
SPECIAL SECTION: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION: MAYA ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEMORY

Memory is ... a social process of remembering and forgetting that is embedded in the materiality of existence (Hendon 2010: 1–2).

The past decade or so has witnessed a burgeoning of studies on memory, collective memory, and social memory in the humanities and social sciences (Climo and Cattell 2002; Klein 2000; Olick and Robbins 1998). Berliner (2005) employs the phrases “memory boom,” “memory craze,” and “obsession with memory” to describe the current state of affairs of social memory studies in anthropology and history. Archaeology joined in this trend, and about ten years ago many citations to the foundational literature in social memory studies (Assmann 1995; Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1980, 1992; LeGoff 1992; Nora 1996) started to appear in connection with archaeological research on historic and prehistoric societies (Golden 2005).

Studies of intersubjective personal memory and social memory as a process in ancient Mesoamerica, however, have been a bit slow to develop compared to some other contemporary topics such as landscape, materiality, embodiment, spatiality, and temporality which are entangled with memory and which can (or must) be linked in any archaeological study of social memory. Even at sites with no written texts, such as some of those treated in the present collection, this conceptual entanglement allows a reading of social memory from settlement patterns, architecture, monuments, burials, votive caches, and portable material culture (Bradley 2002; Chesson 2001; Hodder and Cessford 2004; Holtorf 1997, 2001; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Williams 2003).

With specific regard to past Mesoamerican societies, several recent studies have begun to explore the importance of history and social memory in the everyday lives and affairs of individuals, social groups, and communities (Clark and Colman 2008; Hendon 2010; Joyce 2003; Megged 2010; Schortman and Urban 2011; Stanton and Magnoni 2008). These publications demonstrate that studies of social memory have reached a vigorous stage of development in Mesoamerican archaeology and ethnohistory, if indeed a young stage in which a coherent methodological and theoretical framework is lacking (Golden 2005:273).

In this Special Section we offer a collection of papers on social memory among the ancient Lowland Maya of southeastern Mexico and northern Central America that continue this trend and will perhaps stimulate further debate with regard to methodological and theoretical elaboration. In the first paper, **Miranda Stockett**

advocates a view of archaeological sites as spaces where human dramas unfold, stages for the enactment of power and processes of social memory through the “making, altering, and remaking” of important places during the Late to Terminal Classic transition (A.D. 650–900) in southeastern Mesoamerica, and specifically the site of Las Canoas, Honduras. She argues that this making, altering, and remaking of places in the past reflect the dynamics of the manipulation of memory for political strategy. **Sonja A. Schwake** and **Gyles Iannone**, in the second paper, discuss ritual remains and collective memory from the Late Classic sites of Minanha and Zubin, in west-central Belize. While the former is a medium-sized major center, the latter is a minor center; both provide intriguing archaeological evidence of ritual commemorative events spanning several generations.

In the third paper, **Lisa J. LeCount** offers a bottom-up approach to the formation of community identity and social memory at Xunantunich, in the upper Belize River valley. With a primary emphasis on domestic foodways, LeCount argues that a distinctive type of common vessel for cooking and serving became a collective symbol of social identity for the people of the Xunantunich region in the Late Classic period. These foodways, she argues, served as a powerful source of collective memory that reinforced group identity. **Gyles Iannone** follows with his examination of the role that collective memory plays in defining territorial boundaries and in producing and reproducing frontier identities, from the perspective of the case study of the Late Classic Minanha site in Belize. In the fifth paper, **Charles Golden** also examines borders, social memory, and history with reference to the peripheries of the Classic Maya kingdoms of Piedras Negras, Guatemala, and Yaxchilan, Mexico. **Greg Borstede** follows with an examination of social memory and sacred sites in the western Maya highlands region with examples from Jacaltenango, Guatemala. In the penultimate paper, **Matthew Restall** presents a historiographic essay on the politics of social memory, the writing of history of the non-Hispanic inhabitants of Yucatan, the Maya mystique, Afro-Yucatecan invisibility, and the need to bridge the social distance created by temporal and cultural gaps within and between these two groups.

Finally, **Susan Gillespie** presents a most perceptive critical overview of the contributions. We strongly agree with her that these papers demonstrate the great potential for anthropologically oriented social memory studies in Maya archaeology.

