



Figure 1. Map of the Guatemalan highlands with the Huista and Acatec Maya region and major sites mentioned in the text.

Late Postclassic Period Ceramics of the Western Highlands, Guatemala

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This report describes the ceramics of the Late Postclassic or Protohistoric period (AD 1200 to 1500) uncovered in a recent archaeological investigation in the western Maya highlands. The Proyecto Arqueológico de la Región Huista-Acateco, directed by the author, investigated the region in the Cuchumatán Mountains currently occupied by the Huista and Acatec Maya (Figure 1), documenting 150 archaeological sites and an occupation sequence spanning the Terminal Preclassic to Late Postclassic/Protohistoric periods, AD 100 to 1525 (see Borgstede 2004). The modern towns of Jacaltenango and San Miguel Acatán are the center of the region.

The ceramics described here are from the Late Postclassic period, also known as the “Protohistoric” period in the Guatemalan highlands due to the incipient Spanish invasion and existing ethnohistoric records of the period. The seminal ceramic report on this time period is Robert Wauchope’s 1970 publication, “Protohistoric Pottery of the Guatemala Highlands.” The current study attempts to augment and refine Wauchope’s interpretation, specifically for the western Guatemalan highlands. Wauchope synthesized most studies prior to 1970, and comparative examples in the following descriptions are drawn from Wauchope as well as more recent studies, including Arnauld

1986, Culbert 1965, Ichon 1987, Nance 2003a, Nance 2003b, and Weeks 1983.

The Late Postclassic period remains one of the most intensely studied in the Maya highlands, in terms of archaeology and ethnohistory. The existence of competing Maya kingdoms, including those of the K’iche’, the Kaqchikel, and the Mam, coupled with the persistence of written documentation immediately prior to, during, and after the Spanish invasion, provide the Protohistoric period with an abundance of anthropological data for understanding this complex era. Archaeological evidence, particularly ceramics, has played a role in interpreting the cultures, histories, and structures of these societies. Archaeological investigations have been carried out at most of the known major Late Postclassic centers—Utatlán (Q’umarkaj), Iximché, Zaculeu, and Mixco Viejo—as well as in regional centers (e.g., Robinson 1998) and by regional surveys (e.g., Borgstede 2004; Braswell 1996; Hill 1996; Lowe 1959).

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first is to present descriptions of the Late Postclassic period ceramics of the Huista-Acatec Maya region. Descriptions include forms, decoration, paste types, and comparative examples from elsewhere in the Maya highlands. The majority of comparative examples derive

Type: Variety	Surface Decoration	Forms	Paste	Quantities (n, %)
Ajul Polychrome: Ajul variety	Thick black lines, usually 2-3 horizontal lines sub-rim, red rim or red paint on interior	Hemispherical bowls	Coarse to medium, with small calcite inclusions	117, 2.75
Ajul Polychrome: Cuchumatan variety	Thick black lines, red rim or red paint on interior	Hemispherical bowls	Sandy orange	21, 0.5
Ajul Polychrome: Nupup variety	Black outlines defining red zones on cream or unslipped (Black-outlined Polychrome)	Bowls, constricted-neck bowls	Variable, often compact with small calcite inclusions	11, 0.25
Ajul Polychrome: Huista variety	Usually exterior, red and black zoned, lines and dots, on a lightly polished buff, brown, or white surface; zoned; crosshatching and elongated triangles often are sub-rim	Bowls, small jars, jars; usually thin	Light red and brown, small calcite inclusions	32, 0.75
Ajul Polychrome: Paiconob variety	Always exterior, black and red lines, curvi- and recti-linear, on brown to white/cream surface (Dull Paint Polychrome)	Tall-neck jars, strap handles	Variable or compact, often with clay or calcite inclusions	74, 1.75
Ajul Polychrome: Tenam variety	Highly polished, red and black designs on glossy white background (Bright Paint Polychrome)	Tall-neck jars, strap handles, constricted-neck bowls	Compact, with small calcite inclusions	16, 0.37
Ixtenam Red: Ixtenam variety	Uneven vibrant red on gray on interior and exterior	Small bowls	Sandy or orange chalky	101, 2.37
Pueblo Viejo Red: Pueblo Viejo variety	Light red paint on gray surface	Bowls with flaring walls, flat-base bowls	Gray paste with fine inclusions	80, 1.87
Conhob Thin: Conhob variety	Brown, smoothed and/or polished, occasional red-orange paint on exterior	Vertical-neck jars, vertical-wall bowls, shoulder-grooved bowls, incurved-wall bowls, occasional strap handles	Variable, light color, small calcite inclusions, some mica inclusions	313, 7.37
Huitzobal Orange: Bi Tenam variety	Uneven orange/red exterior and interior, polished and/or smoothed	Small bowls, hemispherical bowls, constricted-neck bowls with flaring necks	Soft and chalky, small quartz inclusions	535, 12.61
Yultenam Brown: unspecified variety	Brown to dark red with polished surface on interior and exterior	Dishes with flat bases, bowls with incurved walls and medial groove	Variable, usually with dark core	254, 5.99
Acateco Impressed: Acateco variety	Very fine "net" impressions	Large jars	Fairly coarse with small calcite inclusions	11, 0.25
Acateco Impressed: unspecified variety	Crosshatch or "mat" design on exterior surface	Large jars	Variable, some mica	27, 0.62
Buena Vista Waxy: Abak variety	Medium to light striations, all in the same direction	Bowls, constricted-neck bowls, flaring rims, jars with incurved sides and vertical necks, strap handles	Waxy, smooth, porous, friable, medium to large calcite inclusions	323, 7.62
Buena Vista Waxy: unspecified variety	Unslipped, often burnt exterior, occasional smoothing	Bowls, constricted-neck bowls, flaring rims, jars with incurved sides and vertical necks, strap handles	Waxy, smooth, porous, friable, medium to large calcite inclusions	2041, 48.06
San Antonio Striated: unspecified variety	Deep or shallow striations, random directions, crosscutting (but not crosshatching)	Small and medium-sized bowls, jars with out-flaring necks, jars with low vertical necks	Compact and highly fired, calcite and mica inclusions	292, 6.87

Figure 2. Late Postclassic ceramics of the Huista-Acatec region of the western Maya highlands, Guatemala: summary table.

from the Guatemalan highlands—western and central—the areas to which the Huista-Acatec region had the closest ties during the Late Postclassic period. Ceramics from other periods (Classic and Terminal Classic) in the Huista-Acatec region are not included here (for summary descriptions, see Borgstede 2004). The second purpose for this study is to discuss a number of implications of the ceramic typology. Because Wauchope had very little material with which to draw conclusions about the far western highlands in 1970, this study will expand upon his typology for this region and complement his study by presenting a number of new types found in the Huista-Acatec region. In general Wauchope’s seminal study has successfully stood the test of time, but this study augments his work.

Synthesis of Ceramic Descriptions with Comparisons

The Late Postclassic ceramics of the Huista-Acatec region are presented in a manner similar to that of Culbert (1965). This includes: 1) description of the ceramic, including type-variety name, surface decoration, forms, paste, and other relevant distinguishing criteria; 2) comparative material; and 3) comments, when appropriate. General comments are reserved for the discussion following the descriptions. The type-variety system was used for the typology following convention in Maya archaeology (Gifford 1960), despite questions of its utility in the Maya area in general (e.g., Hammond 1972) as well as in the highlands specifically (Pofoe de Hatch 1997). Given that this is the initial typology presented for this region, a Late Postclassic period ceramic “complex,” in the specific sense developed by Gifford (1976), must await further exploration and elaboration of the ceramics in the region. Comparative material derives from published sources, primarily in the Guatemalan highlands to which the Huista-Acatec material is most closely related, but some comparisons are drawn from published material from the Chiapas Highlands of Mexico. Some published material is not type-variety, representative of an earlier tradition in Maya archaeology. A summary table is provided (Figure 2). Figures provide the most illustrative examples of each type for comparative purposes.

