

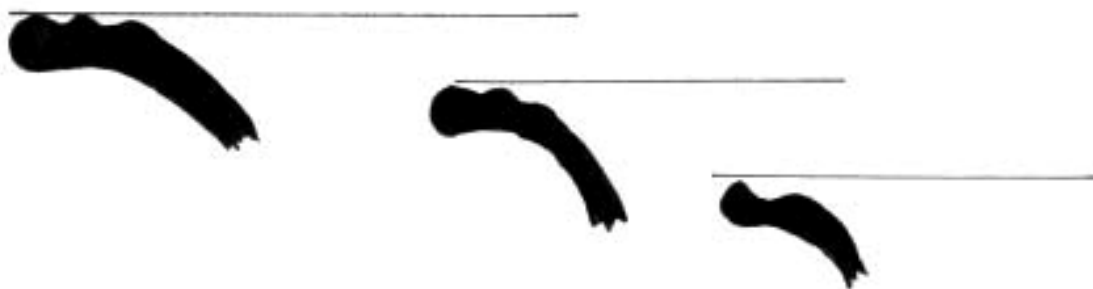
## CHAPTER 12

### Introduction, Background and Objectives of the Chocolá Project

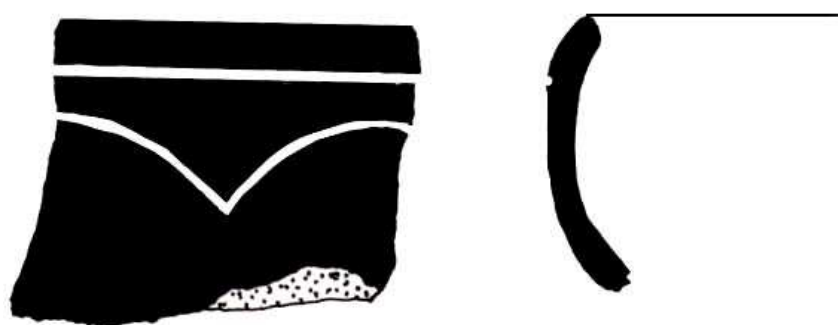
Federico Paredes Umaña

#### Comparative ceramic dating

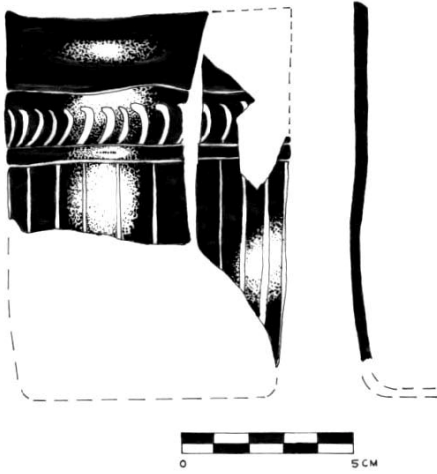
Since the 2003 season PACH has been concerned with conducting comparisons of the ceramics recovered in test pits and grid monitored excavations. Different experts have expressed their opinions on the material (Arroyo, Bové, Clark, Genovés, Hatch, Love, Shieber, Orrego, personal communications during field visits in 2003 and 2004); this material was contrasted with refined typologies from sites of the highlands and the Pacific Coast at IDAEH's ceramic archives. The 2003 season yielded a rich collection of surface ceramics that were systematically collected, which provided data to confirm that the occupation of the site extended at least from the Middle Pre-Classic to possibly the Post-Classic periods, with samples of diagnostic materials from all periods. We present some examples below:



Dishes with a glossy orange slip and fluted in the inside. Middle Pre-Classic period.



