

Putting Together the Pieces:  
Maya Pottery of Northern Belize  
and Central Peten, Guatemala

*Arlen F. Chase and Diane Z. Chase*

Upper level Maya ceramic analysis involves the comparison of a specific site sequence with those extant in other parts of the Maya area. These comparisons are usually carried out through the use of the concept of a "ceramic sphere" which "exists when two or more complexes share a majority of their most common types" (Willey, Culbert, and Adams 1967:306). The implication of membership in a ceramic sphere is that two or more complexes share "broader cultural interaction patterns common to their respective sites or locality" (Ball 1976:323). The ceramic sphere concept is synthetic in nature. By its very definition, it is meant to combine diverse attributes, modes, and forms into a whole that can then be placed in a specific geographic region. However, many if not all of the "broader cultural interaction patterns" are, in fact, lost to the geographic aspect of the ceramic sphere.

The goals of Maya ceramic analysis are: first, the description of Maya pottery in terms that are useful to other researchers; second, the construction of a site sequence; and third, an explanation of the behavior behind the pottery. The first goal, simple description, is accomplished through the use of the type-variety-mode method of ceramic analysis. The second goal, the construction of a site sequence, establishes the chronology of a site and, to some extent, its culture history. The third goal, the explanation of behavior, implies the attribution of function to pottery types and the definition of both intra- and inter-site ceramic distributions. In a very real sense, the third goal contrasts with the first, for the simple typological description of pottery is a synthetic exercise stressing similarities while the explanation of the behavior behind that pottery needs to examine the variability that is

hidden within the integrative type-variety-mode system of analysis.

Because of its very nature, the use of the ceramic sphere concept to get at underlying "cultural patterns" is limited. The ceramic sphere emphasizes similarities and not differences; it derives from the ceramic analysis and only vaguely relates to the behavior of the people being analyzed. If the goal of ceramic analysis is ultimately the reconstruction of behavior, then Maya ceramic analysis has been misled by thinking that the ceramic sphere is the most useful integrative level. The merit of interpretations based on the quantification of ceramic remains is also questionable, especially more so since it has been stressed that "ceramic spheres are quantitatively rather than qualitatively defined" (Ball 1976:324). The quantification of ceramic deposits, while useful simply as a relative measure, does not necessarily have anything to do with the underlying culture that produced those deposits for it combines various distinct behaviors and conditions. For example, each ceramic type often produces different breakage patterns. In addition, people at each site may have an unlimited number of relationships with individuals and groups from other sites and regions, yet a site can only be a full member of a single ceramic sphere.

A more useful concept for deriving behavior from the archaeological record and for facilitating meaningful comparisons between sites is the "subcomplex." A subcomplex, as defined by the 1967 Maya ceramic conference, is "a subdivision of a complex that has significance in cultural interpretation other than that of chronological differentiation." With the exception of the Becan ceramic report (Ball 1977:3, 142-150), this exceedingly useful concept has not generally been employed in Maya ceramic studies. Much more than a ceramic sphere, subcomplexes allow the definition of units meaningful to the Maya and a possible interpretation of these Maya behaviors; by their very nature, subcomplexes permit more accurate inter-site comparisons. The most commonly recognized subcomplexes are those comprising caches, censers, and burials, although subcomplexes comprising refuse deposits have also been defined (D. Chase 1982a: 340, 617-639; A. Chase 1983:48-55, 69-70, 136-140). While the prime components of subcomplexes may be ceramic vessels, an important aspect of the term is clearly function and/or context.

Through comparing subcomplexes at different sites, it is possible to gain a better understanding of meaningful connections between them. In spite of the critique that subcomplexes are dependent for their formulation "upon the recovery of functionally specialized contexts" (Ball 1977: 3), it is our contention that the use of subcomplexes will allow Maya ceramicists and archaeologists to develop a

## Putting Together the Pieces

more precise understanding of the nature of Maya society and its organization. The use of subcomplexes in comparing Tayasal and Santa Rita both to each other and to their neighbors reveals much more than a broad sharing of ceramic types between some time periods and not between others.

### TAYASAL AND SANTA RITA COROZAL

The sites of Tayasal (A. Chase 1979, 1983, 1984, 1985a) and Santa Rita Corozal (D. Chase 1981, 1982a, 1986; D. Chase and A. Chase 1986) are superficially similar in many respects (see Fig. 1). Both contain ceramic sequences that span the Preclassic through Historic time periods. Both are located near bodies of water and are strategically placed with regard to trade. Both sites are viewed as being on the second tier of a Maya settlement hierarchy. But, Tayasal and Santa Rita Corozal are also very different. Tayasal is characterized by dominance over a 15 km long peninsula termed the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone. This zone has large constructions, a plaza-oriented settlement pattern, and the presence of carved monuments. Santa Rita Corozal extends 4 km along a bluff that rises above Chetumal Bay. This area has few large constructions, lacks carved monuments altogether, and is characterized by a settlement pattern that puts little emphasis on the use of common plazas shared by more than one structure. Yet, the two sites share ceramic types, ceramic groups, and in some cases, ceramic spheres and mortuary subcomplexes.

The ceramic data from the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone (A. Chase 1979, 1983, 1984; A. Chase and D. Chase 1983) and Santa Rita Corozal (D. Chase 1982a, 1984) are also indicative of the difficulties in establishing regional sequences and of the problems with assuming that sites of lesser importance are necessarily subsumed into the ceramic sequences of larger neighbors. It would in fact appear that geographic proximity does not necessarily correspond with an exact ceramic equivalence between sites. In addition, it is not always apparent which sites, whether small or large, are likely to be most representative of an area. This is clearly seen in both northern Belize (Pring 1976; D. Chase 1982a:71-72; A. Chase 1986:123) and central Peten (Culbert 1977:29-30; A. Chase and D. Chase 1983:66) in the variability among the ceramic sequences of neighboring sites. The diversity present in the ceramics and sites of these two regions should be expected given the multitude of complex relationships that must once have existed within Maya society. The meaning behind this variability and, to some extent, the very diversity itself, however, may be completely masked by a punctilious adherence to a synthetic, descriptive ceramic typology.

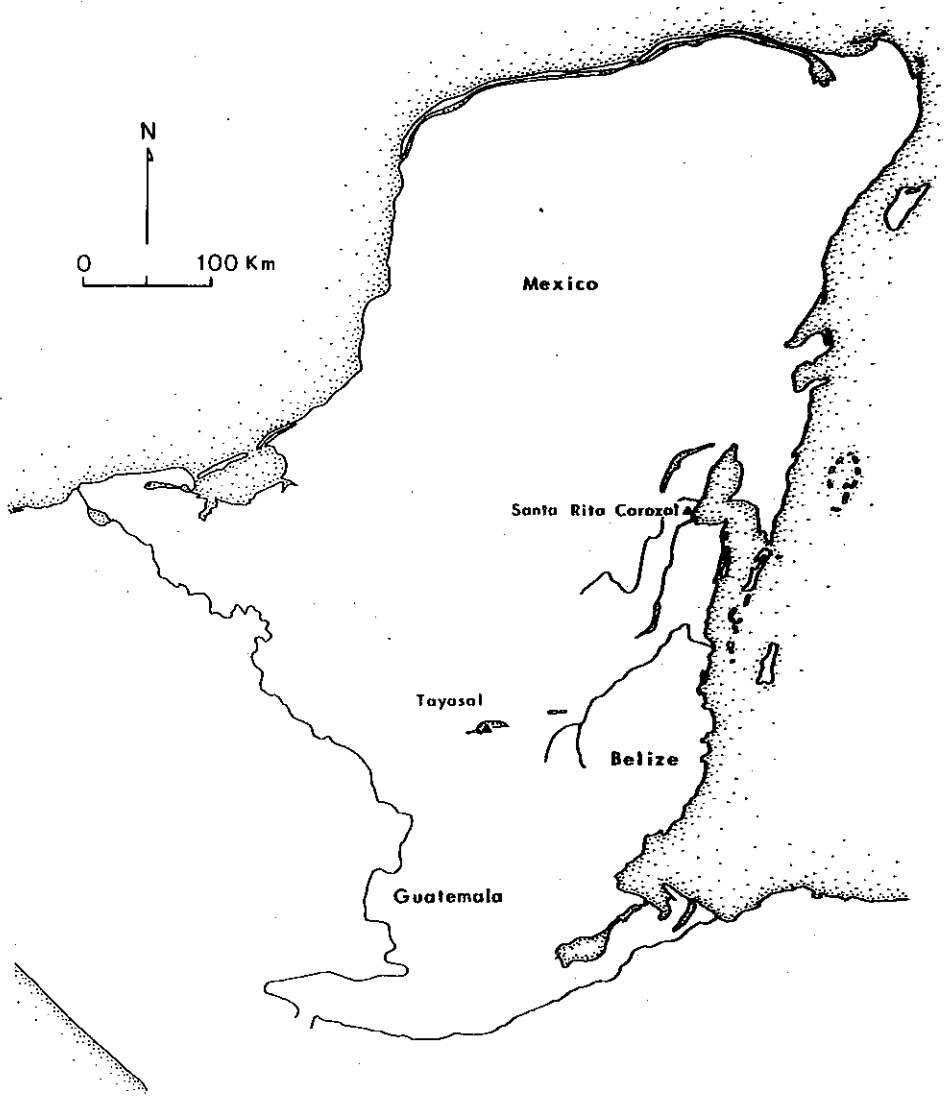


Fig. 1. Map of the Maya area showing the location of Tayasal and Santa Rita Corozal.

