brown, is now occasionally found in Balanza Black, Águila Orange and Caribal Red.

<sup>9</sup> Only seven of 93 Águila Orange sherds derive from Faisán 3 contexts, one is a ring base. Unfortunately, none of these early Águila Orange examples were illustrated. By comparison, 12 of 50 Balanza Black sherds and 15 of 26 Pucte Brown sherds, correspond to Faisán 3 levels. Some illustrated Jordan context examples of these types may have been produced in Faisán 3 times (Bachand 2006: Figures 126, 127 and 129).

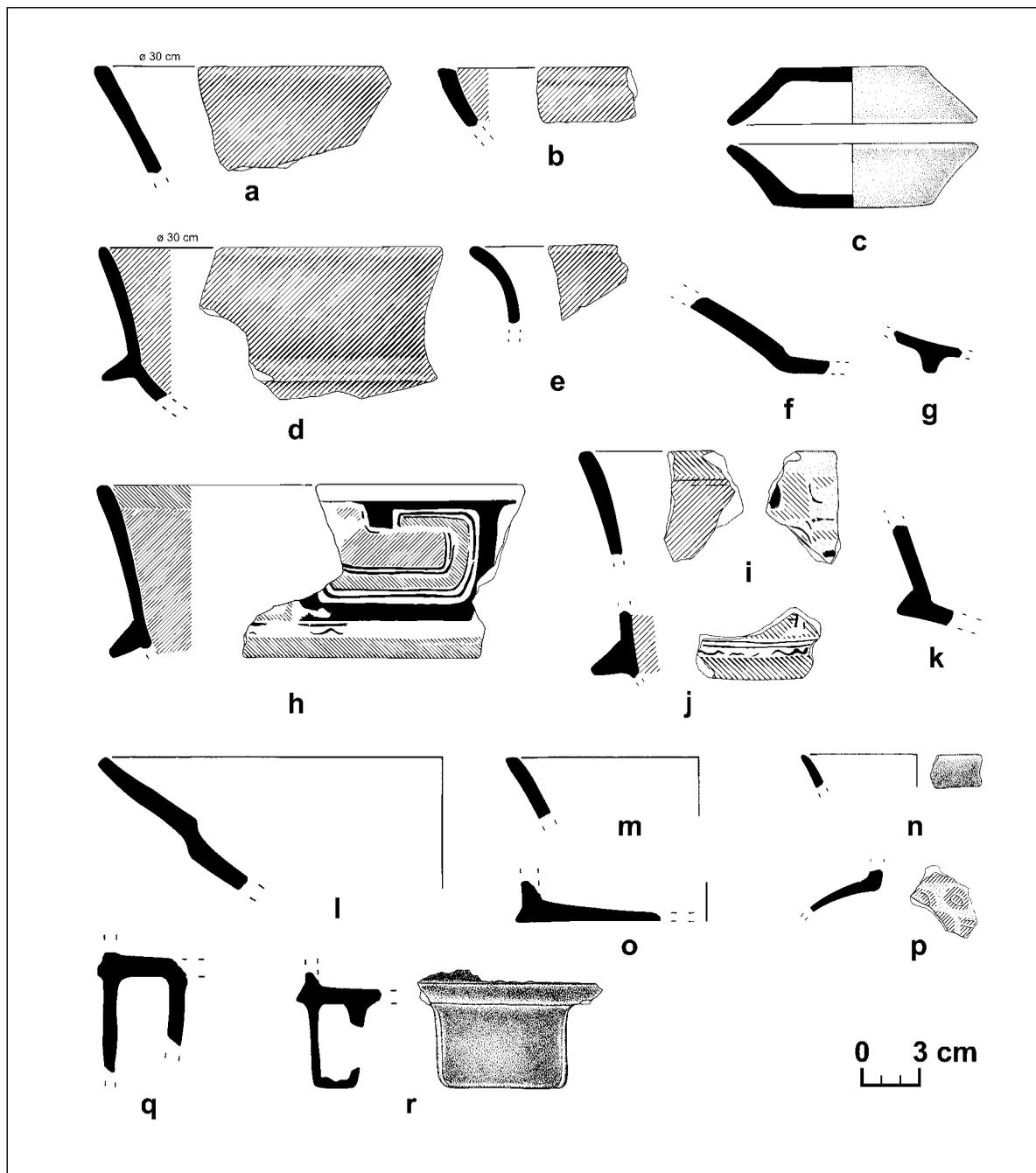


Figure 9. Jordan (Tzakol 2 equivalent). Águila Orange: a-g (slip on c was eroded, incorrectly rendered as unslipped); Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome: h-k; Balanza Black: l-o, q, r; San Clemente Gouged-incised: p. All examples from Mound 6 mask wall deposit. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

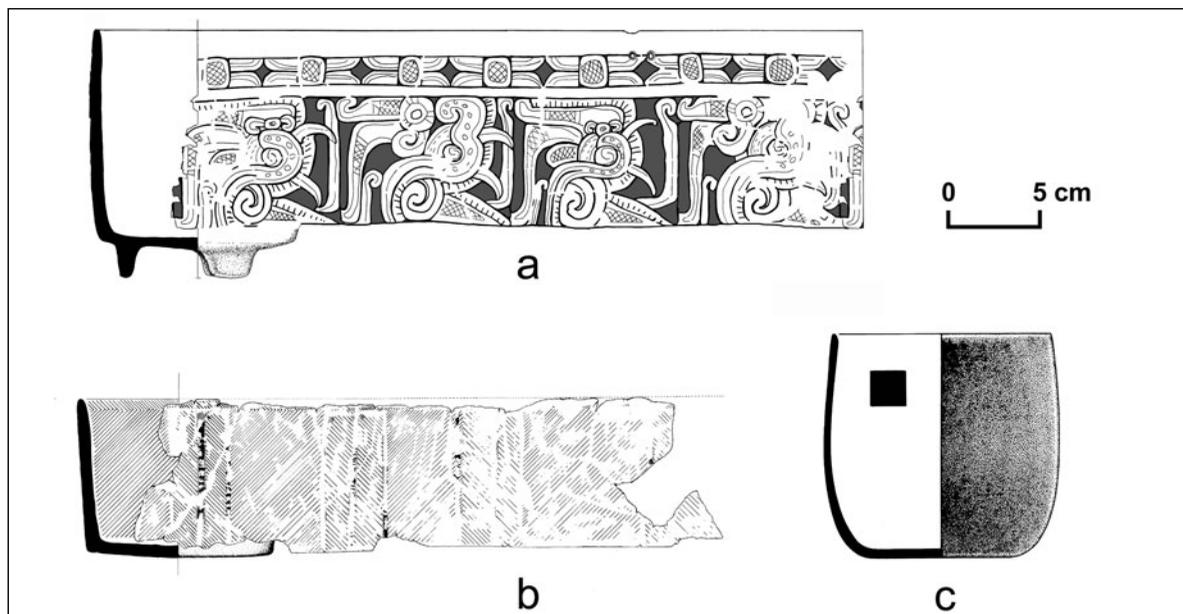


Figure 10. Jordan phase vessels from Burial 103: a) Unnamed Gouged-incised cylinder-tripod with serpent design; b) Unnamed orange and red-on-cream polychrome cup; c) Balanza Black vase. Drawings a-b by Hiro Iwamoto, c by Alfredo Román.

But the most pronounced changes are seen in the unslipped ceramic inventory (Figure 11)<sup>10</sup>. Pastes are grittier and less compact, surfaces are coarser and vessel walls are often thicker in the new Quintal group. Calcite inclusions are larger and more abundant and often penetrate the surface. Shallow unslipped bowls begin to rival unslipped jars in popularity. Striation becomes a necessary feature on jars; the striations are slightly deeper and appear in criss-crossed patterns. Triunfo Striated jars have salient square lips with a consistent channel or groove in the lip's flattened upper surface. Triunfo rims are sometimes exteriorly folded. Jar necks are generally shorter and less curvilinear, bending at more abrupt or acute angles than those found on Achiotes Unslipped jars.