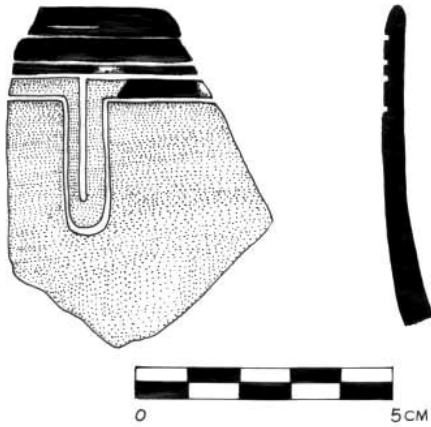
Bowl with a black slip, incision below the rim and an arched surrounding motif. Middle Pre-Classic period.



PACH I-B  
Cylindrical vase  
Black slip



PACH I-B  
Fluted bowl with esgrafiado decoration  
Black slip



Bowl with straight side  
Dark brown polished slip



Pitcher with straight vertical neck  
Dark brown slip

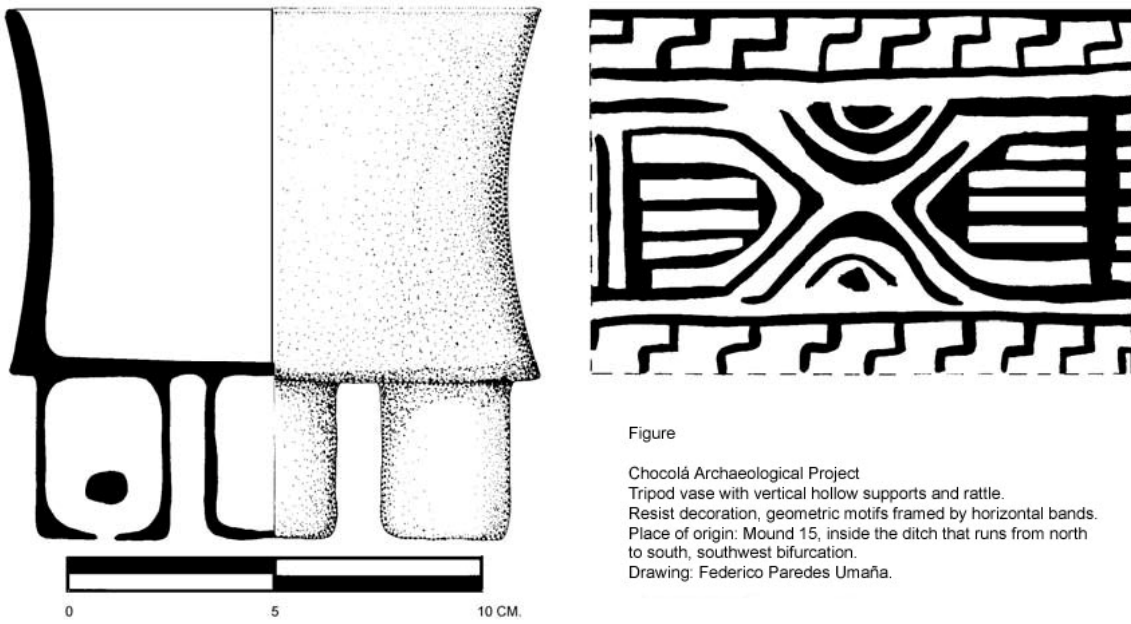


Bowl with vertical side  
Black slip



Globular, hollow support with hole  
Coarse outer finishing

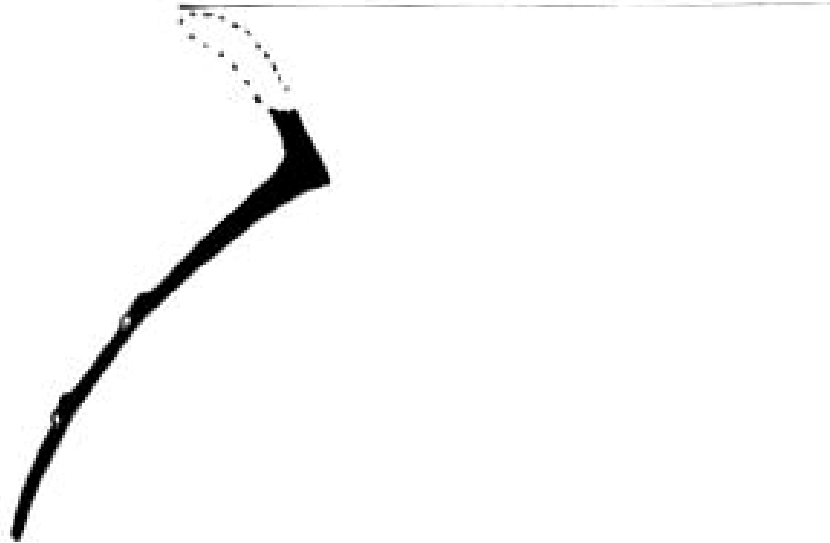
**Black slips. Late Pre-Classic period.**