## Putting Together the Pieces

Thus, it is our contention that even a brief review of the patterns of ceramic variability within certain sub-complexes at Tayasal and Santa Rita Corozal underscores the need to look beyond the ceramic sphere concept in order to understand interactions between and within parts of the Maya realm.

### Preclassic

Santa Rita Corozal has Early Preclassic remains. These are similar to Swasey ceramics found 30 km to the south at Cuello, yet they differ in form and surface coloration (D. Chase 1983). An Early Preclassic burial subcomplex has been defined at Santa Rita Corozal and consists of a partially flexed individual accompanied by a single Consejo Red dish (Fig. 2a) placed in the chest area. The Middle Preclassic at Santa Rita Corozal is characterized by a blending of Swasey and Mamom characteristics; unlike Cuello (Kosakowsky 1982:28), no distinct Mamom complex exists at Santa Rita Corozal; rather, there is a smooth transition from the earlier Swasey-related ceramics into the Late Preclassic Chicanel-related types. For the Middle Preclassic, two different burial subcomplexes can be defined at Santa Rita Corozal. The first represents a continuation of the early burial subcomplex in the placement of one or more vessels in the chest area of a flexed individual. The second burial subcomplex is characterized by the use of a single inverted vessel near the head of the individual. Both of these burial subcomplexes see the use of slipped and unslipped Swasey-related and Mamom-related types. No subcomplexes can be defined for the Middle Preclassic in the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone; the zone, however, fits within the Mamom ceramic sphere and the pottery for this period is characterized by a harder paste and glossier slip than the pottery of succeeding complexes.

For the Late Preclassic, both Santa Rita Corozal and Tayasal fall within the Chicanel ceramic sphere. The inclusion of both of these sites within this sphere, however, masks some major differences between the associated complexes. At Tayasal, monochrome slipping in red, black, cream, and a mixture of all three of these slips characterizes the Kax ceramic complex. At Santa Rita Corozal only extremely rarely is something not red-slipped. Santa Rita Corozal also witnesses the heavy use of chocolate pots (Fig. 2b), a form very rarely found at Tayasal. The only Preclassic period burial excavated at the site of Tayasal consisted of a single individual sandwiched in between two Sierra Red vessels. At Santa Rita Corozal, a variety of burial subcomplexes exist, most of them associated with the typical Sierra Red large dish (Fig. 2c). These dishes are placed near or over the heads of flexed individuals throughout the Late Preclassic period; when they cover the entire body, they are often

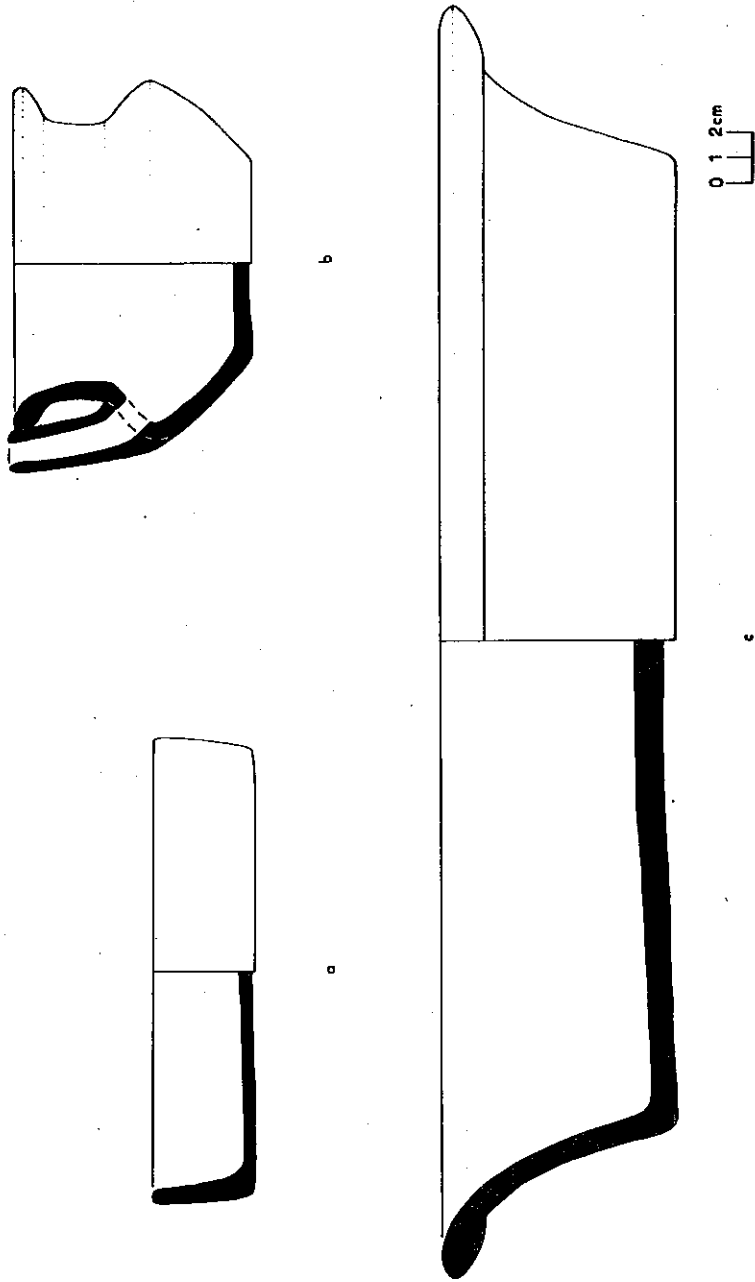


Fig. 2. Preclassic burial vessels from Santa Rita Corozal: a) Consejo Red: San Andres variety from S.D. Pl2B-26. b) Kuxche Orange: variety unspecified from S.D. Pl0B-3. c) Sierra Red: variety unspecified from S.D. Pl0B-8.

## Putting Together the Pieces

found covering other Sierra Red vessels, particularly one or more chocolate pots or dishes in combination with a smaller florero or a jar with high rim.

### Protoclassic

The Protoclassic era is represented at both sites, but in very dissimilar ways. Both Santa Rita Corozal and the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone could be considered as peripheral members in the Floral Park ceramic sphere, yet major differences characterize the ceramics from the two areas. In the Tayasal area, the Yaxcheel ceramic complex appears to be a local development out of the succeeding Late Preclassic complex; the Aguacate ceramic group is represented in domestic deposits. Two cache subcomplexes may be defined for the Protoclassic Tayasal region. Both are characterized by lip-to-lip patterns: in one, tetrapod Paxbono Black vessels (Fig. 3a) of local manufacture are placed beneath an altar; in the second subcomplex, Aguila Orange dishes (Fig. 3b) are cached with or without human skulls. Tetrapod plates (Fig. 3c), tetrapod composite forms, and groove-hooked striated vessels may also be potentially defined in a ritual, ceremonial destruction subcomplex for the area. A burial subcomplex consists of monochrome Aguila Orange dishes, many set lip-to-lip, about an extended individual. Santa Rita Corozal also has Protoclassic materials. Extended burials occur for the first time at the site, but the flexed pattern continues as well. In contrast to the Preclassic, vessels are placed in an upright position with the bodies and include derivative Sierra Red chocolate pots, some derivative Polvero Black vessels, Guacamallo Red-on-orange tetrapod plates, and Ixcanrio Polychrome tetrapod bowls (Fig. 4). While Protoclassic pottery exists in other deposits from Santa Rita, the use of Protoclassic horizon markers in interments at Santa Rita contrasts with the use of similar vessels only in no-burial deposits in the Tayasal Paxcaman zone.