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Social memory and its closely related theoretical cousins, including public memory and collective memory, have had an increasing impact on the social sciences and humanities in the past decade. The timing of this growth in the developing discipline, if it can be called such at present, is not entirely clear. Certainly many of the key publications that have informed the current social memory literature are nearly a century old, particularly the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1980, 1992) who is arguably the central figure in social memory studies. Perhaps we could attribute the growing interest to a “crisis in memory” or the “death of memory,” the sense of dislocation and disembeddedness that many scholars feel to be a condition of postmodernity (e.g., Baumann 2001:125; Cattell and Climo 2002:6; Hobsbawm 1996:40; Nora 1989).

Yet, clearly a focus on social memory and its importance in culture and society does not represent a death or a crisis in memory, but instead a refocus on the vibrancy, malleability, and centrality of memory. The explosion in social memory studies grows out of an interest in collective memory within the discipline of history, and has gained ground in other social sciences—such as anthropology, archaeology, and political science—as scholars move beyond the individual-focused psychology and memorialization of Freud and his contemporaries, and come to realize the active nature of collective or social remembering, in a variety of forms, in interpreting the past and the present. This theoretical diversity, though, presents problems of its own, as Jeffery K. Olick and Joyce Robbins (1998:106), among others, suggest that serious problems remain in achieving the goal of structuring collective memory into an academic discipline. They note that the study of collective memory is plagued by an “imprecision of concept, lack of disciplinary hegemony, [and] lack of theoretical development,” problems that we do not believe have been solved at present.

Within anthropology the shift of attention to social memory has been irregular. Studies have tended to develop in one of two ways: a focus on collective memory in Western culture in detail, often in book-length analyses (e.g., Lowenthal 1985; Klein 1997); or as an overview of social memory in cross-cultural perspective, often as edited collections in widely varying cultural contexts (e.g., Cattell and Climo 2002; Sutton 1998, 2001; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). For American archaeology in particular, a focus on social memory has been most fully developed within American historical archaeology, usually termed “public memory,” and focused on Western cultural developments and the processes of remembering and forgetting (e.g., Shackel 2001a; 2001b). Moves outside this domain have tended to be broadly cross-cultural with little synthesis or analysis of how social memory functions within specific cultural contexts.

As social memory becomes an important theoretical tool in understanding the role, importance, and practice of remembering and forgetting collectively, there is an even greater need for analyzing the concept cross-culturally in meaningful and detailed ways. At issue is the relevance of social memory—as either an analytic tool or as an emic epistemological way of knowing—in non-Western societies and cultures. At the risk of reifying cultural difference, one approach is to examine the role of social memory in detail in a non-Western setting utilizing multiple lines of evidence that cross-cut modern disciplinary boundaries and examine social memory as it functioned in the past and its effect on the present. The present Special Section is conceived in this vein—as a detailed study of social memory through archaeology, history, and ethnography within a single, non-Western cultural milieu. What does this tell us about social memory as a theoretical tool? Is it merely jargon; a Western-derived concept imposed on non-Western contexts to

make them more comprehensible to Western academics? Or can we say something more universal and cross-cultural about social memory and the processes behind collective remembrance?

Social Memory

The study of social memory in the social sciences broadly has its roots in earlier developments within the discipline of history. In a seminal work by Maurice Halbwachs (1980 [1925]), collective memory was contrasted with history as two alternative ways of understanding the past. Drawing on the drive for objectivism in the middle of the twentieth century, Halbwachs characterized the study of History as a scientific endeavor that collected and organized facts into a comprehensible and overarching picture of the past that is enduring. In contrast, memory is a contingent collection of versions of the past based on the experiences of individuals within a society. Its subjective and incomplete nature (*vis à vis* History) means that it simultaneously cannot outlive an individual and has many versions extant within society. For Halbwachs, these contrastive epistemologies are sequential—Memory as subjective/tradition precedes History as objective/science.

While historians have largely abandoned a number of Halbwachs’ postulations—such as the absolute, objective nature of Western history—he introduced a number of key ideas that have gained great importance in understanding how societies conceptualize the past. Halbwachs argued that memory is not possible outside of society, specifically those structures constructed for the purpose of remembrance (Halbwachs 1992:43; see also Lowenthal 1997). That is, the construction and development of memories is based on social and cultural conventions. In this sense memory is social or collective because it cannot be cleanly extricated from its cultural context.