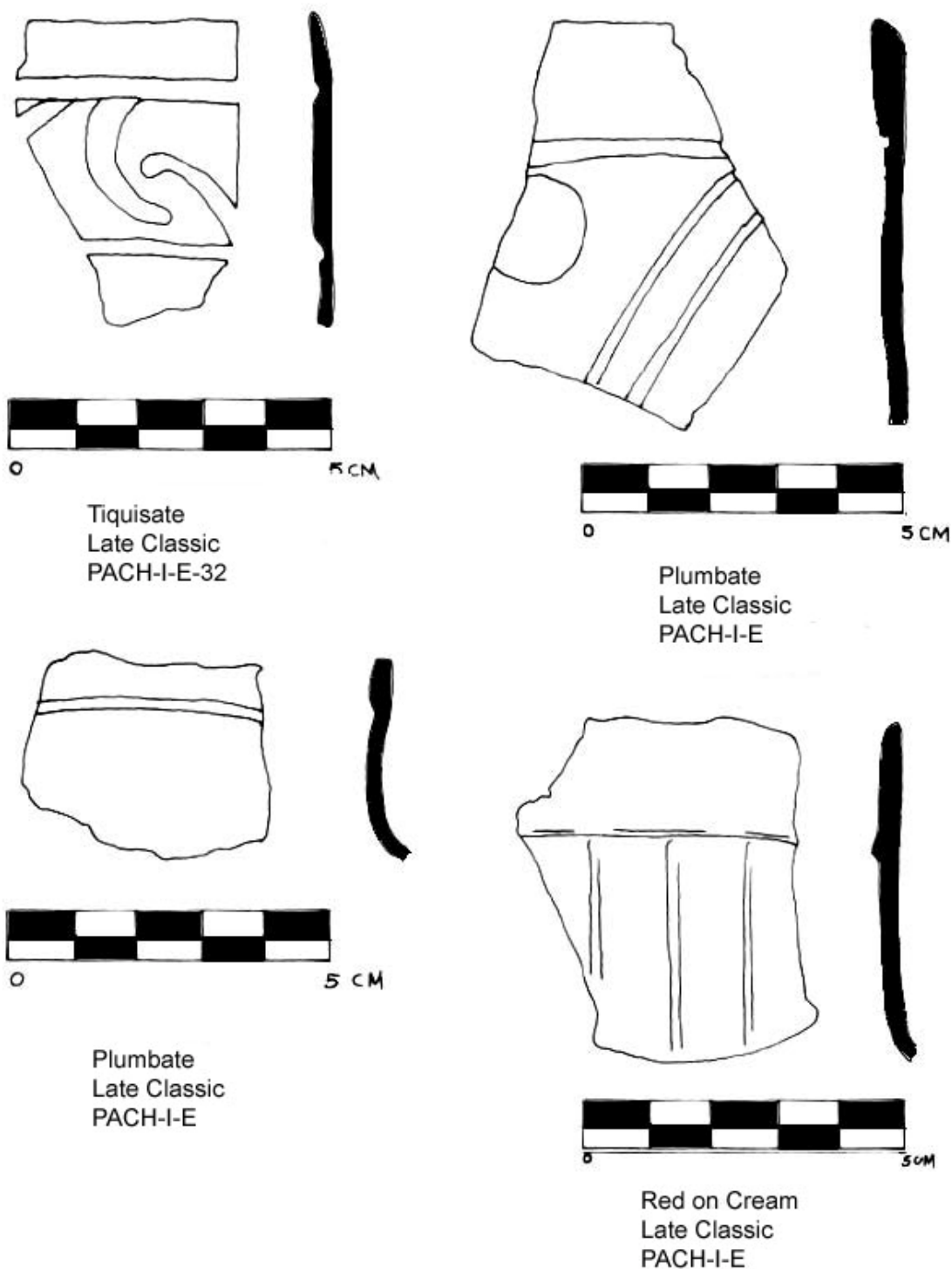
Figure

Chocolá Archaeological Project  
 Tripod vase with vertical hollow supports and rattle.  
 Resist decoration, geometric motifs framed by horizontal bands.  
 Place of origin: Mound 15, inside the ditch that runs from north  
 to south, southwest bifurcation.  
 Drawing: Federico Paredes Umaña.