### Early Classic

Polychromy does not characterize the ceramics of the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone during the Early Classic period, nor do basal flange plates. Instead there is an emphasis on the monochrome Balanza Black and Aguila Orange ceramics. Two burial subcomplexes may be established. In one, a flexed individual is accompanied by either an Aguila Orange plate or one or two monochrome Balanza Black bowls. In the second, an extended individual is accompanied by a host of Aguila Red and Balanza Black pottery which included flanged plates, ring-base dishes or bowls, and tripod cylinders (Fig. 5). Unlike the Tayasal area, Santa Rita Corozal is characterized by Tzakol-style polychrome basal flange bowls; these occur both in refuse deposits and in a burial subcomplex. A cache subcomplex

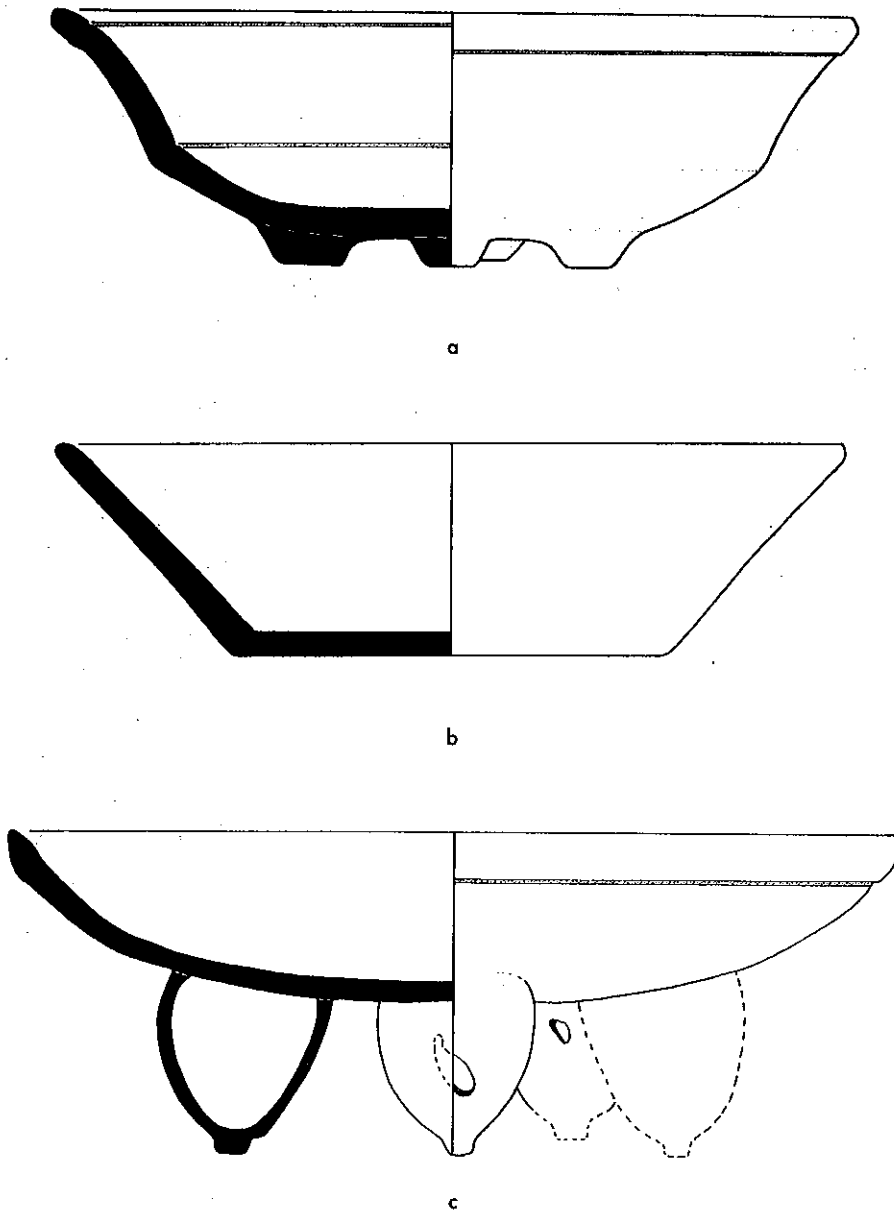


Fig. 3. Protoclassic vessels from the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone: a) Paxbono Black: Paxbono variety from Cache T1C-3. b) Aguila Orange: Aguila variety from Cache T1C-3. c) Aguacate Orange: variety unspecified from P.D. T1E-1.



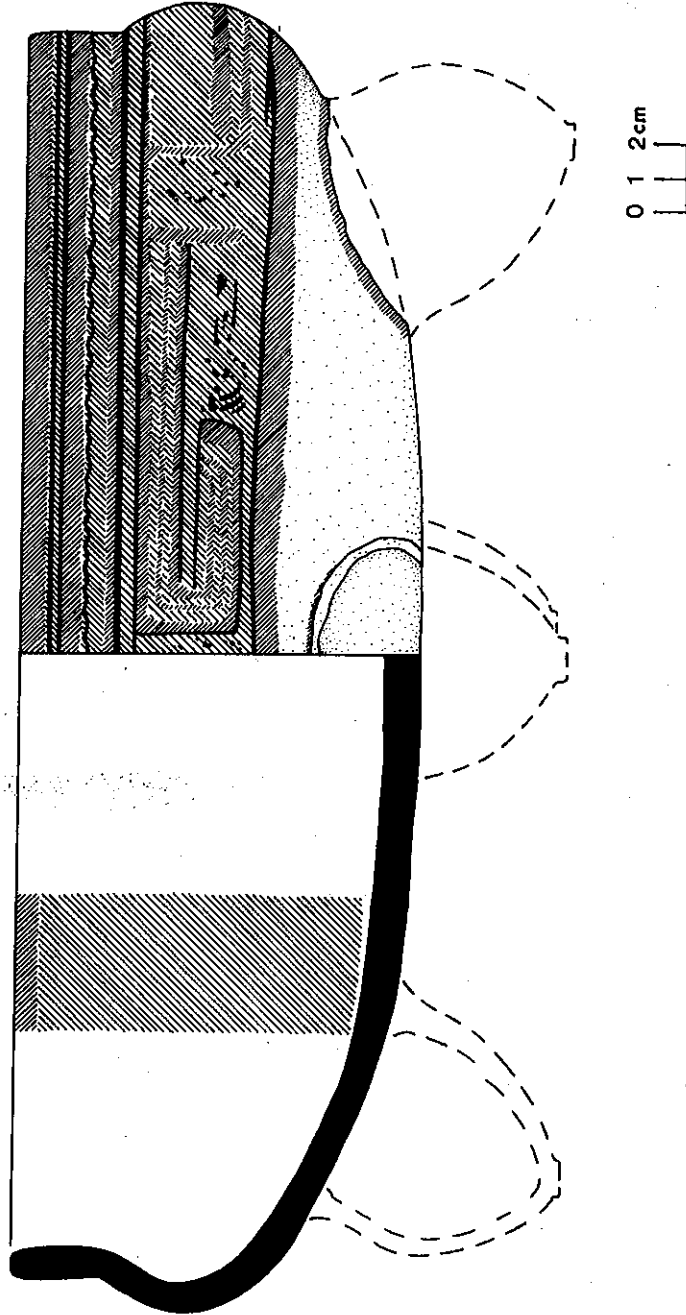


Fig. 4. Protoclassic Ixcanrio Orange Polychrome: variety unspecified burial vessel from S.D. P2J-1 at Santa Rita Corozal.