Polychromes

Ajul Polychrome: Ajul variety (Figure 3). Hemispherical bowls with a small diameter, usually 12-18 cm. Decoration is on the interior of the bowl and consists

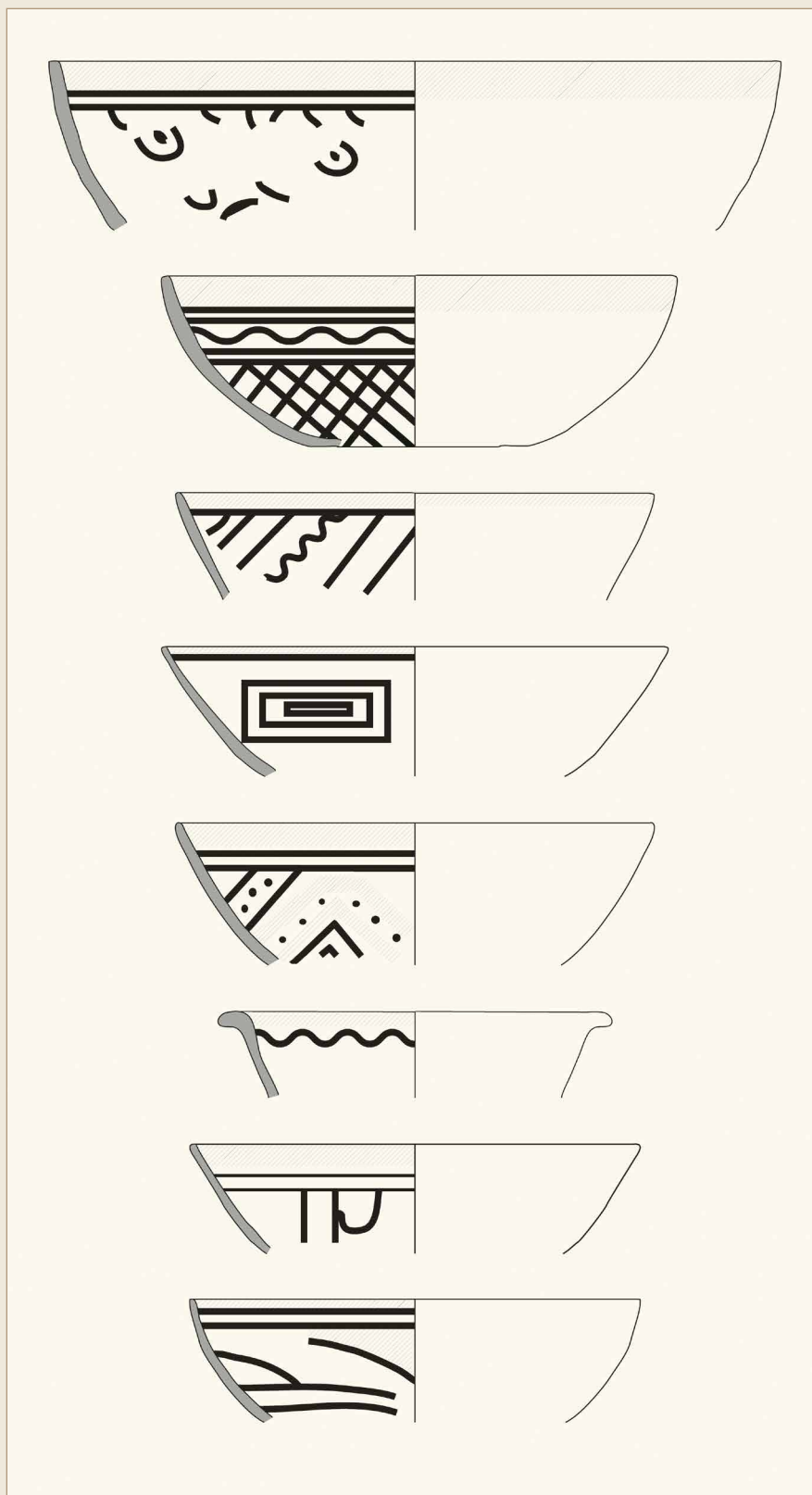


Figure 3. Ajaul Polychrome: Ajul variety.

of fairly thick black lines. Two or three of these lines are located sub-rim parallel to the rim. The rim itself is painted red. The background color ranges from buff to brown to white. Paste is variable, from coarse to medium, often with small calcite inclusions. As described by Wauchope (1970:112-114), these are “Hemispherical Bowls,” which he felt were produced in a single workshop (possibly in San Rafael Petzal of the western Guatemalan highlands) due to their uniformity. In the Huista-Acatec region, they are more variable than Wauchope described. Similar hemispherical bowls were described by Weeks (1983:174) for Chisalin—“Sipaca Polychrome: variety unspecified”—and by Woodbury and Trik (1953:196) from Zaculeu as a “bowl similar to Chinautla Polychrome.”

Ajul Polychrome: Cuchumatán variety (Figure 4). A variety of Hemispherical Bowls that is similar in form and size to the Ajul variety, but differing in paste. The Cuchumatán variety is made of a distinctive orange, sandy paste. Rims are painted a dark red, usually with a horizontal black line immediately below the rim, often on a white slip. All designs are on the interior. This variety was found exclusively in the Huista region.

Ajul Polychrome: Nupup variety (Figure 5). Surface decoration consists of black outlining of red zones on a cream or unslipped surface. Forms are primarily small to medium bowls, usually with constricted necks (not hemispherical bowls). Paste is variable, but often compact with small calcite inclusions. This variety is very similar to Wauchope’s (1970:114-115) “Black-outlined or chocolate-brown-outlined red-on-cream.” The Nupup variety’s colors are always black, however, with no fading to chocolate or brown. Wauchope describes only a single example of this type—from the Antigua valley in the central highlands. In addition he suggests that this is a version of Polychrome very similar to “Marihua Red-on-Buff” from El Salvador (see Haberland 1964) and associated with the Pipil expansion during the Late Postclassic period. In the Chiapas highlands, “Huistan Hard: Huistan variety” (see Culbert 1965:72, Figure 34) is also a red-on-buff, but lacks the black outlines of Wauchope’s and the Huista-Acatec versions.

Ajul Polychrome: Huista variety (Figure 6). Decorative designs are on

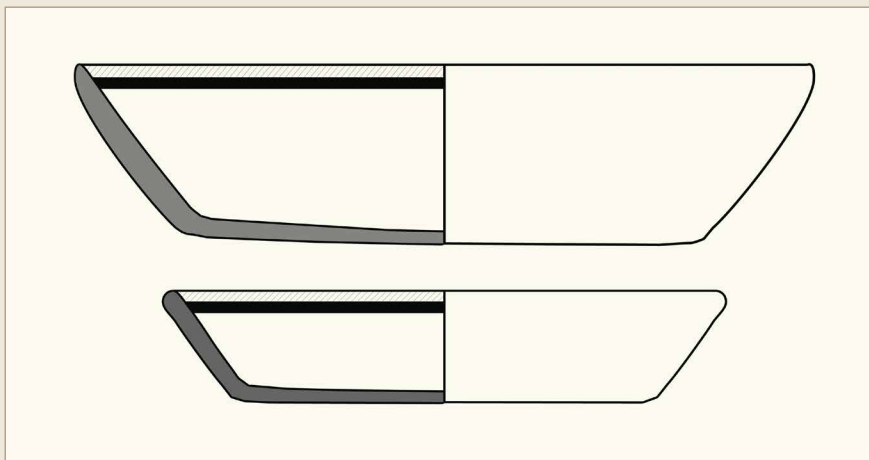


Figure 4. Ajul Polychrome: Cuchumatán variety.