**Tripod vase with cylindrical supports and painted designs. Second half of the Early Classic period.**



**Pitcher with "Firpo" type appliqués on the body. Middle Classic to Late Classic periods.**

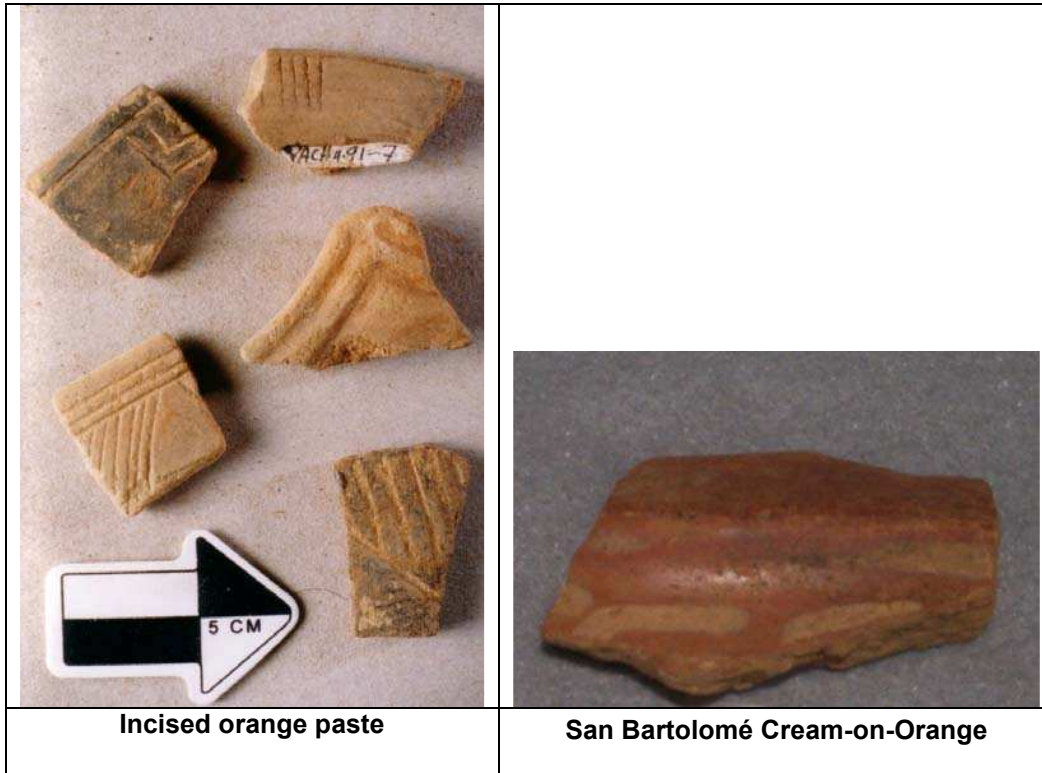


“Plumbate” and “Tiquisate” ceramic fragments, Late Classic period.