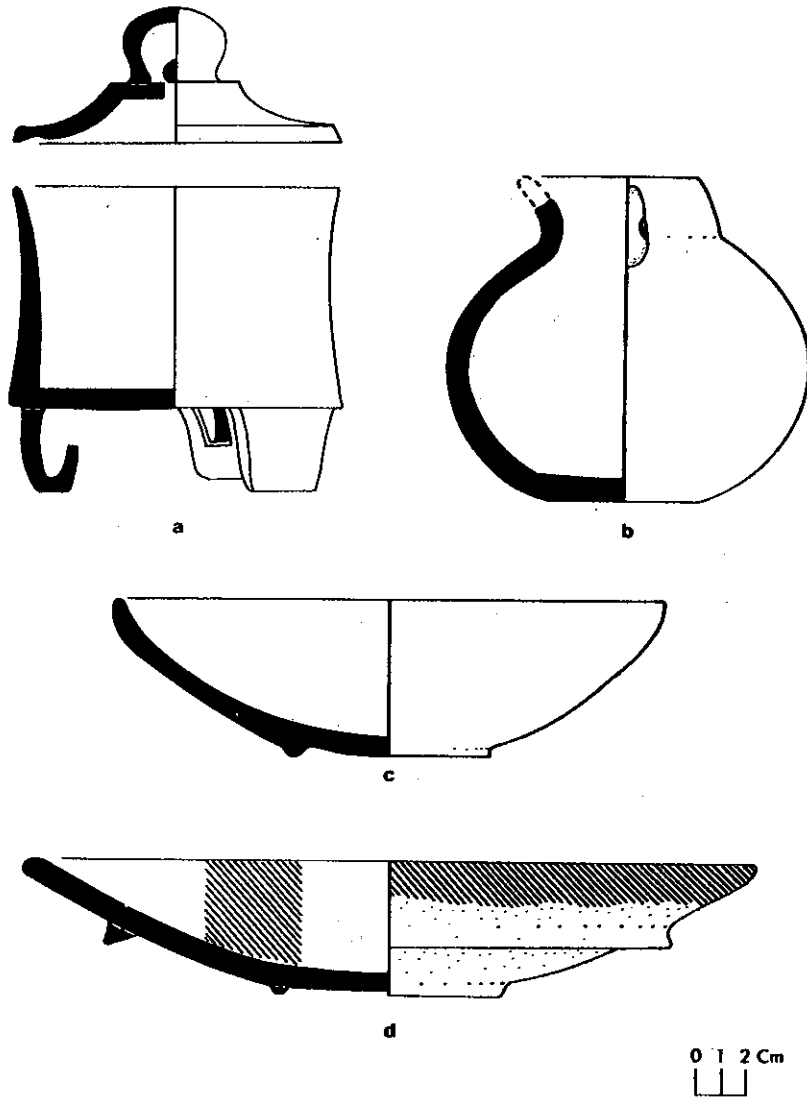


Fig. 5. Early Classic vessels from Bu. T12B-1 at Tayasal: a) Balanza Black: Balanza variety. b) Aguila Orange: Aguila variety. c) Aguila Orange: Oxpayac variety. d) Aguila Orange: Aguila variety.

occurs which is represented by poorly fired, unslipped, large, rounded dishes and cut-out and modeled cylinders. Three Early Classic burial subcomplexes may be defined for Santa Rita Corozal. The first is characterized by a flexed individual whose head is covered by a Dos Arroyos polychrome plate (Fig. 6c). The second is characterized

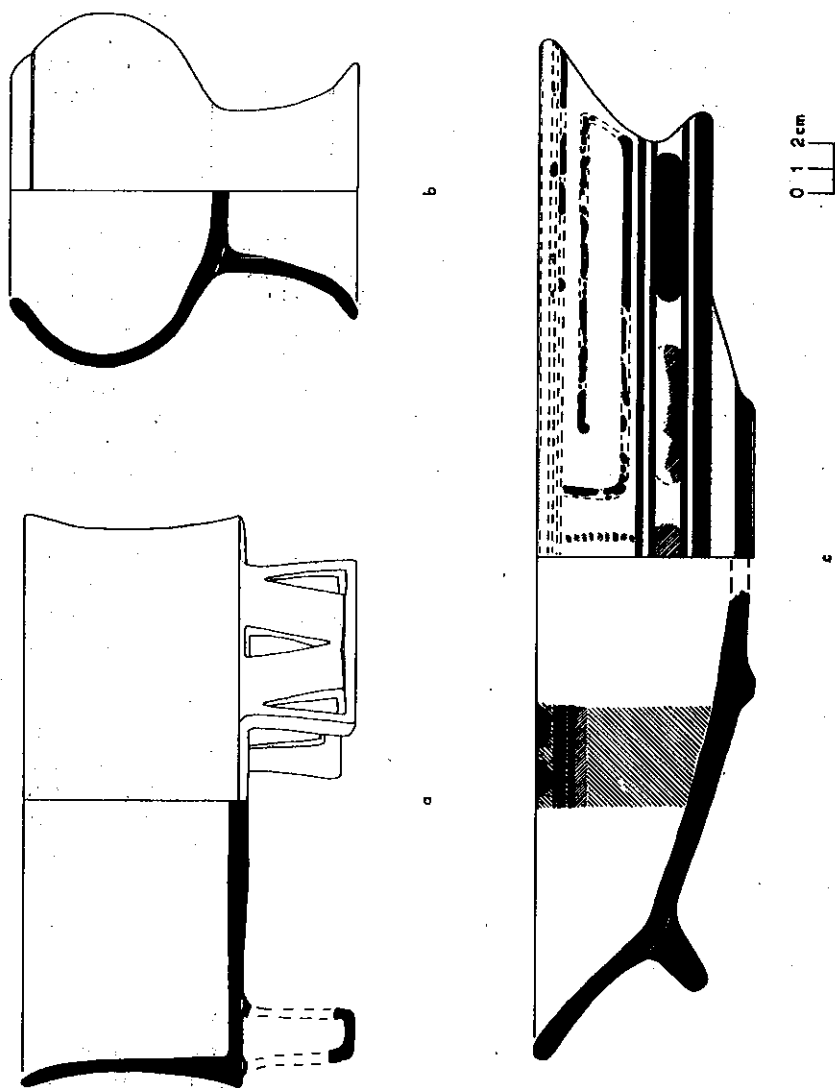


Fig. 6. Early Classic burial vessels from Santa Rita Corozal: a) Balanza Black: Balanza variety from S.D. P2B-5. b) Balanza Black: variety unspecified from S.D. P2B-2. c) Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome: variety unspecified from S.D. P13B-4.

by an extended individual associated with polychrome bowls and inverted bowls covering extra skulls. The third is characterized by an extended individual accompanied by polychrome plates, cylinder tripods (Fig. 6a) or pedestaled bowls (Fig. 6b), and other bowl forms. The third Santa Rita burial subcomplex is very comparable to the ones found in the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone and is indicative of elite ties in the belief systems between the two regions. These data would indicate that the elite of both Tayasal and Santa Rita were encompassed within the same social network, while the non-elite followed other, more localized, patterns.

### Late Classic

During the Late Classic, any similarities that existed between the Santa Rita Corozal and Tayasal ceramic sequences have disappeared. At Santa Rita, two burial subcomplexes may be defined. The first consists of a flexed individual whose head is covered by a polychrome plate (Fig. 7a); the second consists of an extended individual whose head is either covered or accompanied by a bowl (Fig. 7b). While the plates are within the local fineware tradition, the bowls include both local types and tradewares.

The Late Classic period at Tayasal may be subdivided into two parts. For the earlier part of the Late Classic, one burial subcomplex is characterized by flexed individuals with Molina Black jars while another is characterized by extended individuals accompanied by Saxche Orange Polychrome unfooted or footed dishes and Saxche Orange Polychrome rounded deep bowls (Fig. 8a). In the transition between the earlier and later Classic period at Tayasal, the deep rounded bowl may be replaced either by a rounded-bottom bowl (Fig. 8b) and/or a cylinder vase. Two cache subcomplexes may be established for the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone during the early part of the Late Classic period: the first consists of miniature vessels with lids; the second contains tecomate-form bowls (Saxche Orange and Molino Black).

The later part of the Classic period in the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone sees the presence of two burial subcomplexes. In the first, an extended individual is buried with a single bowl under the head. In the second, an extended or partially flexed individual is accompanied by at least one tripod plate and one or more polychrome bowls (Fig. 8c); one of the bowls is always beneath the skull. This second Late Classic burial subcomplex may be faceted for an early version of it includes a cylinder vase. A Late Classic cache subcomplex consists of a polychrome cylinder vase and tripod plate. A generalized censer complex for Late Classic Tayasal area emphasized tall modeled and flanged cylinders. Late Classic refuse