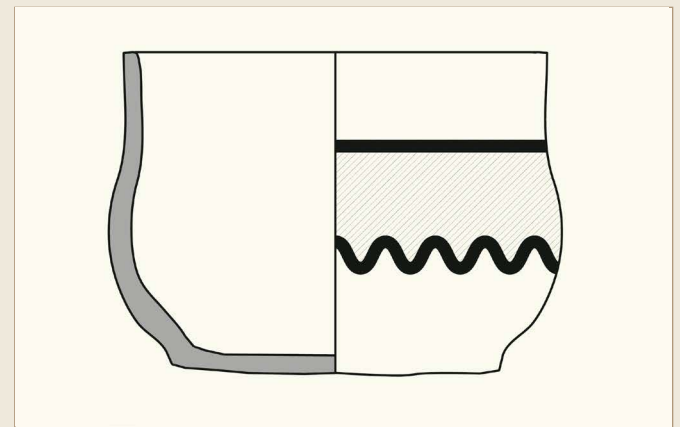


Figure 5. Ajul Polychrome: Nupup variety.

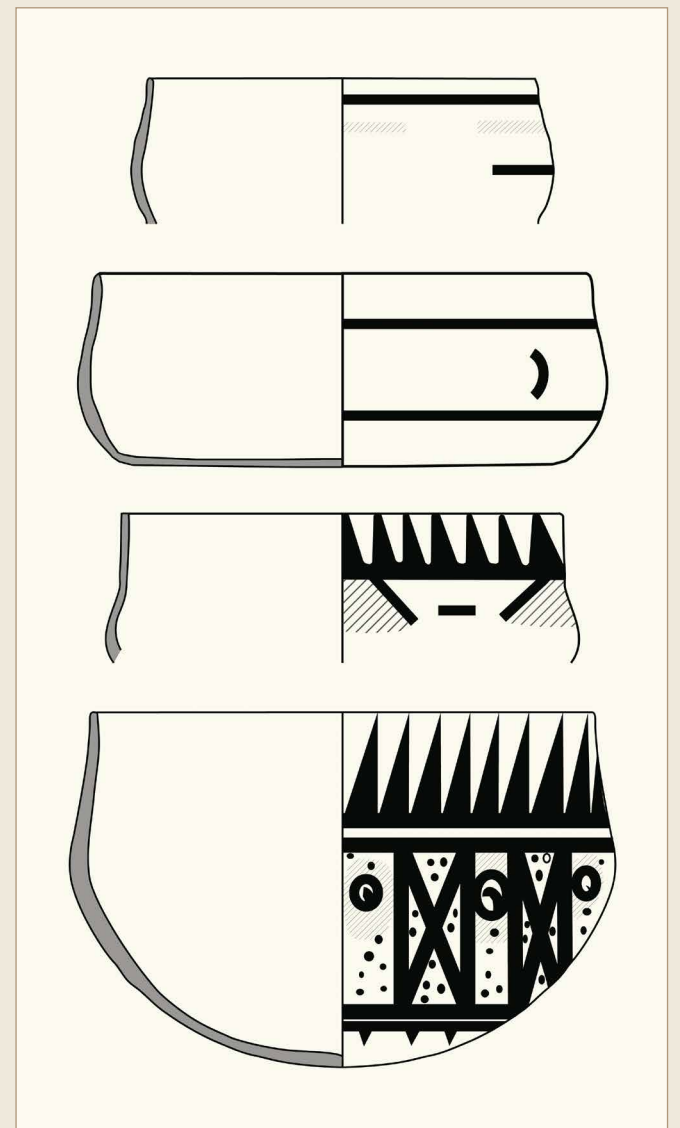


Figure 6. Ajul Polychrome: Huista variety.

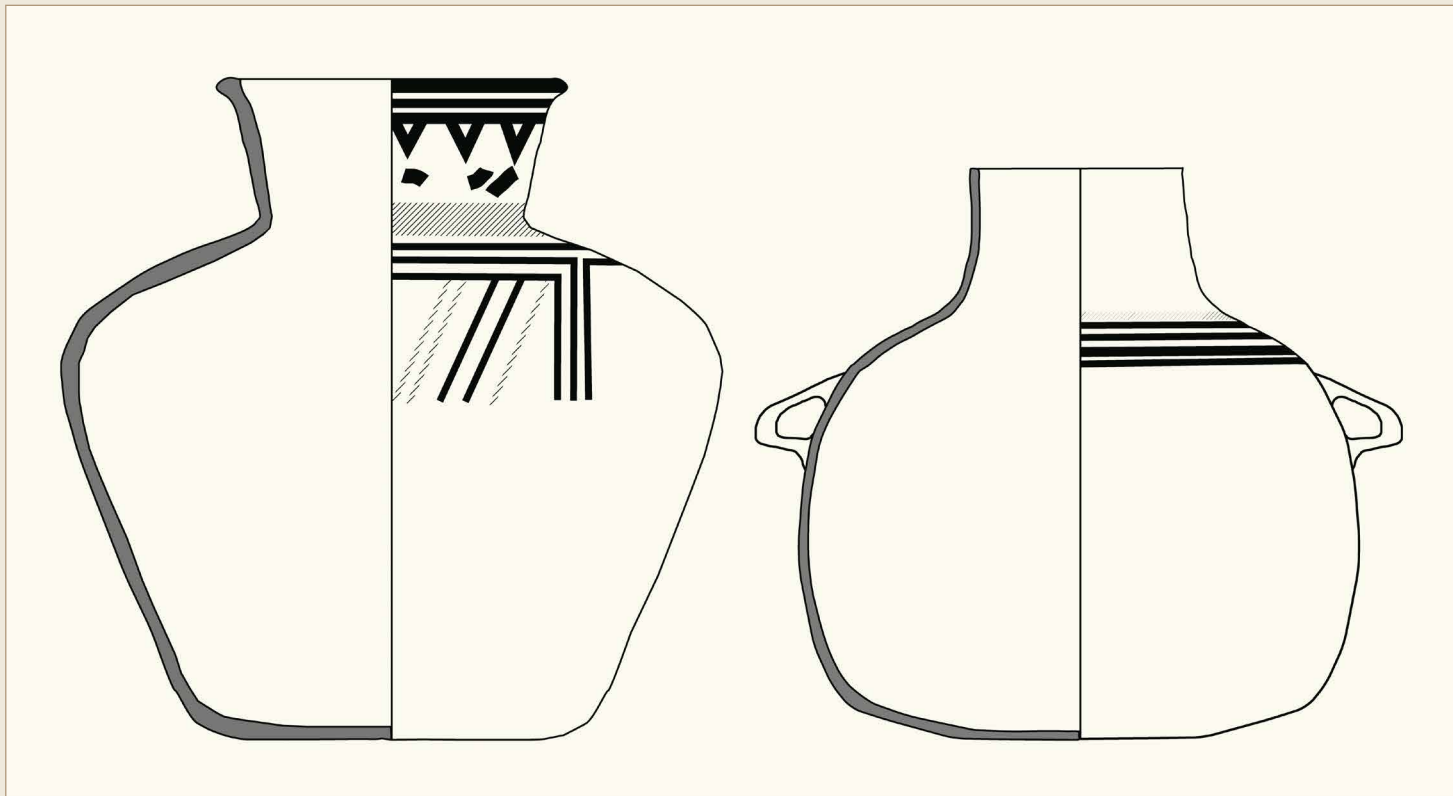


Figure 7. Ajul Polychrome: Paiconob variety.