### Typological Analysis

The typological analysis is being carried out by means of the adequate construction of a database, fit to provide typological information as well as horizontal and vertical localizations, to conduct cross references. PACH intends to elaborate a ceramic sequence preferably based on absolute dates. The Guatemalan Boca Costa lacks an appropriate chronology. The characteristics of the preservation of the ceramic materials found at T'akalik' Ab'aj' are unfortunately inadequate to fulfill such

objectives. The area has lacked absolute dates obtained through specialized laboratory methods, and work has been usually conducted through macroscopic comparisons with sequences corresponding to other regions.





Figurine collection originating from excavations and surface collections

### Absolute dates and ceramic chronology, a particular case from the North Group at Chocolá

This section intends to discuss the results of five calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates from Operation 4 in pit 72, located at the North Group in Chocolá. The total number of successfully tested  $^{14}\text{C}$  samples during the 2004 season amounts to 7. Considering that 5 of them originated in sequential lots that corresponded to pit 72 and the remaining two came

from an adjacent pit and equivalent lots, only the first ones shall be used for this discussion.

At this stage of our analysis, it is relevant to note the different Strata and Lots of the Operation, for this purpose we have prepared graphics that include: pictures of the ceramic material, calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates, drawings of the profile of pit 72 with its arbitrary levels, and the identified strata, all of which will provide guidelines to the readers and will allow them to arrive to their own conclusions.

From the ceramic analysis of this pit we are in a position to suggest that lots 4 to 6 include materials from the Middle Pre-Classic, the Late Pre-Classic and the Early Classic periods. Lots 7 and 8 include materials from the Middle Pre-Classic and the Early Pre-Classic periods as well as a change of stratum that begins in lot 7 and an additional change of stratum that begins in lot 9. However, the  $^{14}\text{C}$  samples would appear to very consistently indicate that both strata III and IV had significant activity between the mid-Middle Pre-Classic and the end of the Late Pre-Classic periods. Why then are there sherds that point to the Early Classic period, mixed with materials from earlier stages? It is only as of lot 7 that we do not find materials from the later periods any longer. Could it be something wrong with our macroscopic method of ceramic dating? Or perhaps there are intrusions of a later stage? For the moment we favor the latter possibility. If we accept the calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dating, then we should pay attention to materials dated through means different than this method, namely strata 1 to 3, and 9 to 12.

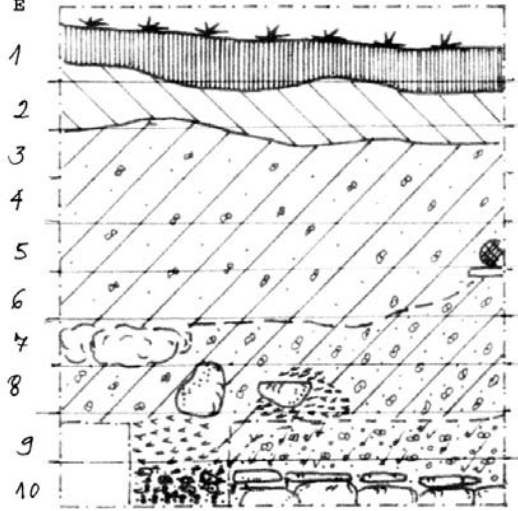
Let us consider then the connection between Structure 15-1 and the Trait of water management that extends underground as uncertain. It should be noted that according to observations made by Diana Belches, the stones delimiting Structure 15-1 are located on Stratum III.