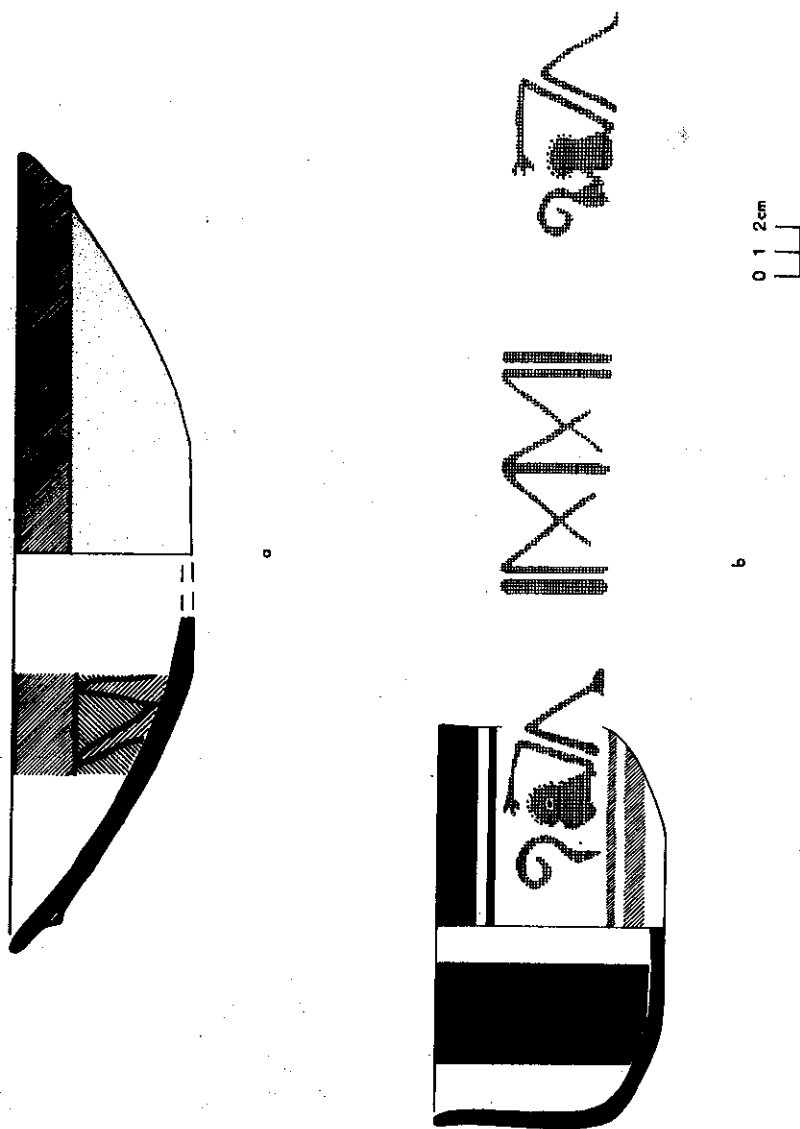


Fig. 7. Late Classic burial vessels from Santa Rita Corozal. a) Miguel Polychrome: Miguel variety from S.D. P37C-1 (interior design shown in D. Chase and A. Chase 1986: 13). b) Campesino Brown on cream: Campesino variety from S.D. P21A-1.

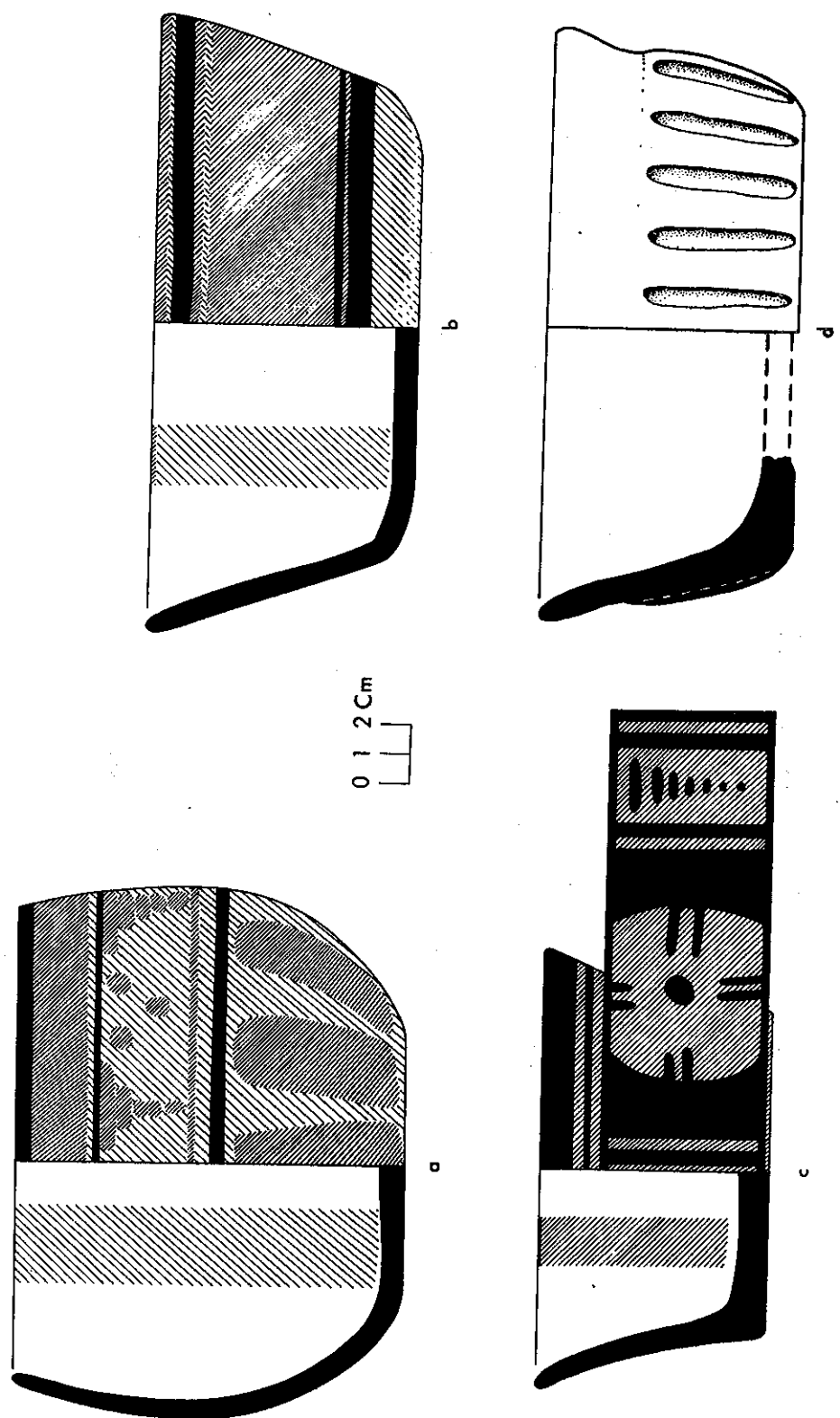


Fig. 8. Late Classic vessels from the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone: a) Saxche Orange Polychrome: Saxche variety from Bu. T2A-5. b) Seibal Buff Polychrome: variety unspecified from Bu. T16B-1. c) Yuhactal Black-on-red: variety unspecified from BU T16D-1. d) either Chilar or Tenaja Fluted: variety unspecified from Deposit 1C-1.

## Putting Together the Pieces

deposits from the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone also tend to emphasize a variety of bowl forms (Fig. 8d). It is interesting to note that in spite of major differences between the Late Classic ceramics of Tayasal and Santa Rita Corozal, both sites contain mortuary subcomplexes that emphasize extended burials with a focus on single bowl forms; this may be indicative of a shared ritual belief system.

### Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic

The end of the Classic period at Santa Rita Corozal is marked by the widespread appearance of double-mouthed waterjars (Fig. 9a), both Thin and Puuc Slate wares, trickle wares, and Achote Black. Achote Black (Fig. 9b) and Kik Red group bowls (see D. Chase 1982b) occur in extended burials. While it is evident that there is heavy population at Santa Rita Corozal, at least as represented by the pottery, it is also likely that all of the related subcomplexes for this era have not been found. It is suggested that most burial patterns underwent radical change in the transition from the Classic to the Postclassic. Ceramically, Santa Rita Corozal sees strong Yucatec influences in terms of slatewares and trickle wares during this period. Tayasal witnesses the continuation of the Late Classic tradition into its initial Postclassic period. The Terminal Classic period is characterized by a continuation of Late Classic period mortuary patterns. These include both the inclusion of multiple polychrome vessels of bowl and plate form (Figs. 10a and 10c) with a single extended individual and the inclusion of a single bowl, usually Pepet Incised (Fig. 10b), beneath the head of the extended individual. Additionally, Augustine Red ceramics are introduced into the Tayasal region. A tripod plate (Fig. 10d) occurs at the side of an extended individual in the only interment at Tayasal containing Augustine ceramics. An Augustine period cache subcomplex consists of a foreign Plumbate jar tradeware. An Augustine related censer subcomplex emphasized large unslipped pedestaled dishes. It has been previously suggested that a derivative Classic tradition and the new Augustine tradition existed together for some period of time in the Lake Peten area (A. Chase 1985c).