### Early Classic – Jordan Tzakol

The Jordan Ceramic Complex is described here as a «complex» with some reservation. There are no con-

clusively defined Early Classic monumental constructions at Punta de Chimino. The ceramic sample derives from a ritual termination deposit and burial. Ceramic traits suggest Jordan is a «flash in the pan» Tzakol 2 manifestation at Punta de Chimino. The ceremonial center was abandoned for one or two centuries immediately after Jordan ceramics were deposited, an event that corresponds with occupational interruptions at major centers along the Middle Pasión River (Bachand 2006, n.d.a, n.d.b; Johnston 2006; Sabloff 1975).

Only two new types and one new variety appear in these Early Classic deposits: Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome, San Clemente Gouged-incised, and Triunfo Striated: Impressed Variety. Certain modes such as hollow rectangular supports (Figure 9q, r) and outset ring bases are strongly correlated with Jordan. Miniature vessels, basal flanges, ring bases, rim bands, and polychrome painting are also more frequent than before.

Not a single Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome sherd (total=91) is found in Faisán 3 construction fill. Most

<sup>10</sup> One-hundred and forty-seven unslipped potsherds were found in Faisán 3 contexts and classified as follows: Achiotes Unslipped (67), Quintal Unslipped (12), and Triunfo Striated (68). Fifty-four of the 67 Achiotes Unslipped sherds derived from late Protoclassic Mound 6 constructions that utilized large quantities of early cultural refuse.