Consequently, the accurate dating of lots 8 to 11 could provide concluding data. The apparent dating of lots 3 to 6 is already known to us (B.C. 390-80).

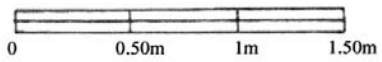


PROYECTO ARQUEOLOGICO  
CHOCOLA 4-72-4 MC= 211

L  
O  
T  
E



Perfil Norte



Dibujo y calco: Diana Belches L.



<sup>14</sup>C (cal) B.C. 390-190




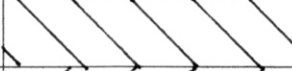
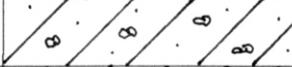
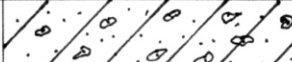
PACH 4-72-4  
Field Sample 211  
Stratum III

Represented by a yellowish dark brown (10 YR 4/6) sandy clay, with taxcal and pebbles. This stratum may present itself with a minimum width of 0.50 m and an approximate maximum width of 1.20 m, and maybe wider. The texture is not too granular and the consistency is compact, with some small roots that do not exceed a 2 mm width. In general, and in relation to Stratum II, the amount of sherds seems to have a diminished concentration in the area, but the amount increases due to the size and thickness of this stratum, which represents the largest source of material found. Rich in mica, very small colored sand, the percentage of taxcal stones or rocks, gravel, green stone (not identified) and probably pumice stone inclusions is as follows: 15% small stones; 70% irregular stones of roughly 0.25 to 0.50 m in diameter; 10% stones larger than 5 cm in diameter. There are inclusions of charcoal with a diameter smaller than 1 mm in some areas.

Charcoal samples were collected for PACH 4-72-4. This is the stratum directly associated with the bowl found in the niche (PACH 4-91 – lots 4, 5 and 6), at the center of the structure, identified as Trait 14; besides, it is the same stratum where most stones of Structure 1 are found. This stratum is as well associated with Strata II and IV.

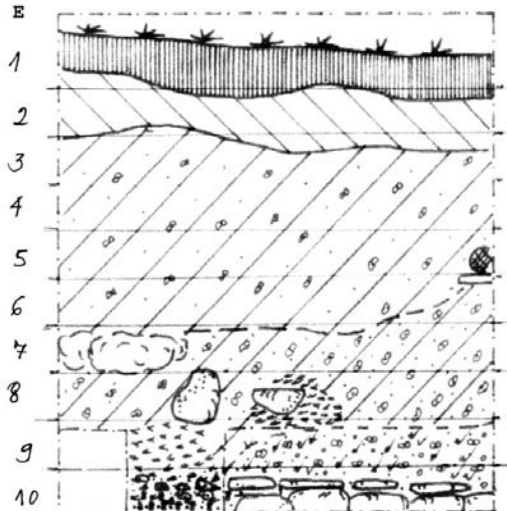
Ceramics from this lot show incised black-coffee slips, one fragment of an anthropomorphic figurine quite common in Chicolá, a resist decoration of the Usulután type, and seemingly later sherds, such as Flesh an Amatlé; however, the calibrated <sup>14</sup>C sample indicates B.C. 390-190, that is to say, from the end of the Middle Pre-Classic to the beginning of the Proto-Classic periods.

#### KEY FOR STRATA IDENTIFICATION

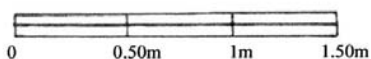
I. Humus	
II	
III	
IV	

PROYECTO ARQUEOLOGICO  
CHOCOLA 4-72-5 MC= 258

LOTE



Perfil Norte



Dibujo y calco: Diana Belches L.



$^{14}\text{C}$  (cal) B.C. 390-80.