### Middle and Late Postclassic

In the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone, the initial introduction of Augustine Red ceramics and Nohpek short rimmed ollas is followed by a period of local experimentation that leads to the appearance of Paxcaman Red ceramics during the Middle Postclassic period. During the Middle Postclassic, extended burials still continued in the Tayasal area; in these the body was burned in situ and sometimes accompanied by small high necked jars,

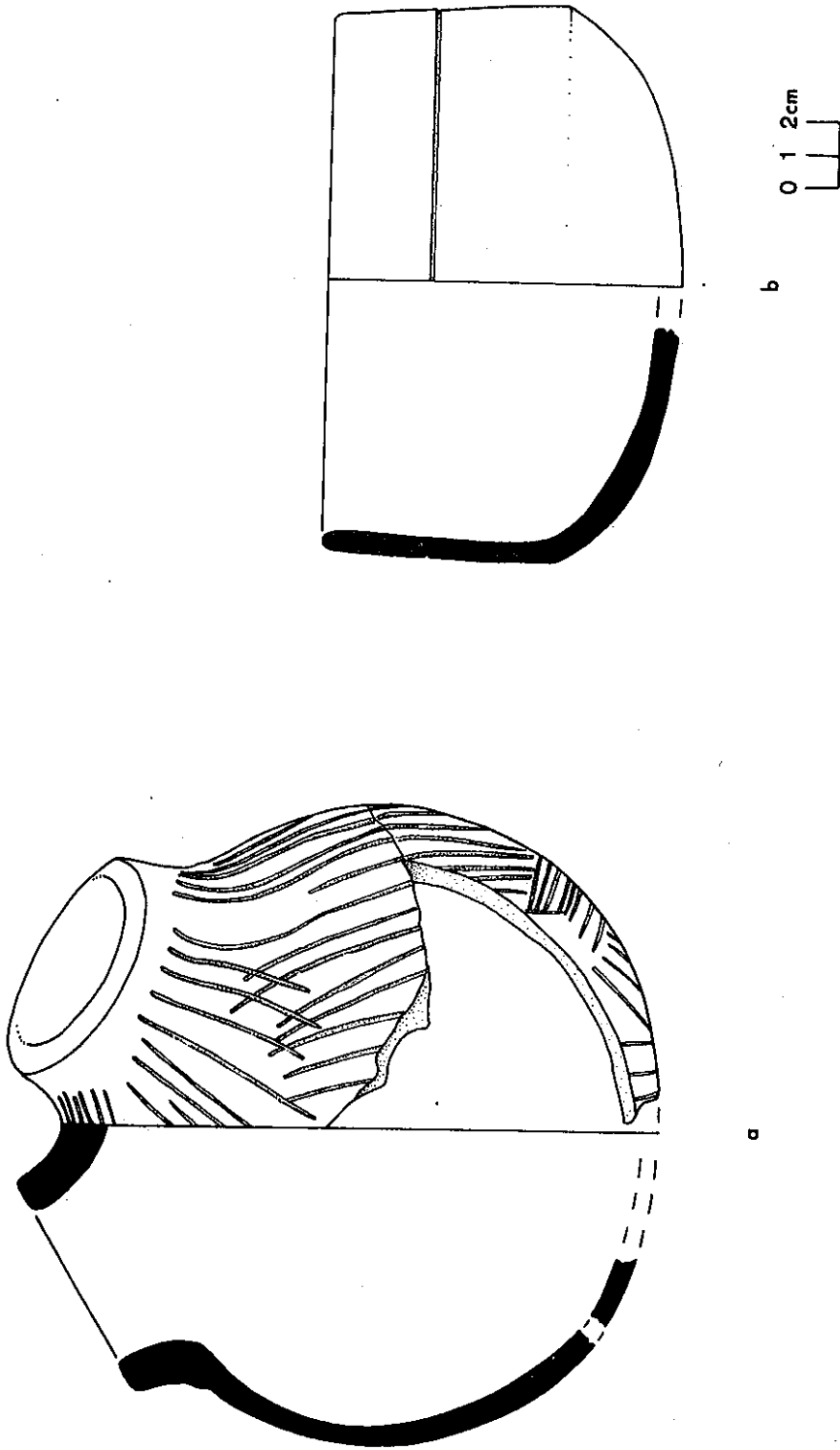


Fig. 9. Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic vessels from Santa Rita Corozal: a) Buyuk Striated: variety unspecified from Deposit 2E-1. b) Cubeta Incised: Ekolen variety from S.D. P21A-2.



Putting Together the Pieces

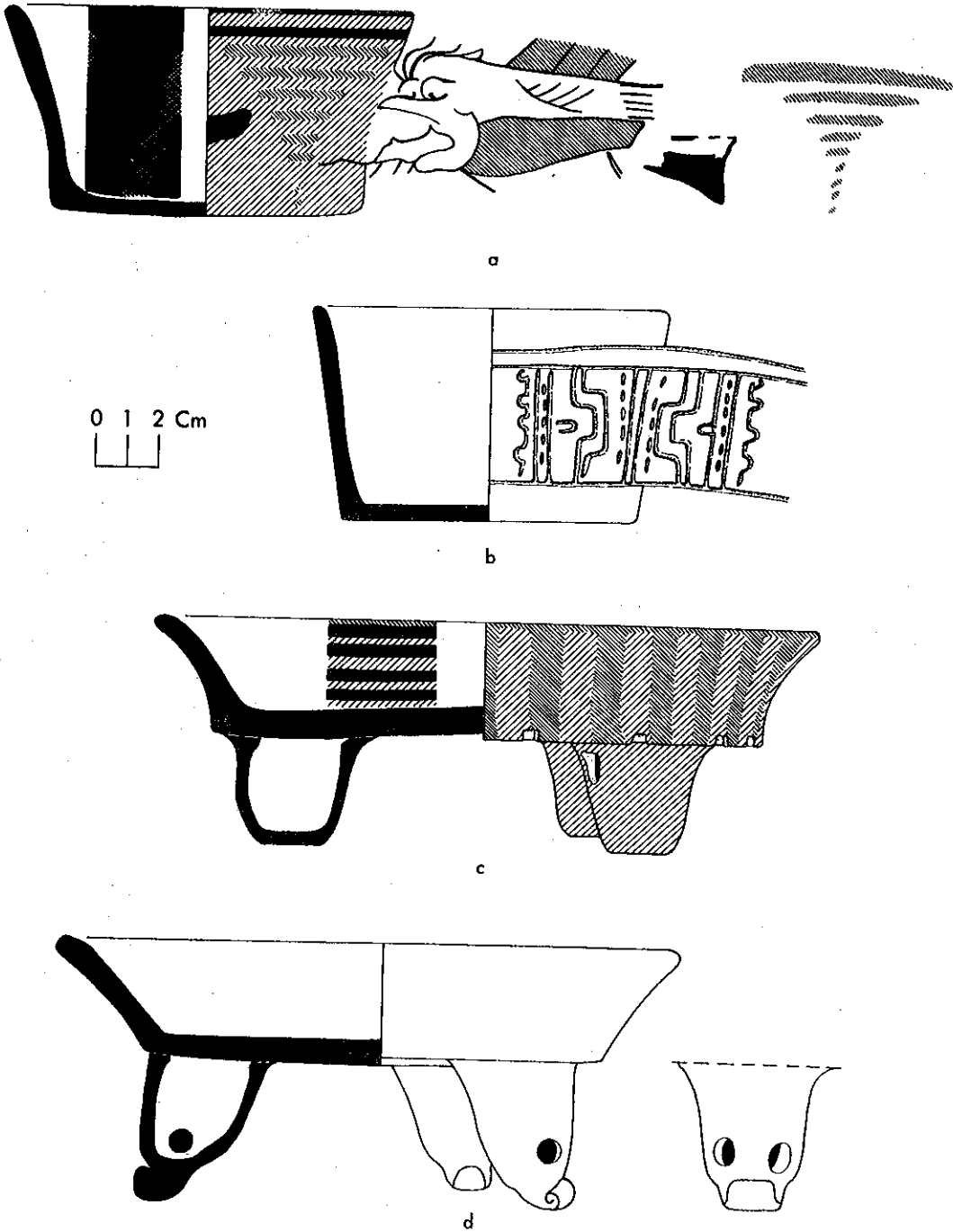


Fig. 10. Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic vessels from Tayasal: a) Danta Orange Polychrome: variety unspecified from Bu. T7B-2. b) Pepet Incised: variety unspecified from Bu. T30PP-1. c) Danta Orange Polychrome: variety unspecified from Bu. T7B-2. d) Augustine Red: Augustine variety from Bu. T9I-2.

either of local (Fig. 11b) or foreign (Plumbate) manufacture. A censer complex consists of filleted ollas and pedestaled vases (Figs. 11a and 11c). Late Postclassic burials in the Tayasal area were flexed and do not appear to have been accompanied by objects other than shell beads.

At Santa Rita Corozal, a new ceramic tradition appeared at the site (D. Chase 1982a, 1984). Its earlier facet shows some similarities to the Tulum (Paxbono) Red tradition, but its late facet manifestation is more derivative of Mayapan-like ceramics. Two, if not three, censer subcomplexes have been defined for Late Postclassic Santa Rita (D. Chase 1985:115-116): pedestaled and modeled dishes (Fig. 12c), effigy human censers, and modeled tripod ollas and cups. Three burial subcomplexes are represented at the site (D. Chase 1986: 357-362). Mass burials of more than one individual occur frequently; these are sometimes accompanied by effigy censer fragments or footed plates and bowls (Fig. 12b), redware effigy collared rim jars, and plainware ollas. Flexed burials of individuals on their sides also occur; these are sometimes accompanied by water jars and modeled red ware jars. The elite of Santa Rita, in contrast, were buried seated upright and usually without ceramic vessels, but often with other elaborate artifacts. Refuse deposits, probably from ceremonial contexts, contain a mixture of all known forms including censers, jars, and bowls (Fig. 12a); these also contain a significant amount of painted geometric decoration not found in other contexts at the site. The Late Postclassic cache subcomplex from Santa Rita Corozal is well known and focuses on modeled effigy figures or figurines (Fig. 13), usually encased in a lidded plainware olla (D. Chase 1985). A second cache subcomplex consists of a black tradeware cached beneath a wall. Whereas the Santa Rita Corozal Postclassic ceramics show strong ties to the northern lowlands, the Tayasal Postclassic ceramics show an indigenous development.