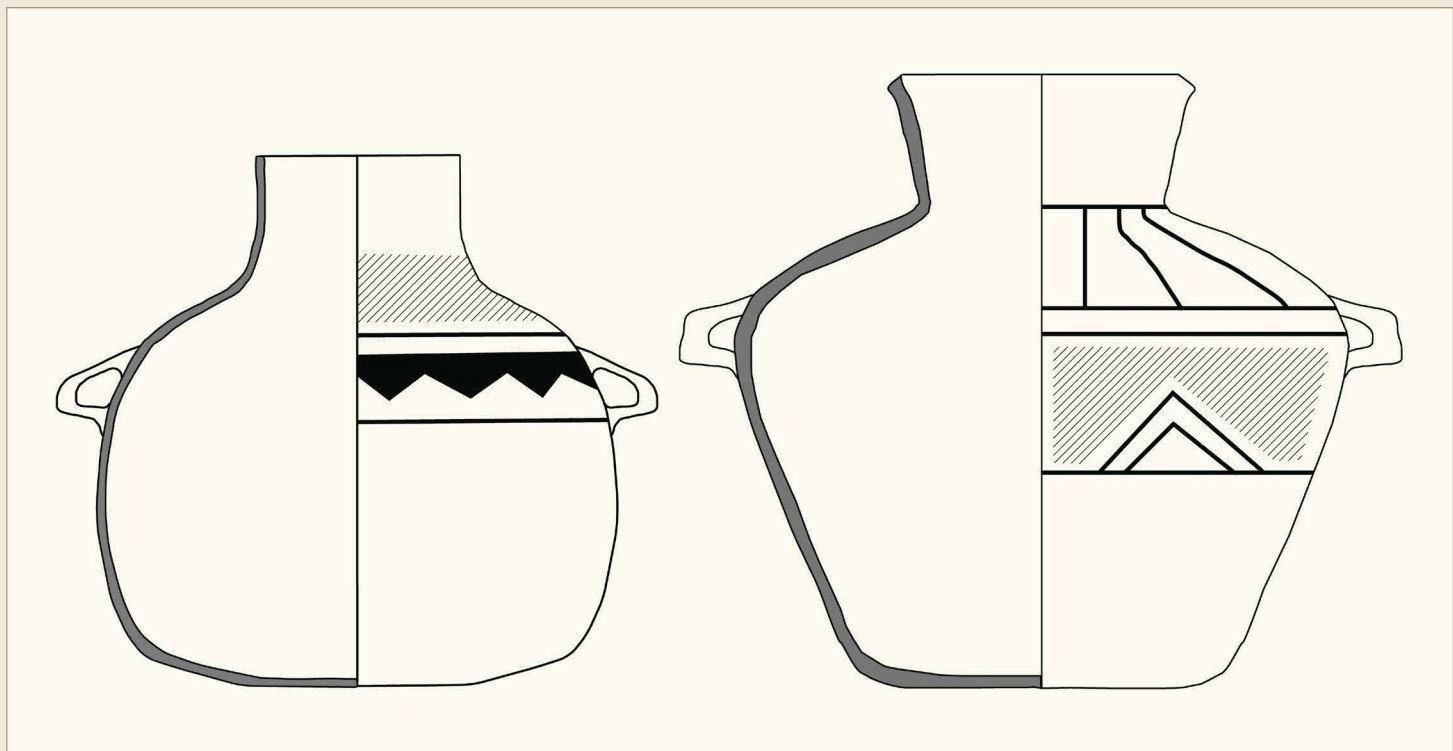


Figure 8. Ajul Polychrome: Tenam variety.

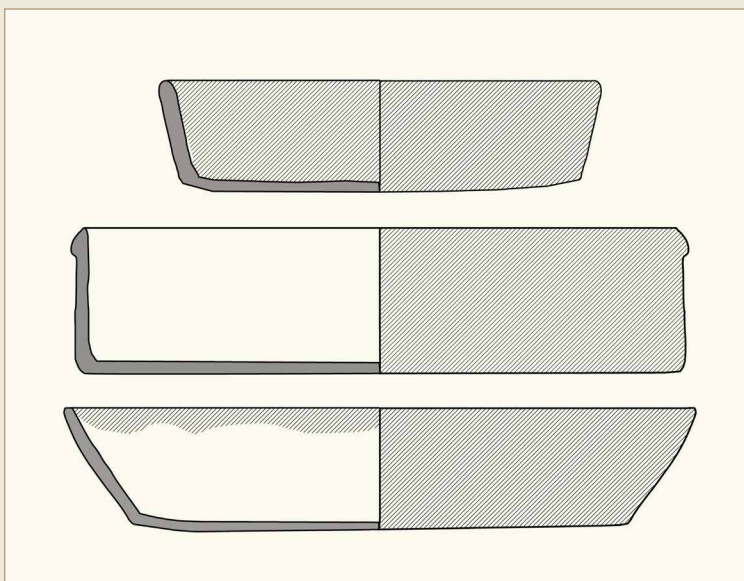


Figure 9. Ixtenam Red: Ixtenam variety.

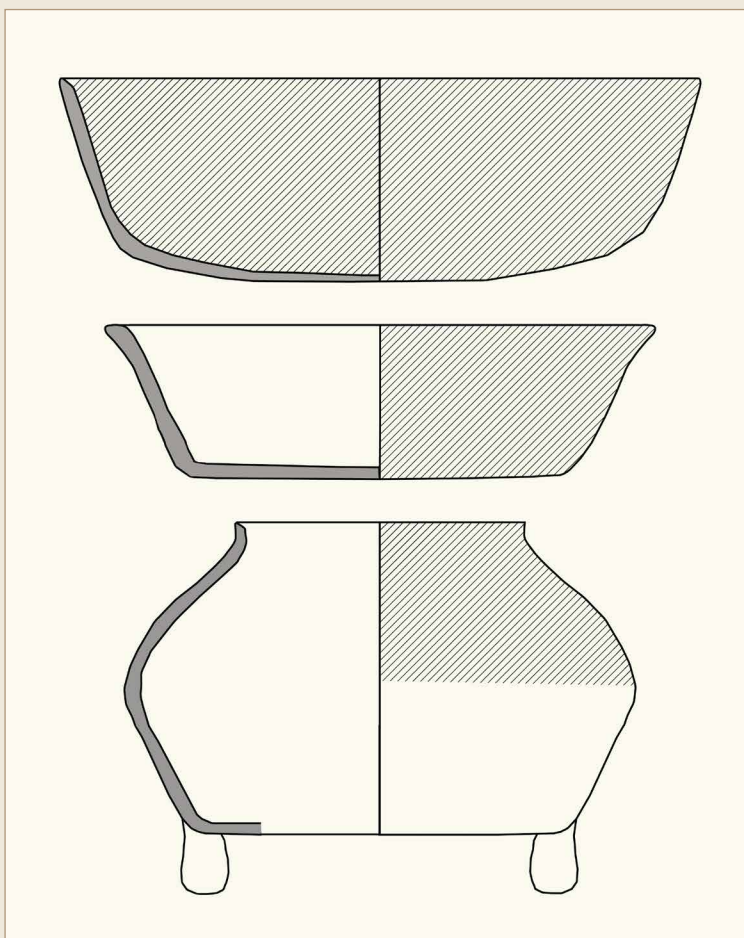


Figure 10. Pueblo Viejo Red: Pueblo Viejo variety.

the exterior and consist of red zones, black lines, and black dots on a lightly polished buff, brown, or cream surface. The designs are usually zoned, often with crosshatching. Elongated triangles hang sub-rim. Forms consist of bowls with curved sides and curved base (often with a slightly constricted neck), small jars with vertical necks and curved sides, and jars with vertical necks. All forms are relatively thin. Paste is usually light red and brown with small calcite inclusions. The decoration and forms are fairly uniform in all examples. While closely related to other red/black/cream polychromes, this variety was not described by Wauchope (1970). Nance (2003b:Figure 6.20b) illustrated a similar pattern for a vessel from Iximche, occurring in a category he terms “Orange on Gray-Buff.”