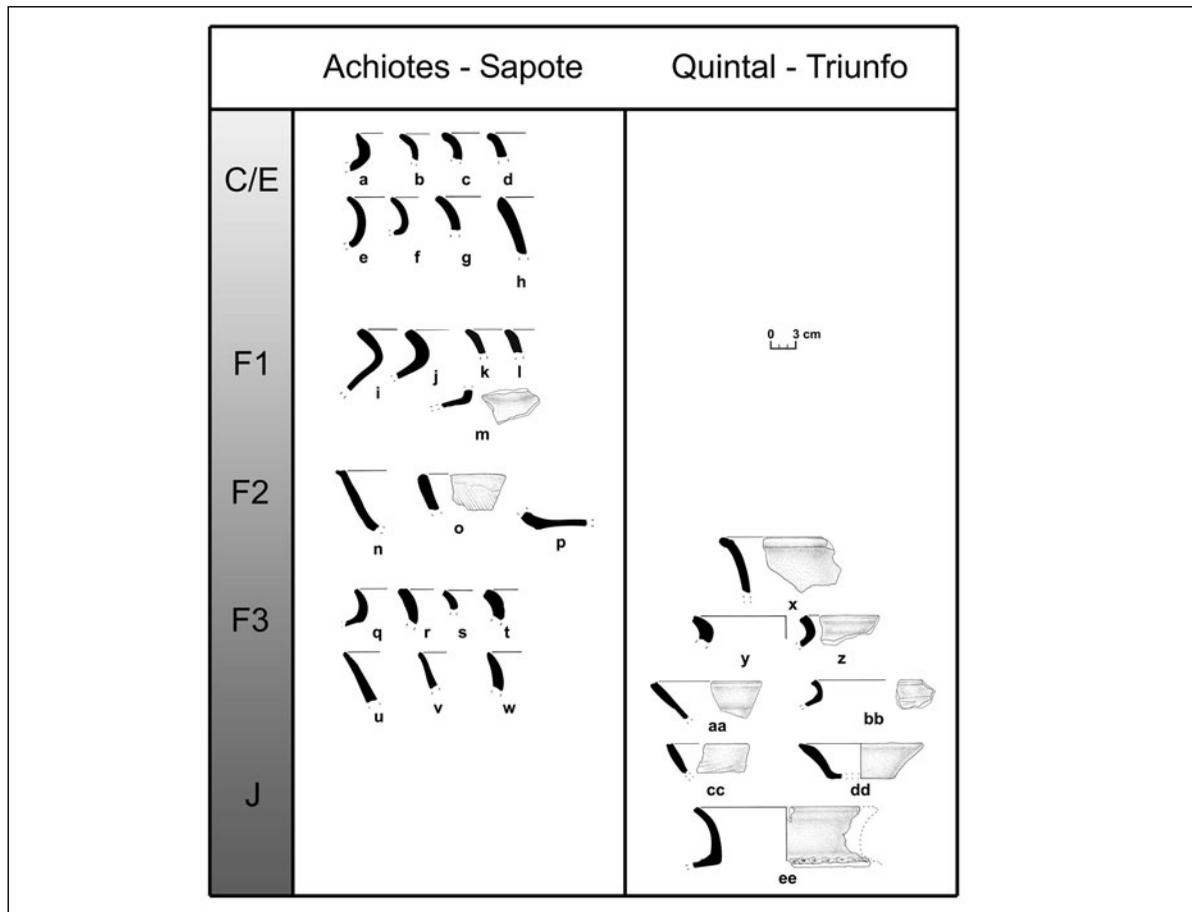


Figure 11. Evolution of unslipped pottery. Achiotes Unslipped: a-n, p-w; Sapote Striated: o; Quintal Unslipped: x-aa, dd; Triunfo Striated: bb, cc; Triunfo Striated: Impressed Variety: m. Illustrations by Alfredo Román.

Dos Arroyos sherds ( $n=86$ ) derive from a mask wall termination deposit in Mound 6. The secure dating of Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome at Punta de Chimino confirms that Dos Arroyos postdates Actuncan Orange Polychrome in the Pasión region, making it an excellent time marker for Tzakol 2 (Sabloff 1975: 107; Smith and Gifford 1966: 154, 157). Three of seven Actuncan Orange Polychrome sherds identified at Punta de Chimino derive from Faisán 3 construction fill. One has a Z-angle flange, an element more commonly associated with Tzakol 1 pottery (see Figure 8o).

San Clemente Gouged-incised is a rare Tzakol 2 type (Adams 1971: 53, 128-129). Foias (1996: 394-396) reported only four San Clemente sherds from the Petexbatún. The present specimen (Figure 9p) derives from the Early Classic termination deposit in the Mound 6 mask wall corridor. Its presence confirms a Tzakol 2 date for the deposit. Triunfo Striated: Impressed Variety was identified originally by Laporte (1995b: 53) on the Dolores-Poptún Plateau where it occurs in the Early Classic Tzakol sphere. The sole example comes from the Jordan mask wall deposit (Figure 11ee)<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> No striations are visible on this sherd but the paste color, large calcite inclusions, and squared lip with groove are identical to other Triunfo Striated examples. The neck is tall and outflaring—definitely on the tall end of the range for this type. Foias (1996) does not identify such plastic modification in Triunfo. Adams (1971: 19, Figure 31a), however, illustrates collar designs impressed with a tool or round cylindrical object on a minority of Triunfo sherds at Altar de Sacrificios. Importantly, he places this variety, Triunfo Striated: Ak Variety, in late Ayn or Tzakol 2.