#### Historic Period

With the exception of one majolica sherd, no materials definitely attributable to the Spanish have been located at the site of Tayasal. However, ceramics equivalent to those found in the modern village of San Jose on the north shore of Lake Peten do occur archaeologically and are known as Chilo Unslipped. How much time depth may be ascribed to Chilo Unslipped is unknown at this time. In contrast, the Historic period at Santa Rita Corozal is well represented in that Spanish goods (majolica and olive jars) dating to the sixteenth century are found and abundant nineteenth century English ceramics are also present, paralleling the development of modern Corozal Town and the sugar industry of northern Belize.

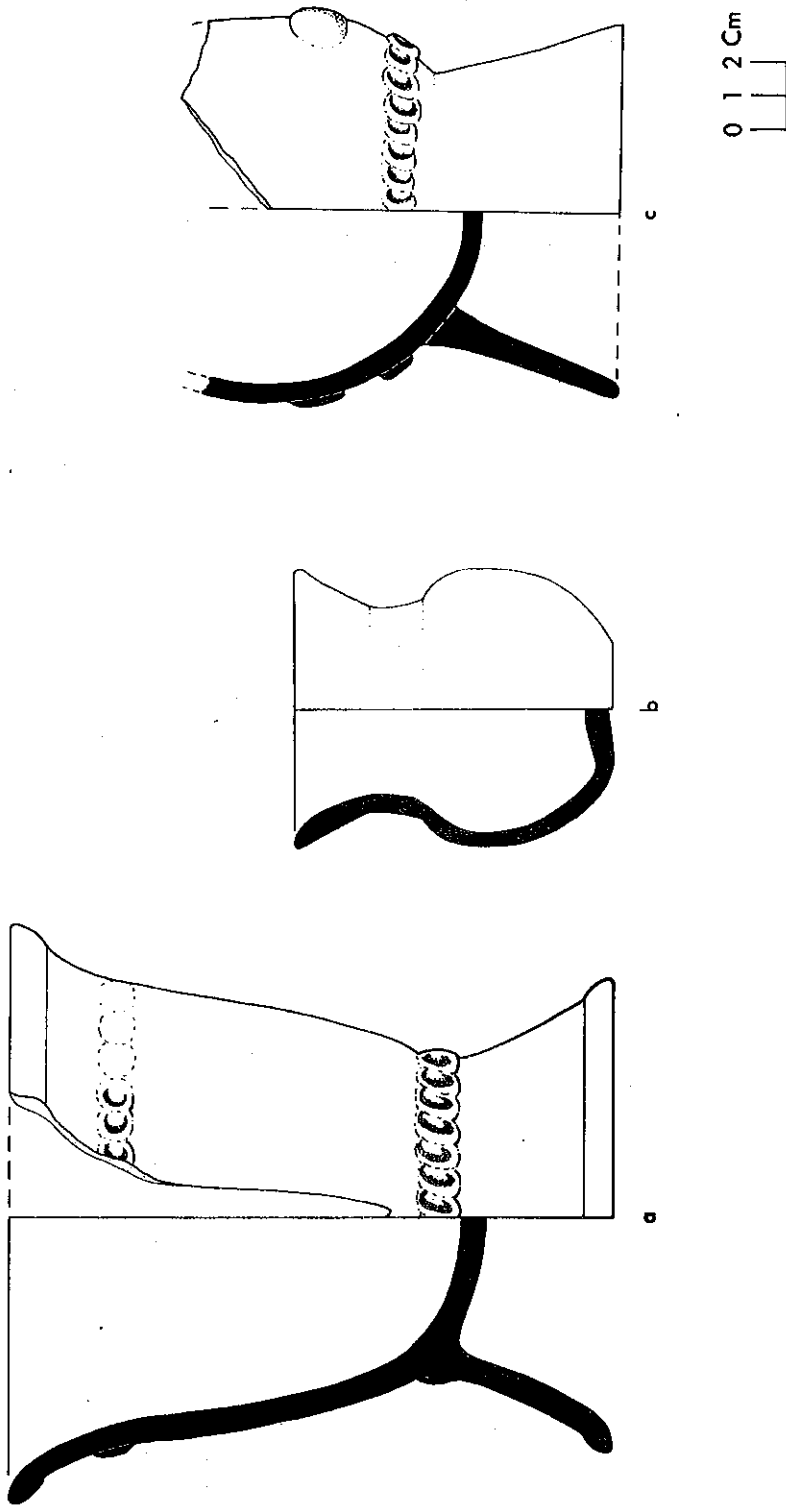
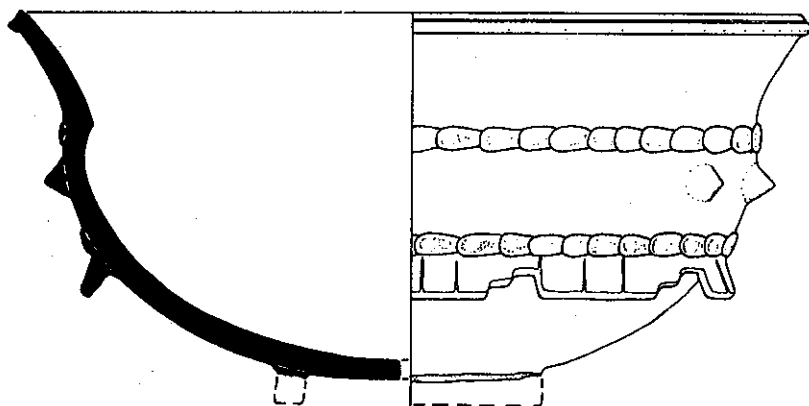
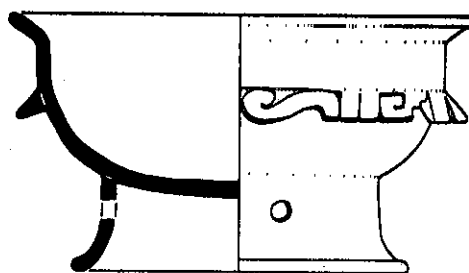
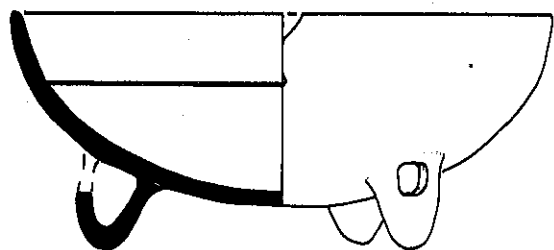


Fig. 11. Middle and Late Postclassic vessels from the Tayasal-Paxcaman zone: a) Puxteal Modeled: variety unspecified from P.D. T43A-1. b) Nohpek Unslipped: Nohpek variety from Bu. T9H-1. c) Puxteal Modeled: Puxteal variety from Deposit T31G-1.



0 1 2cm

Fig. 12. Middle and Late Postclassic vessels from Santa Rita Corozal: a) Rita Red: Rita variety from Deposit P6E-1. b) Kulel Modeled: Kulel variety from S.D. P37A-2. c) Pum Modeled: Pum variety from Deposit P6E-1.

## Putting Together the Pieces

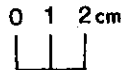
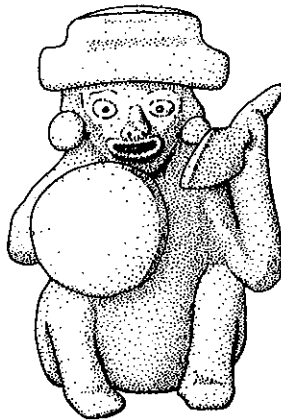


Fig. 13. Late Postclassic Cao Modeled: Cao variety cache figurine of a warrior from S.D. P37A-1 in Santa Rita Corozal Structure 183.

## CONCLUSIONS

This very brief presentation of known ceramic (and other) subcomplexes from Tayasal and Santa Rita points to broad similarities and differences. A general similarity, to the point of full ceramic sphere membership, is seen between the two ceramic sequences only during the Late Preclassic period. While the Early Classic period complexes differ, the extant burial subcomplexes indicate that the two regions were politically tied together.