Halbwachs’ suggestion that collective memory is inherent in “frameworks” or structures depends on a largely structural-functional perspective of society. Building upon this idea, recent scholarship has suggested instead that structures are not necessary preconditions for memory (or history, for that matter), but that they develop in tandem. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, social scientists perceive structures not as monolithic, static entities, but as malleable and changeable (Olick and Robbins 1998:108). Memory, like other aspects of society and culture, simultaneously influence and are influenced by the frameworks of society. This interdependence strikes a balance between the social stasis of structural-functionalism and the imbalanced fluidity of extreme constructivism through a focus on the practices, which are socioculturally situated, of individuals. In this sense, memory, like many other aspects of society such as identity, is both collective and individual, active and passive.

The development of theories regarding social memory in history has mirrored developments in the social sciences more broadly. The temporal implications of Halbwachs’ model have been examined, suggesting that instead of a necessary (almost evolutionary) move from collective memory to “scientific” history these can coexist within cultural traditions not as dichotomous poles, but as interwoven themes. Similarly, the scale of history has come under examination, with research on micro-historical contexts becoming more important (Olick and Robbins 1998). These have tended to stress practice and agency in the construction of social memory as well as cultural relativism. Also, the role of modernity has been studied in relation to memory and history, questioning whether or not History as a discipline is a product of or necessary requirement for the modern situation.

Ultimately social memory moved out of academic History and its relevance to many social scientists was obvious and directly applicable in various contexts. Anthropologists in particular see a theoretical discussion to which anthropological data—cross-cultural, social, “traditional society,”—was directly relevant (see contributions in Climo and Cattell 2002). Moreover, anthropologists view social memory as a means of making anthropological research relevant in the modern world; social memory, reframed in anthropological terms as traditional, non-Western ways of knowing the past, is an important way that anthropology can contribute to contemporary dialogues on heritage and preservation, indigenous communities and rights, and sociopolitical activism and identity in the modern world.

Current Directions in Social Memory

The explosion of research on social memory in the social sciences in recent years has introduced and developed the concept in a number of different, and unexpected, directions. While these are too many to list here, a few bear mentioning in this context. First, there has been a clear shift towards understanding collective memory as a result of the actions and practices of individuals (e.g., Wilce 2002). As mentioned before, these studies draw on the theory and scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu and the role of practices—culturally contextualized activities—in the construction and maintenance of Halbwachs’ “frameworks” of social collective memory. This approach is diverse as well, however, with some researchers focusing on the individual person while others focus on the agency of the individual—a collective designation that reinforces the active nature of memory on a small scale. These approaches usually study the role of the individual, memory, and society within small scale, limited contexts with occasional generalizations to society, history, or the past as a whole. By stressing agency and practice, these studies highlight the active nature of memory—as remembering and forgetting, often in an individual way. More complex studies then move to detail how remembering and forgetting affects broader social understandings and frameworks.

A second important trajectory is social memory as alternative to history. Halbwachs suggested that History, in the course of becoming objective and supplanting traditional social memory, became the “official” version of the past. This view of history and social memory has been challenged on a number of fronts, particularly within anthropology and history. Building on studies of non-Western societies and the growing influence of non-Western academics (indigenous and otherwise), “alternative histories” are being posited to counter “official” histories (Schmidt and Patterson 1995). This has at least two trajectories of study: the movement within post-colonial studies to challenge “official” history as sponsored by the state (Young 2001) and the movement within indigenous communities to develop “alternative histories” that are based on non-Western sources such as oral history, hieroglyphic writing, and oral history. Social memory plays an important role in both of these trajectories, as a form of “alternative history” as well as a means of challenging the hegemony of Western history.

Third, there has been an increase on studies that focus on the materialization of social memory. These studies are primarily within archaeology and material culture studies, disciplines that have an inherent interest in material culture, objects, structures, and sites (e.g., Hallam and Hockey 2001). On the one hand, the materialization of social memory is antithetical to Halbwachs’ original definition of collective memory, which could not outlast the life of the individual and was “traditional” in the sense that it was

unwritten (oral, for example, although that raises another set of questions about memory’s longevity).

As researchers expanded the definition of collective memory, however, it was only a matter of time before the association was made between memory and material culture. Historical archaeology in the United States and heritage studies in Great Britain have developed this idea most fully, examining the role of collective memory in: statues, as depictions of past events or people; memorials, as more (or less) abstract materializations for the purposes of remembrance; historically important buildings, structures, and sites, as edifices or places that play a more indirect role in remembrance (they are not constructed specifically to remember or remind, but are preserved or protected from a given period). These studies are augmented by material culture studies, often but not always Western in nature, that focus more on portable objects as a means of remembrance.