PACH 4-72-5  
Field Sample 258  
Stratum III

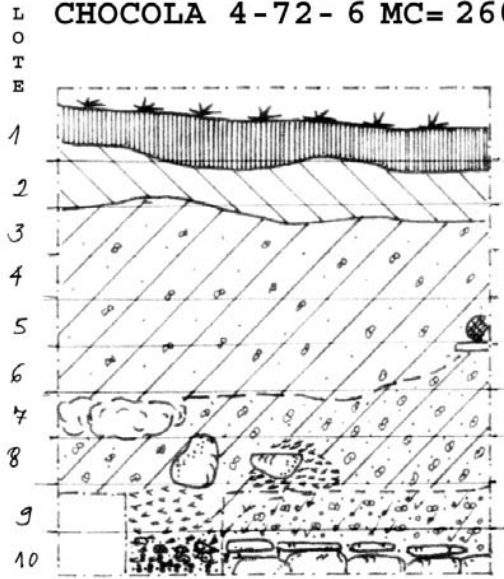
The characteristics are similar to those of the previous lot. As observed in the graphic, we are referring to the same Stratum III. The field notes suggest that the charcoal sample collected in this level is of approximately 0.13 m.

The ceramic paste is soft and has pumice as degreaser. There are glossy orange slips, and several incised designs. The calibrated date for the  $^{14}\text{C}$  sample indicates B.C. 390-80, or the period between the end of the Middle Pre-Classic and the beginning of the Late Pre-Classic periods.

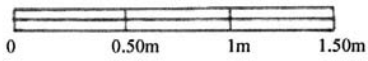
KEY FOR  
STRATA  
IDENTIFICATION

I. Humus	
II	
III	
IV	

PROYECTO ARQUEOLOGICO  
CHOCOLA 4-72- 6 MC= 260



Perfil Norte

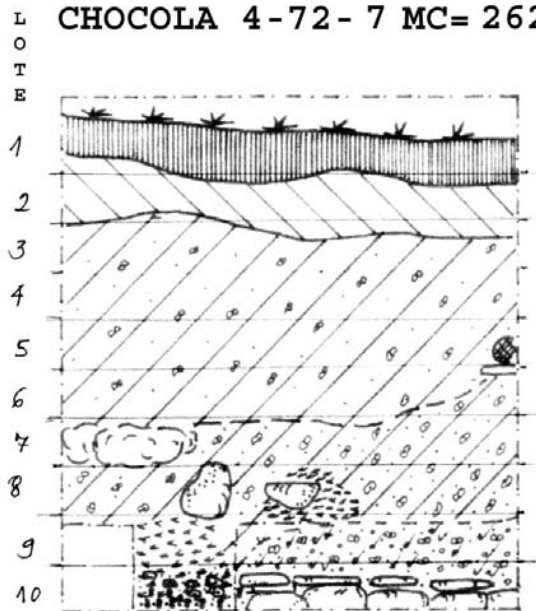


Dibujo y calco: Diana Belches L.

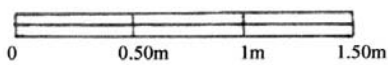


<sup>14</sup>C (cal) B.C. 380-160.

PROYECTO ARQUEOLOGICO  
CHOCOLA 4-72- 7 MC= 262



Perfil Norte



Dibujo y calco: Diana Belches L.




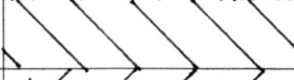
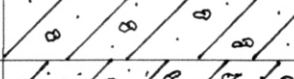
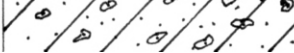
<sup>14</sup>C (cal) B.C. 370-110.