The dense artifact deposit discovered on the western flank of Mound 6 contains the largest Early Classic ceramic sample yet documented in the Petexbatún region. No fully restorable vessels are present. There are a sizeable number of unclassified/eroded sherds. Few Águila Orange sherds have slip remnants. Slipped serving vessels are common, but hardly dominant. A good number of unslipped Quintal/Triunfo jars and small Quintal Unslipped flat-bottomed bowls (braziers?) are present (Figures 11aa, cc, dd)<sup>12</sup>. No spatial patterning is noted, aside from a concentration of three partial basal flange bowls (Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome, Águila Orange and Balanza Black) at the base of mask armature 1. This ceramic profile, in conjunction with the murky organic soil, lithic waste, and faunal detritus, lead me to interpret this material as secondarily deposited domestic refuse. The large quantity of Faisán 3 types is noteworthy. Many now exhibit Tzakol 2 modes. Also of interest, but of no great numerical value, is the assortment of unclassified types—a sign of ceramic experimentation and innovation at this time. Preclassic sherds are negligible; the dozen or so examples are probably acquisitions from earlier refuse or the remains of heirlooms. The deposit seems to present a fairly accurate glimpse of the entire Jordan assemblage in Tzakol 2 times.

No Early Classic Jordan sherds were found nearby on the floor of a room containing an *in situ* stela butt. Present, however, were numerous partly restorable fragments from several Miseria Appliqué modelled censers. One censer (Figure 8r) is identical to the hollow cylinder, modeled face censer types assigned to the Protoclassic-Early Classic Ayn complex at Altar de Sacrificios (Adams 1971: 53-55, Figs. 29i, 95c-e, g, 96a-f, 97a, b, 98a-e, 99a-c). This censer is the first of its kind reported in the Petexbatún region. The unslipped orange vessel has a hard gritty paste and dark core. Sand aplastics are present. Appliqué braided bands, pellets, and volutes adorn the exterior of the 2 cm thick vertical wall that terminates with a flat, un-beveled edge. Flanges were not identified, but the evidence is fragmentary. Remaining vessels exhibit rims with beveled lips. One is rather crudely made (possibly a bowl); it has a dark paste with rough uneven surfaces.

A lip-to-lip vessel offering was placed on the floor at the foot of the broken stela (Figure 9c). The size, shape, paste, surface finish, and lip-to-lip placement of

these vessels resemble the traits of «small variety» Águila Orange cache vessels that are ubiquitous at Tikal during the Manik phase (Culbert 1993: Figs. 127a-c, 143b, 149b and 153a). No slip is found on the Punta de Chimino vessels, but a cream underslip (an occasional Águila Orange trait) is visible on the interior of the fragmented upper vessel. Two «large variety» Águila Orange bowls were deposited one inside the other in a Faisán 3 cache within Mound 7 (Castellanos 1996; Demarest *et al.* 1996: Fig. 14.2; Escobedo 1996, 1997). The frequent occurrence of this cache form at Tikal suggests it is an Early Classic Tikal trademark.

Several Jordan phase vessels were found in a circular cist burial at the base of Mound 7. The interment contained the skeleton of a migrant from the central or west-central Maya lowlands (Wright and Bachand in press). One vessel was a Balanza Black vase (Figure 10c). Another was a squat cup with a flat base, vertical walls, direct rim, and pointed-rounded lip (Figure 10b). This unclassified orange and red-on-cream polychrome had repeating vertical bands of varying thickness on its exterior (the thinnest bands faded from orange to cream, a common effect of resist designs). The third vessel was a highly polished, thin walled cylinder tripod with an exquisite gouged-incised rendering of four curl-nosed saurian creatures (Figure 10a). Its fine dark paste and volcanic temper suggested highland manufacture. Mending holes below the rim resulted from a prior effort to repair and conserve the piece. The vessel's serpent design is nearly identical to one found on a late Protoclassic roller stamp from Altar de Sacrificios (Willey 1972: Fig. 89ab).

In summary, Jordan was short-lived at Punta de Chimino and applicable to a small number of households, some of which may have been occupied by newcomers from the north. Researchers may ultimately decide that the latter half of Faisán 3 is best perceived as an early facet of the Jordan ceramic complex. Preclassic ceramics quite likely disappear from Faisán 3 by A.D. 300 when the new domestic assemblage and Petén Gloss wares take over. Although such a subdivision is intimated in ceramic frequencies, it currently lacks stratigraphic corroboration. Nevertheless, the Jordan assemblage was clearly an outgrowth of Faisán 3. With better stratigraphic evidence, it may be possible to divide Faisán 3, designating the later half as Jordan 1 and treating the current description as Jordan 2.