Another direction in which social memory studies are expanding in the social sciences is towards an understanding of the embodiment of social memory. In a way similar to that of agency and practice, social scientists are examining how memories can be situated within the context of the body. This has expressed itself in a number of ways, from body modification to studies of death and burial (see, for example, contributions in Johnson 2004). In archaeology in particular, burial practices and the rituals of death, in both an individual and corporate sense—have been the focus of a number of detailed studies of mortuary data (Chesson 2001). Death and burial provide a complex but rich context in which to study social memory: it is an active, ritual situation; it materializes many conceptions of death and the afterlife; and it embodies social memory through the perceived permanence and longevity of the condition.

Social Memory and the Maya

These developments in the study of social memory, as well as others, are directly applicable to the context of the Maya. At the risk of essentializing cultural identity, we characterize the “Maya” as a distinct cultural tradition that expresses itself in a number of different ways in both the past (an archaeological heritage defined from at least A.D. 200 to 1500; and a historical heritage that includes hieroglyphic texts, protohistoric writings from A.D. 1100 to 1500, Conquest era and Colonial period historical documents, and modern history) and the present (over twenty different languages and ethnic communities, hundreds of contemporary closed corporate communities, and a modern indigenous movement).

The distinctiveness of this cultural tradition as a whole has its origins in either Conquest period interactions between the Spanish and indigenous communities, or in Western public and academic thought. The abundance of historical and cultural information make it an ideal case study for examining social memory in a detailed, rich way through multiple lines of evidence in a non-Western context. In addition, the results are applicable to the contemporary situation in the Maya area—to state governments, indigenous communities and movements, academics, and others with a stake in understanding Maya culture in the present.

Social memory among the Maya can be categorized into four complementary divisions as a vehicle for understanding Maya culture. It is in these areas that the social memory must be conceptualized and the categories into which the following contributions situate Maya social memory. The first is as a set of processes that unite disparate Maya traditions and experiences into a unified whole. In this sense, social memory is understood as a part of a Maya cultural tradition. At the same time as collective memory is

unifying, researchers are exploring how specific memories divide and separate traditions, such as individual communities or polities in the past and present.

The second way of approaching social memory in Maya studies is as a theoretical, heuristic concept of Western tradition imported into the Maya context. This plays itself out in the past, as social memory is examined in archaeological contexts, and in the present, as versions of the past are reconceptualized as memory (rather than “History”, for example), and deployed for political purposes in the modern world.

The third approach to social memory is as a vehicle for integrating various lines of evidence. The Maya past has been studied through archaeology, epigraphy, oral history, ethnohistory, document history, and ethnography. Social memory provides a means by which, at least in analytic terms, these various lines of evidence can be incorporated into a holistic presentation of the past. It also provides a more neutral “alternative history” that can coexist with “official” histories while still managing to carry the authority of versions of the past constructed in Western academia that are valued by political actors in contemporary Maya indigenous movements.

Fourth, and allied with the previous, is the utilization of social memory as a vehicle for integrating Western academic traditions and studies with indigenous concerns (and those of other stakeholders). Social memory, particularly those processes of which it is comprised, are often viewed as providing a more incorporative version of the past (here building on Halbwachs’ original characterization of collective memory as arising in “traditional” culture)

positioned either in opposition to official histories or in conjunction with them. Social memory can tie together the past and the present as well as structure and change within a specific cultural tradition such as the Maya.

It is in this last category that this volume will contribute most to studies of social memory generally and the Maya more specifically. Whether or not social memory is conceived as a Western academic imposition, it does provide the opportunity to integrate culture, society, and history under a single analytic banner. The result of such investigations has relevance beyond strictly academic concerns.

The Current Contributions

This Special Section represents a unique contribution of papers analyzing the theoretical dimensions of social memory and history within the context of a single cultural tradition over a period of two millennia. Although, as discussed above, other publications have explored the issues and implications of social/collective memory as a theoretical topic, no other compiled work has done so through an in-depth and long-term focus within a single cultural tradition. The authors here present a series of theoretical interpretations drawing data from case studies involving archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography, and ranging in time from the Classic period to present.