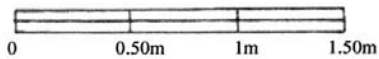
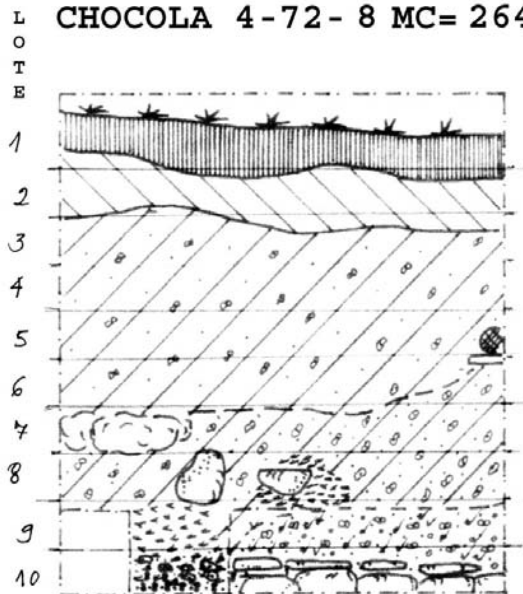
PACH 4-72-7  
 Field Sample 262  
 Stratum IV

Stratum IV has been already described, but it is level 7 the one that clearly shows its very particular nature. Here there are no Early Classic materials; instead, there are sherds that in the south coast were dated to B.C. 600-400, which is exclusively Middle Pre-Classic, together with other punctured or fluted ones with an earlier appearance. The calibrated <sup>14</sup>C date indicates B.C. 370-110, which is from the final portion of the Middle Pre-Classic to the mid-Late Pre-Classic period.

**KEY FOR STRATA IDENTIFICATION**

I. Humus	
II	
III	
IV	

**PROYECTO ARQUEOLOGICO CHOCOLA 4-72-8 MC= 264**



Dibujo y calco: Diana Belches L.




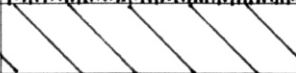
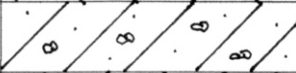
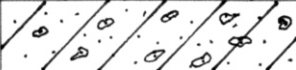
**C14 (cal) B.C. 500-460 / B.C. 430-A.D. 20.**

PACH 4-72-8  
 Field Sample 264  
 Stratum IV

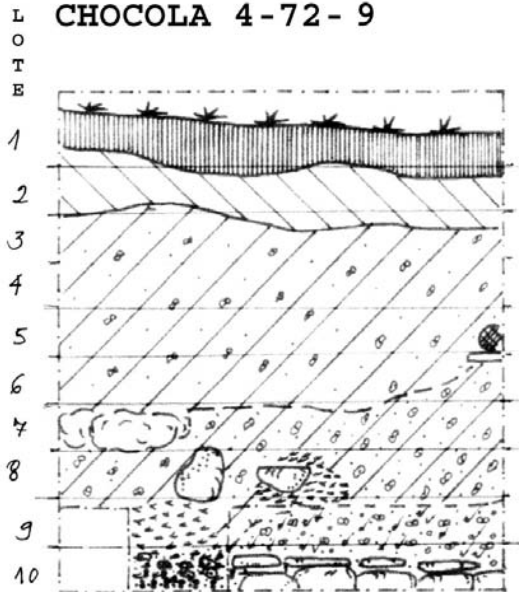
This is where stratum IV ends, with the presence of a stone trait understood as a ditch but covered by a thick layer of very hard taxcal.

What we have here is ceramic from the Middle and Late Pre-Classic periods, corroborated by the <sup>14</sup>C calibrated date that indicates the widest range in our entire sample, B.C. 500-460 / B.C. 430- A.D. 20; however, the consistency of the ranges is maintained, extending from the mid-Middle Pre-Classic to the end of the Late Pre-Classic period.

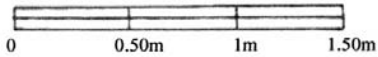
**KEY FOR STRATA IDENTIFICATION**

I. Humus	
II	
III	
IV	

**PROYECTO ARQUEOLOGICO  
 CHOCOLA 4-72-9**



Perfil Norte



Dibujo y calco: Diana Belches L.