The regionality of northern Belize, apparent in the divergent pottery traditions found at different sites, is evident during the Early Classic period and is well expressed by the Late Classic. In particular, Altun Ha (Pendergast 1979, 1982) shows a ceramic trajectory distinct from that at Santa Rita. Although noted as having had some kind of contact with Teotihuacan early in its history (Pendergast 1971), the published material from Altun Ha reveals little ceramic evidence of the kind termed "Teotihuacan influence" in central Peten; in fact, while Santa Rita and Tayasal are involved in a similar burial subcomplex showing these influences, Altun Ha appears to be developing what becomes the generalized early Late Classic (or Tepeu 1) bowl tradition that later

emerges in central Peten. Santa Rita Corozal never adopts this Saxche Orange bowl tradition, but Tayasal and most of central Peten do; thus it would appear that part of the explanation for the pottery transition from Tzakol to Tepeu forms in the Peten and the associated Maya hiatus is to be found in central Belize. While central Peten adopts, continues, and modifies what appears to be a Belizean legacy, Altun Ha continues along the regionalized path followed by most sites in northern Belize during the Late Classic period (see A. Chase 1986:121-124).

Other glaring questions emerge when the two sequences and their subcomplexes are compared. Why is there an emphasis on redwares at Preclassic Santa Rita Corozal to the virtual exclusion of creamwares and blackwares? Why are blackwares so much emphasized during the Early Classic period at Tayasal? Could the emphasis on these two colors, black and red, reflect other meanings - such as east and west in the Maya area or is this too far-fetched? The Protoclassic period in the Maya area is one that also demands more research. We have been looking for ties to the south, but given the highly visible role that Teotihuacan plays in the Early Classic Maya area, perhaps we should look north toward central Mexico and maybe to the valley of Oaxaca. Could the Protoclassic and Teotihuacan Early Classic florescence of the Maya be the result of trade competition between Teotihuacan and Monte Alban mixed together with a dose of indigenous Maya development?

Overall, the Santa Rita Corozal and Tayasal sequences emphasize internal developments with several exceptions. The Preclassic developments at both sites represent smooth trajectories. At Tayasal, what Protoclassic elements occur are fit into an existing framework much as the slightly later Teotihuacan elements that appear at the site. The real shift in Tayasal pottery traditions occurs in the transition from the Early Classic to the Late Classic period. At Santa Rita, the Protoclassic and Early Classic periods are characterized by a wealth of different fineware pottery, most of it introduced, at least initially, to the area. The transition from the Early Classic to Late Classic is a smooth one, and Santa Rita Corozal is totally outside of the Tepeu ceramic sphere. The Late and Terminal Classic developments at both sites are relatively smooth but the transition between the Classic and Postclassic periods is characterized by the appearance of new pottery in both regions. At Tayasal, this new pottery is established during the Early Postclassic and develops its own regional tradition which continues through the Late Postclassic period. At Santa Rita Corozal, the pottery is derivative of Mayapan and especially flourishes during the Late Postclassic with its own distinctive caching pattern. In terms of overall Maya development, both Santa Rita Corozal and Tayasal suggest

## Putting Together the Pieces

that the Early Classic and Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic periods are critical to understanding who the Maya were and what they became.

Further definition and consideration of ceramic subcomplexes will greatly aid in reconstructing Maya prehistory. Maya pottery exists within a behavioral context that is reflected in subcomplexes. Intersite comparisons are often restricted to general similarities through the use of such concepts as ceramic sphere or hidden because of the difficulties involved in type definitions by different researchers. Thus, to attempt to understand Maya behavior through ceramics mandates that we look for other avenues such as the use of the context in which special pottery assemblages occur. It is important first to understand each site and its sequence individually before pigeon-holing its ceramics in terms of other sequences. It is even more important to attempt to define how ceramics are specifically used and what behavior is associated with them, if possible. While these subcomplexes may be described in terms of their constituent types, it is clear that the form of the vessel is the most important attribute to the Maya of Santa Rita Corozal and Tayasal. The various forms that make up certain subcomplexes, when combined with their understood function and recovered placement, may allow the interpretation of "broader cultural interaction patterns" in the overall Maya region by pointing to differences and similarities in the contextual use of pottery.

## Acknowledgments

The research reported in this paper was supported through a large number of sources. The initial work at Tayasal was undertaken by the American Section of The University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. The final two seasons of research at Santa Rita Corozal were funded by the National Science Foundation through grants no. BNS-8318531 and no. BNS-8509304. Vessel illustrations shown in Figures 3, 5, 8a, 8b, 10 and 11 were prepared by Sarah J. Ruch; all others were done by D.Z. Chase.

## References

- BALL, J.W.  
1976 "Ceramic Sphere Affiliations of the Barton Ramie Ceramic Complexes," in Prehistoric Pottery Analysis and the Ceramics of Barton Ramie in the Belize Valley, by J.C. Gifford, pp. 323-30. Memoirs of the Peabody Museum, vol. 18 (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University).

1977 The Archaeological Ceramics of Becan, Campeche, Mexico, Middle American Research Institute Publication 43, (New Orleans: Tulane University).

CHASE, A.F.

1979 "Regional Development in the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone, El Peten, Guatemala: A Preliminary Statement," Ceramica de Cultura Maya 11:86-119.

1983 "A Contextual Consideration of the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone, El Peten, Guatemala," Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania.

1984 "The Ceramic Complexes of the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone," Ceramica de Cultura Maya 13:27-41.

1985a "Archaeology in the Maya Heartland: The Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone, Lake Peten, Guatemala," Archaeology 38(1):32-39.

1985b "Contextual Implications of Pictorial Vases from Tayasal, Peten," in Fourth Round Table, 1980: Vol. VI, ed. M.G. Robertson and E. Benson, pp. 193-201. (Precolumbian Art Research Institute: San Francisco).

1985c "Postclassic Peten Interaction Spheres: The View from Tayasal," in The Lowland Maya Postclassic, eds. A. Chase and P. Rice, pp. 184-205. (Austin: University of Texas Press).

1986 "Time Depth or Vacuum: The 11.3.0.0.0. Correlation and the Lowland Maya Postclassic," in Late Lowland Maya Civilization: Classic to Postclassic, eds. J.A. Sabloff and E.W. Andrews V., pp. 99-140. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).

CHASE, A.F., AND D.Z. CHASE

1983 La Ceramica de la Zona Tayasal-Paxcaman Lago Peten Itza, Guatemala (Philadelphia: The University Museum).

CHASE, D.Z.

1981 "The Maya Postclassic at Santa Rita Corozal," Archaeology 34(1):25-33.

1982a "Spatial and Temporal Variability in Postclassic Northern Belize," Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania.

1982b "The Ikilik Ceramic Complex at Nohmul, Northern Belize," Ceramica de Cultura Maya 12:71-81.



Putting Together the Pieces

- 1983 "Perceiving the Past: Typologies and the Preclassic Period in the Maya Lowlands," paper presented at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago.
- 1984 "The Late Postclassic Pottery of Santa Rita Corozal, Belize: The Xabalxab Ceramic Complex," Ceramica de Cultura Maya 13:18-26.
- 1985 "Gained .But Not Forgotten: Late Postclassic Archaeology and Ritual at Sata Rita Corozal, Belize," in The Lowland Maya Postclassic, eds. A. Chase and P. Rice, pp. 104-125. (Austin: University of Texas Press).
- 1986 "Social and Political Organization in the Land of Cacao and Honey: Correlating the Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Postclassic Lowland Maya," in Late Lowland Maya Civilization: Classic to Postclassic, eds. J.A. Sabloff and E.W. Andrews V., pp. 347-377. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).
- CHASE, D.Z., AND A.F. CHASE  
1986 Offerings to the Gods: Maya Archaeology at Santa Rita Corozal (Orlando: University of Central Florida).
- CULBERT, T.P.  
1977 "Early Maya Development at Tikal, Guatemala," in The Origins of Maya Civilization, ed. R.E.W. Adams, pp. 27-43. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).
- KOSAKOWSKY, L.J.  
1982 "A Preliminary Summary of Formative Ceramic Variability at Cuello, Belize," Ceramica de Cultura Maya 12:26-42.
- PENDERGAST, D.M.  
1971 "Evidence of Early Teotihuacan-Lowland Maya Contact at Altun Ha," American Antiquity 36(4):455-460.
- 1979 Excavations at Altun Ha, Belize, 1964-1970: Volume 1 (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum).
- 1982 Excavations at Altun Ha, Belize, 1964-1970: Volume 2 (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum).
- PRING, D.C.  
1976 "Outline of the Northern Belize Ceramic Sequence," Ceramica de Cultura Maya 9:11-42.

A.F. Chase and D.Z. Chase

WILLEY, G.R., T.P. CULBERT, AND R.E.W. ADAMS  
1967 "Maya Lowland Ceramics: A Report from the 1965  
Guatemala City Conference," American Antiquity  
32(3):289-315.