Ajul Polychrome: Paiconob variety (Figure 7). Surface decorations are always on the exterior and include black and red designs (occasionally only black lines), both curvilinear and rectilinear, on a brown to white/cream surface. Paint is dull rather than glossy. Pastes are variable, but usually compact, often with clay or calcite inclusions. Forms include tall-necked jars with strap handles, occasionally with interior-folded rims. According to Wauchope (1970:108-110), these are the “Dull Paint Style” polychromes. They are found primarily in the northern part of the Maya highlands—the northern part of the central highlands (El Quiche and Huehuetenango) and the northern highlands (Alta and Baja Verapaz) (Wauchope 1970:110). Examples were also found at Nebaj (Becquelin 2001:Figure 99) and in Chiapas at Lagartero (“cerámica roja oscura y negro/crema” [Rivero Torres 1997:230]) and in the upper Tributaries of the Grijalva Basin (Lowe 1959:Figures 32d-g, 55a-c).

Ajul Polychrome: Tenam variety (Figure 8). In contrast to the previous examples, decorations on the Tenam variety are glossy or bright. These are highly polished with red and black on a glossy white/cream background. Black designs are curvilinear and rectilinear as well, and enclose red-painted zones. Forms are similar to the Paiconob variety: tall jars with constricted necks and strap handles. Paste types are compact, often with small calcite inclusions. According to Wauchope (1970:110-112), these were the “Bright Paint Style” polychromes which are found primarily in the southern part of the Guatemalan highlands, although never in great amounts. The Tenam variety was also found at Iximche (Nance 2003b:179) and, more frequently, at Mixco Viejo (Navarrete 1961:13-15). At Iximche, for example, Nance described a “Black and Red on White” as “...well-finished (slipped and polished) on both surfaces and manifests a well-executed polychrome design on the exterior surface” (Nance 2003b:156). It is probable that “Brown-Black on Buff” from Iximche (Nance 2003b:155, Figure 6.22b) and “Ixcomal Black on White” from Chisalin (Weeks 1983:177-178) are also closely related examples.

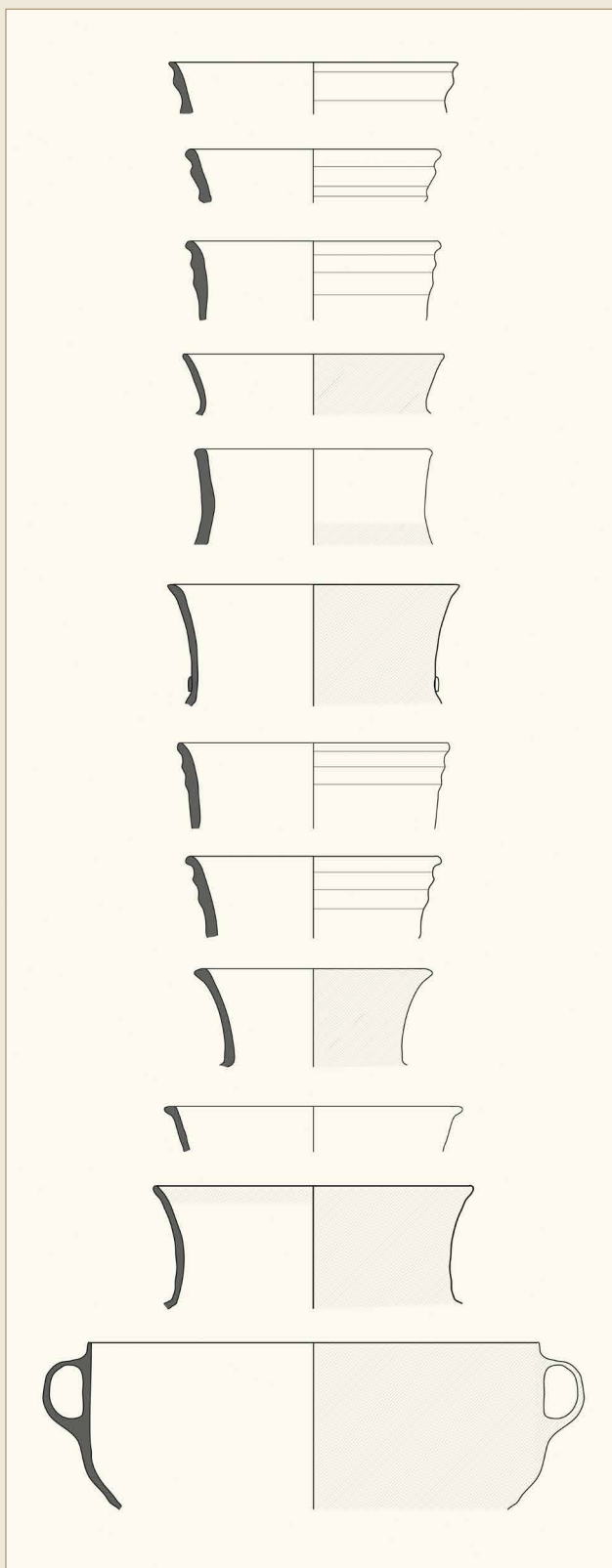


Figure 11. Conhob Thin: Conhob variety.

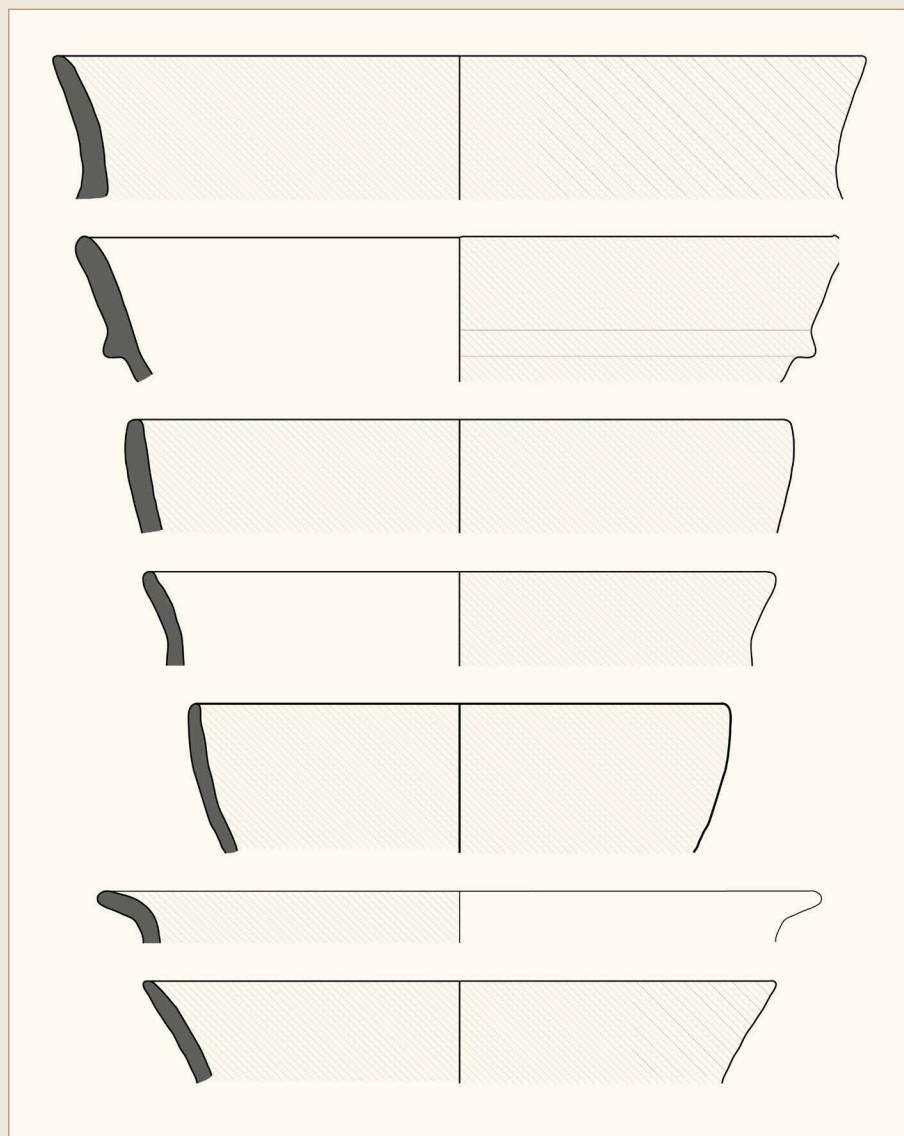


Figure 12. Huitzobal Orange: Bi Tenam variety.