<sup>12</sup> The large quantity of Triunfo Striated jars in comparison to Quintal Unslipped body sherds is the reverse of the Preclassic ratio of striated to unslipped plain vessels.

## CONCLUSIONS

The antiquity and duration of Colonia Xe is still an inconclusive matter. An occupational hiatus between Colonia and Excavado is possible but unknowable based on current evidence. Excavado is part of the same regional Mamom tradition that encompassed the Pasión River, a tradition related to but modally distinct from the central Maya lowlands, exhibiting certain ties to neighboring Chiapas. Punta de Chimino is absorbed into the Chicanel ceramic sphere in the Late Preclassic, sharing traits that predominated across the entire Yucatán peninsula, lowland Chiapas and eastern Tabasco. This macro-regional membership continued into the Early Protoclassic with the addition of some new ceramic traits. A brief disturbance in the occupational sequence around A.D. 150/175 may mark the beginning of a forest recovery event tied to local demographic decline (Dunning *et al.* 1998: 145). This occupational hiccup was followed by an energetic revitalization of the Acropolis with many new ceramic elements appearing. Punta de Chimino's Faisán 3 renaissance came to an abrupt end shortly after A.D. 400 when the Acropolis was ritually destroyed.

Contrary to original belief (Foias 1996: 366), waxy and glossy Tzakol pottery did indeed coexist in the Petexbatún region. The latest findings do however indicate that Chicanel pottery was manufactured or consumed in markedly reduced quantities by the middle of Faisán 3 (*circa* A.D. 300), a «best guess» appraisal based on ceramic stratigraphy, radiometric determinations and some understanding of site formation processes. The aforementioned elements are vital to evaluating or advancing claims of Chicanel continuity in later periods. Yet, even when these three pieces of evidence are obtained, interpretation is still challenged by the ancient practice of incorporating old refuse into new construction. Archaeological ambiguities resulting from this practice can be mitigated by recovering ceramics in primary cultural deposits (burials, caches, living floors, etc.) and quantitatively comparing sherds found in contemporaneous but distinct depositional contexts.

Important for Petexbatún history is the observation that «the two sites with the most Early Classic Jordan

pottery (Arroyo de Piedra and Tamarindito) have the lowest percentages of Preclassic pottery» (Foias 1996: 366). The absence or dearth of Faisán 2 and 3 traits at these sites seems to imply a 50 year historical gap between Punta de Chimino's Early Classic demise and the founding of the Early Classic Tamarindito dynasty (Mathews and Willey 1991: 43), an inference supported by the presence of Saxche/Palmar Orange Polychrome vessels in Early Classic levels at Arroyo de Piedra and Tamarindito (Foias 1996: 360), and Cycle 9 dates on Tamarindito's earliest stelae.

Both Arroyo de Piedra and Tamarindito lack San Martín Variegated Brown, which again suggests that the Early Classic occupations at Punta de Chimino and Ceibal (the type site for San Martín) are earlier in date. The absence of Águila Orange pottery at Ceibal, though difficult to explain, does not contradict this assessment. The secure chronometric dating of these types at Punta de Chimino indicates that they appeared alongside Balanza Black, Triunfo Striated, and Quintal Unslipped vessels at the end of the Protoclassic, only to disappear following the arrival of Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome to the region. Punta de Chimino and Ceibal were closely linked ceramically and evidence suggests their Tzakol 2 occupations were cut short around the same time. Ceramics in Punta de Chimino's Early Classic destruction contexts, exhibit attributes noted at Tikal and Altar de Sacrificios. The presence of Águila Orange pottery at Punta de Chimino in Faisán 3 suggests ties with the Central Petén, probably Tikal, were forged beforehand in the 4th century A.D.

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