Monochromes

Ixtenam Red: Ixtenam variety (Figure 9). Surface decoration includes a vibrant red paint (7.5YR5/8-red) applied unevenly over the interior and exterior vessel surfaces. Forms are small bowls—either hemispherical or with vertical walls. Paste is gray and sandy with quartz inclusions or orange and chalky. Wauchope (1970:103-107) grouped all monochrome ceramics into a single, inclusive category—“Monochrome red, tan, or brown”—which probably encompasses this and a number of other varieties.

Pueblo Viejo Red: Pueblo Viejo variety (Figure 10). Surface decoration is a light red paint on a light gray surface on both the interior and exterior. Sometimes red paint appears only above the vessel shoulder. Forms consist of bowls with slightly flaring walls and bowls with a flat base, constricted necks, and hollow, ovoid feet. Paste is gray and fine, with calcite inclusions.

This is probably related to “cerámica rojo guinda/blanco” at Lagartero (Rivero Torres 1997:Figure 16) and the “Red and Buff Cylindrical-footed Tripod bowl” and “Red and Buff Bulbous-footed Tripod bowl” at Zaculeu (Woodbury and Trik 1953:164, 167). Examples were also found at Tajumulco (Dutton and Hobbs 1943:96).

Polished

Conhob Thin: Conhob variety (Figure 11). All examples are very thin (3–4 mm body, slightly thicker at neck/shoulder), with forms of vertical-neck jars, vertical-wall bowls, shoulder-grooved bowls, and incurved-wall bowls. The jars occasionally have strap handles and/or one to three shallow grooves around the neck, shoulder, or sub-rim. Color varies from brown to dark orange, and all are smoothed/polished. Pastes are variable, but usually compact with small calcite inclusions. Occasionally mica inclusions are found. At Iximche, these are probably “Brown Slipped and Polished” and “Red Slipped and Polished” (Nance 2003b:137-142) and closely related to “Brown Utility” and “Red Utility” (Nance 2003b:125-128). Nance (2003b:128) states that the Red is usually thinner than the Brown, although it is possible that these are the same ceramic type, just with slightly different colors due to firing or clays. Forms are similar throughout. At Mixco Viejo, “Roja Pulida” (Navarrete 1961:11-12) is a related type, also colored brown to red. At Zaculeu, these were characterized as “Cinnamon” (Woodbury and Trik 1953:174-175) and usually contained cremations.

Huitzobal Orange: Bi Tenam variety (Figure 12). An uneven orangish-red color with a smoothed/polished surface on interior and exterior. Forms include small bowls, often hemispherical, with a medial groove, and constricted-neck bowls with flaring necks and slightly flaring rims. Paste is soft and chalky with some small quartz inclusions, with occasional darker pastes. These are related to the “Orange Polished” found at Iximche (Nance 2003b:174) and “Orange-Red” at Zaculeu (Woodbury and Trik 1953:176-177).

Yultenam Brown: unspecified variety (Figure 13). This ceramic type has a brown to dark red color with a polished surface, usually interior and exterior. Forms include dishes with flat bases and slightly flaring walls and bowls with incurved walls and a medial groove, occasionally with a medial flange. Paste is variable but usually compact or friable with dark cores. These probably relate to “Jorronilaja Brown: Unspecified variety” at Chisalin (Weeks 1983:163-164), although the Chisalin examples have mica temper inclusions. These are probably also related to the “Polished Brown” at Zaculeu (Woodbury and Trik 1953:124), although it appeared slightly earlier there. In the Antigua Valley, Yuletenam Brown is similar to Yepocapa Red (Sharer et al. n.d.).

Other

Acateco Impressed: Acateco variety (Figure 14). Surface decoration is a very fine, net-like impression set into the wet clay and then fired. Forms are variable but include large jars. Pastes are fairly coarse with small calcite inclusions. An example was found at Iximche (Nance 2003b:164, Figure 6.27a) and named “Zoned Crosshatched Incised,” and at Zaculeu (Woodbury and Trik 1953:Figure 286a).

Acateco Impressed: unspecified variety (Figure 15). Surface decoration is a crosshatch, probably of a basket impression, larger and more crude than the

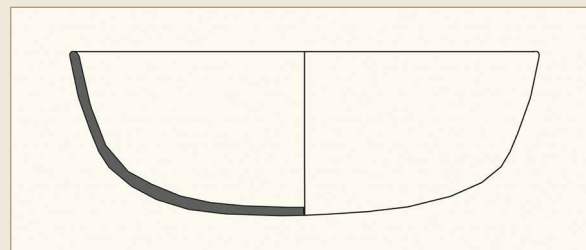


Figure 13. Yultenam Brown: unspecified variety.

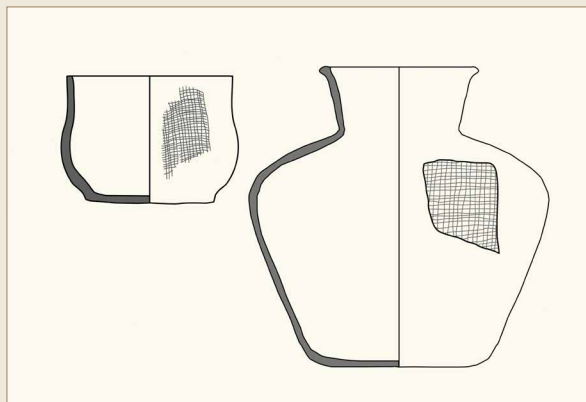


Figure 14. Acateco Impressed: Acateco variety.

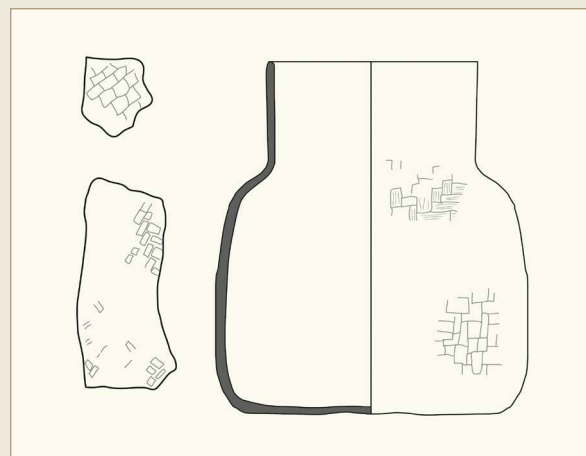


Figure 15. Acateco Impressed: unspecified variety.

Acateco variety, set into wet clay on the exterior surface. Forms are large jars. Paste types are variable and usually coarse, and there are examples with mica inclusions. Examples were found in Alta Verapaz (Arnauld 1986:Figure 212a) and at Zaculeu (Woodbury and Trik 1953:Figure 286d).

Buena Vista Waxy: Abak variety (Figure 16). The Buena Vista type is a distinctive clay type

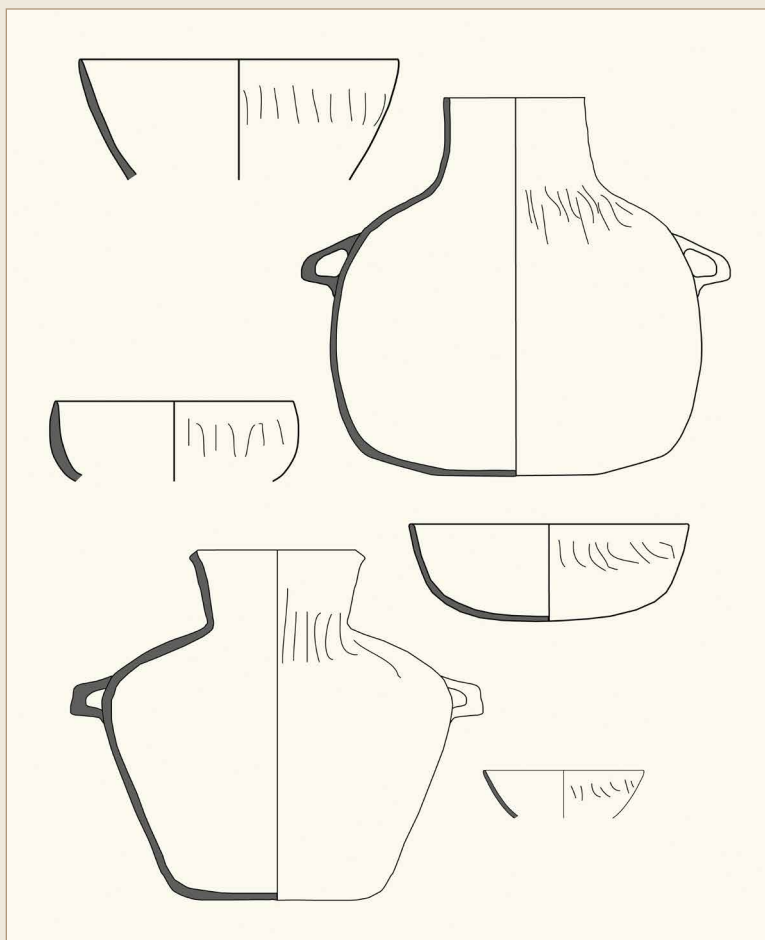


Figure 16. Buena Vista Waxy: Abak variety.

that produces porous and friable vessels with a waxy feel. Large calcite inclusions are common in the paste. Vessels are dark in color (gray, black, brown) and often show evidence of burning on the exterior. The Abak variety is distinguished by striations on the exterior surfaces of bowls and jars. Striations are usually light to medium, all in the same direction (no crosshatching), and usually on the necks of jars or sub-rim on bowls. Forms include bowls, constricted-neck bowls with flaring rims, and jars with incurved sides and vertical necks with strap handles. Forms are similar to the Conhob Thin type. This appears to be a common utilitarian ceramic in the Huista-Acatec region.

Buena Vista Waxy: unspecified variety. The unspecified variety lacks the striations of the Abak variety but is similar in paste—porous and friable—and forms. These were occasionally decorated by smoothing/polishing the surface. This variety comprises nearly half (48%) of the entire Late Postclassic ceramic inventory.

San Antonio Striated: unspecified variety. Surface decoration is of deep or shallow striations, often in random directions, often

crosscutting but not crosshatching. Forms are primarily small to medium bowls but include jars with flaring necks and jars with low vertical necks. Pastes vary from compact, highly fired to coarse with calcite and mica inclusions. Surfaces can be smoothed or rough. These probably relate to the “Polished Brown-Black Incised” from Iximche (Nance 2003b:160-162).

Miscellaneous Forms

Pichachas (Figure 17). A colander form is common in the Huista-Acatec region in the Late Postclassic period. These are usually jars with strap handles with holes through the body or medium-sized bowls. Hole spacing can be either relatively close or far apart, either in rows or random patterns. Pastes are variable but usually compact. Examples can be either smoothed/polished or unpolished. Some examples apparently were found in the Chiapas highlands—Culbert (1965:75) notes “colanders” as a diagnostic form of the eastern Chiapas highlands.

Comales (Figure 18). *Comales* are griddle forms used for food preparation. These are flat, shallow dishes, often with loop handles. They are distinctive in that one side is smoothed/polished while the other is usually coarse and burnt. Usually there is a rough edge along the rim of the smoothed side, to which two handles are attached. Rarely they will have rim decoration, appliqué, or mold. Paste types are variable, from fine to coarse. One subset has a distinctive micaceous paste and another a soft, chalky paste. The *comal* form is fairly common in the Maya highlands during the Postclassic Period (Wauchope 1970:107-108). *Comales* were found at Iximche (Nance 2003a:187) and at Chisalin (Weeks 1983:160-170, of various types/varieties). A micaceous paste example is found at Chisalin—in the “Jorronilaja Brown” type (Weeks 1983:163). Stefan de Borhegyi (1959:57) has suggested that *comal* forms may be related to incensarios rather than a utility form used in cooking. Most archaeologists, however, view the *comal* as a distinct utilitarian

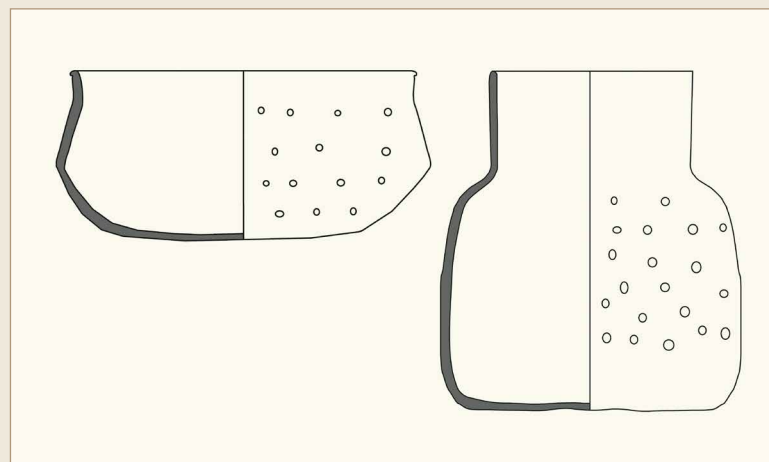


Figure 17. *Pichachas* / colanders.

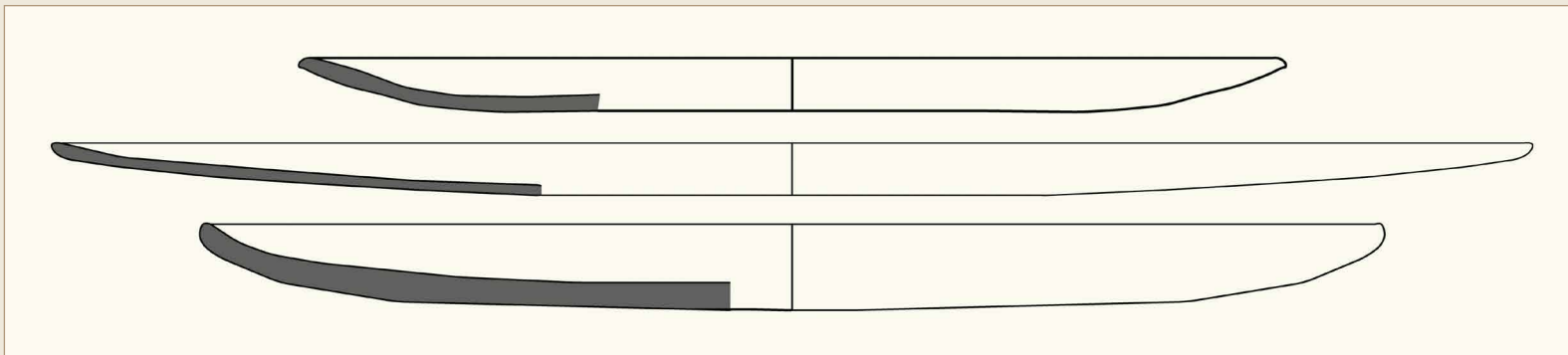


Figure 18. *Comales* / griddles.

form with strong continuity into the modern period, as suggested by ethnoarchaeological studies (Nance 2003a:187).

Censers. A few ladle censers were found in the Huista-Acatec region. Most examples are mold-made, with often only the handle surviving. The handles are attached to small, shallow bowls. No other decoration is found on the ladle censers. Pastes are variable but often coarse and a light brown in color. No “Mixtec” censers, or fretted censers with tripod supports common to the Late Postclassic highlands, were found in the Huista-Acatec region. Ladle censers are common in the Maya highlands during the Late Postclassic Period (Wauchope 1970:117-118). They are easily distinguished at Iximche (Nance 2003b:166-67, Figure 6.27b-c), although not common. They are found in other regions as well, including the northern highlands (Arnauld 1986:Figure 188).

Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, the Huista-Acatec region displays a typical Late Postclassic period ceramic assemblage for the Guatemalan highlands, with local innovations. That is, it participated in the ceramic developments throughout the highlands, as indicated by the polychrome and monochrome types. The Huista-Acatec assemblage has examples of nearly all of Wauchope’s categories for the Guatemalan highlands in general. In addition, the Huista-Acatec assemblage developed a number of local innovations across the assemblage. Ajul Polychrome: Huista variety, for example, is a local variation of the more widespread red-black-cream tradition in the highlands. Buena Vista waxy types, on the other hand, are an abundant, utilitarian ceramic with no published counterparts elsewhere in the highlands.

One important divergence from the typical Late Postclassic assemblage in Guatemala presents itself in the Huista-Acatec sample—the lack of Fortress White-on-Red ceramics. Wauchope (1970:101-103) termed these “White-on-Red,” “White-on-Tan,” or “White-on-Brown,” and they are more commonly known as “Fortress” because of their early association with hilltop sites in Guatemala (Carmack 1981:37; Woodbury and Trik

1953:173). They are one of the most common polychrome types in the Guatemalan highlands and are often associated with the expansion of the K’iche’ kingdom (Fox 1978:242; Woodbury and Trik 1953:174), primarily because of the great abundance of the type at Utatlan, the K’iche’ Maya capital (Lothrop 1936:21; Wauchope 1970:183; Woodbury and Trik 1953:174). The lack of any white-on-red ceramics in the Huista-Acatec region (only one sherd was found) is suggestive, particularly given the ceramic’s abundance in other Late Postclassic sites.

Assuming a close correlation between this ceramic type and the K’iche’ Maya kingdom, which seems likely, it can be proposed that the limits of the K’iche’ kingdom lay somewhere between Zaculeu, where Fortress is found in abundance, and the Huista-Acatec zone in the mountains to the north of Zaculeu, where no Fortress is found. It would be difficult to propose merely a lack of trade between the Huista-Acatec zone and the rest of the Guatemalan highlands because of the presence of a number of other common-horizon Late Postclassic types in the Huista-Acatec region.

The most common and well known of these Late Postclassic horizon types is collectively known as “Chinautla Polychromes,” which include a wide range of red-black-white ceramics found throughout the Guatemalan highlands, but not in great numbers. In the Huista-Acatec region, the Chinautla Polychrome category is comprised of the Ajul Polychrome types and varieties, some distinctly local such as the Huista variety, and others fitting neatly into Wauchope’s categories, such as the Paiconob and Tenam varieties (Wauchope’s dull and bright paint Chinautla polychromes, respectively). This evidence suggests that occupants of the Huista-Acatec region were participants in broader highland interaction spheres, rather than an isolated periphery developing independently. The presence of other ceramic types, such as a variety similar to El Salvador’s Marihua Red-on-Buff, suggests this as well.

The differential distribution of Chinautla polychromes within the Huista-Acatec region is also suggestive. Following a broader pattern noted by Wauchope (1970:108, 110)—that

dull paint Chinautla polychromes are generally found in the northern parts of the Guatemalan highlands and bright paint Chinautla polychromes are generally found in the southern parts of the Guatemalan highlands—the local distribution of these varieties within the Huista-Acatec region is also delimited. Ajul Polychrome: Paiconob variety, the local Dull Paint Chinautla polychrome, is found throughout the Huista-Acatec region; Ajul Polychrome: Tenam variety, the local Bright Paint Chinautla polychrome, is found only in the area currently occupied by the Acatec Maya. In addition, Ajul Polychrome: Huista variety, a Chinautla polychrome not described by Wauchope, is found exclusively in the region currently occupied by the Huista Maya. While this is far from definitive proof, these differential distributions, both locally within the Huista-Acatec region and in the Guatemalan highlands in general, provide further support for the suggestion by Rands and Smith (1965) that the distribution of Chinautla polychromes may reflect complex social and cultural relationships among the different groups of the highlands.

The Late Postclassic assemblage in the Huista-Acatec region is also comprised of distinctive paste types. The first of these is the porous, waxy paste found primarily in the Buena Vista Waxy type. This ceramic type is by far the most common in the Huista-Acatec region, making up nearly one half (48%) of the entire assemblage. In general these ceramics must be considered utilitarian: they are in generally utilitarian forms such as jars and constricted-neck bowls, they largely lack any surface decoration other than occasional striations and, rarely, polishing, and they often show signs of exterior burning. The second distinct paste type is micaceous, which is found in a number of different ceramic varieties in the Huista-Acatec region: Conhob Thin, Acateco Impressed, and San Antonio Striated. This comprises nearly 15% of the entire ceramic inventory. Wauchope (1970:116) mentioned mica ware as a diagnostic of the Late Postclassic period, although he suggested that the uniformity of mica vessels may warrant its own type (Wauchope 1970:100; see also Nance 2003b:131) rather than being a characteristic of other types. Following this idea, in the Huista-Acatec region all types/varieties with mica pastes lack other kinds of surface decoration; that is, no polychromes or monochromes have mica pastes. Wauchope (1970:116) defined mica ware as consisting of “almost solid mica,” which describes relatively few of the Huista-Acatec examples.

Finally, two common but distinctive forms are found in the Huista-Acatec region: the *pichacha* / colander and *comal* / griddle. Both of these indicate a particular kind of food preparation—the colander a rinsing/soaking of maize kernels that continues to modern times in Jacaltenango and San Miguel Acatan, and the *comal* a griddle-cooking of maize dough that also continues

throughout the modern Maya highlands. For *pichachas*, while this type of food preparation is common across the highlands in the ethnographic present, it has not always been a basic component of Maya food preparation. Within the Huista-Acatec region, *pichachas* are found, suggestively, only within the area currently occupied by the Huista Maya; none were found in the region currently occupied by the Acatec Maya. In a similar vein, Culbert (1965:76) sees a spatial distribution for *pichachas* in the Chiapas highlands that correlates with Maya and non-Maya cultural zones. *Comal* forms, on the other hand, are found throughout the entire Huista-Acatec region during the Postclassic period but are not found earlier. *Pichacha* and *comal* use and distribution provide evidence that food preparation was not uniform across the Maya highlands, with changing patterns across the Late Postclassic landscape and changing patterns throughout the Precolumbian sequence.

In conclusion, the ceramics of the Late Postclassic period in the Huista-Acatec region closely follow the typology laid out by Robert Wauchope in 1970. They suggest that occupants of the Huista-Acatec region during the Late Postclassic period were closely tied to developments within the Guatemalan highlands to the east, as opposed to developments in the Chiapas highlands and Grijalva depression to the west. Most of the ceramics found in the Huista-Acatec region were described by Wauchope; this study elaborates on his typology and suggests a finer division of some categories. As can be expected, a number of local utilitarian ceramics were also found that were largely unrelated to ceramic developments elsewhere. While occupants of the region participated in a broader ceramic sphere, the exact nature of that interaction is unclear and may not be resolvable through ceramic analysis alone. The absence of Fortress White-on-Red and the abundance of Chinautla polychromes, for example, provides fodder for speculation on cultural relationships, historical developments, and social interactions, but does not provide definitive answers to the complex situation of highland Maya society on the eve of the Spanish Conquest.

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