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SITES OF MEMORY IN THE MAKING: POLITICAL STRATEGIZING IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PLACE IN LATE TO TERMINAL CLASSIC SOUTHEASTERN MESOAMERICA

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Abstract

Archaeological spaces can be viewed as material manifestations of human drama—sites for the production, expression, and manipulation of social life, power, and history. By viewing such spaces as stages for the enactment of processes of social memory, we may further enrich considerations of the interplay of materiality and history. Here I address the insights archaeologists may gain from engaging with theories of social memory by exploring their application to the analysis of settlements occupied during the Late to Terminal Classic period transition (A.D. 650–900) in pre-Columbian southeastern Mesoamerica. I also consider their relevance to community initiatives engaged by archaeologists today. Ultimately, I argue that processes of making, altering, and remaking place are one among many ways that memory may have served as a tool for political strategies and discourses about power.

Archaeological approaches to the investigation of memory and studies of the “past in the past” have recently experienced both a resurgence of interest and a theoretical reinvigoration (e.g., Ashmore 2008; Barrett 1993; Canuto and Andrews 2008; Delle 2008; Hodder and Cessford 2004; Navarro Farr et al. 2008; O’Sullivan 2003; Reckner 2002; Shackel 2001; Stanton and Magnoni 2008; Van Dyke 2004; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Wallis 2008; Williams 2004). Many of these studies focus successfully on texts, monuments, and heirlooms while others attend to larger contexts such as landscapes and sites. It is to this latter subject that I add my investigation, considering the ways that pre-Columbian settlements functioned (and continue to function in the present) as dynamic and changeable contexts for the enactment of power and the production of history and memory.

Following a consideration of theoretical perspectives on memory, materiality, and the applicability of these approaches to archaeological research, I turn to an analysis of southeastern Mesoamerica in the Late to Terminal Classic period (A.D. 650–900), particularly the site of Las Canoas, Honduras. In drawing on data from Las Canoas, I argue that the making, altering, and remaking of places in the past suggest the dynamic ways that memory may have served as a tool for political strategy, community action, and the construction of a larger historical narrative. After considering in detail the built environment of Las Canoas, I offer some comparisons with contemporaneous sites in the region to illustrate that, despite great diversity in the local sociopolitical contexts and spatial settings of their communities, Late to Terminal Classic

period southeast Mesoamericans employed remarkably similar strategies related to commemoration and forgetting. These strategies appear to have been a means to ensure the stability and continuity of place in the face of widespread regional turmoil. Finally, I consider the ways that theories of social memory might help us address questions concerning the impact of our archaeological interpretations of the past within the context of modern politics and communities.

SOCIAL MEMORY, MATERIALITY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Before we can begin to productively parse theories regarding processes of memory-making in the past, we must have some discussion of what we mean by the term “memory.” In a recent consideration of the role of memory in his archaeological investigations of the Underground Railroad in the eastern United States, James Delle (2008) probes semantic issues and offers some useful terms and definitions. He articulates two types of memory relevant for this discussion: authorized public memory and social memory. Authorized public memories, he relates, are those that have been actively and intentionally produced and reproduced by recognized authorities, such as governments, who “privilege specific remembrances [and] reinforce visions of the past commensurate with” their political aspirations (Delle 2008:65). Conversely, social memories are those that arise from the people and sometimes speak to subaltern or alternative visions of the past, which are unsanctioned by authority. Thus, Delle views memory as implicitly rooted in a view of social relations contingent on the existence of hierarchical forms of political organization. For authorized public memory to

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exist there must be an authoritative figure or governing body, while people often create social memory in response to perceived inadequacies in authorized public memories. Archaeologists, then, must query whether memory and memorialization were irrelevant in non-state societies or within the context of egalitarian or heterarchical forms of sociopolitical organization. In some ways, it seems obvious that this cannot be the case.

After all, memory appears as an enduring aspect of the human experience; in Pierre Nora's (1989:8) words, it is a dynamic process, a "perpetually actual phenomenon." It is shaped, made, and reshaped just as much through behaviors and actions that are daily, mundane, and ordinary as it is through those that are momentous, monumental, and extraordinary. These acts and actions create and shape memory in that they allow "remembering in common" by conveying images and recollected knowledge (Connerton 1989:40). Memory, thus, is an important way that meaning is embedded within a particular time and place (any time and place), and just as people have always remembered, they have also probably always memorialized.

As one means to circumvent this issue of political complexity, we can turn to Ruth Van Dyke and Susan Alcock's definition of social memory, which is far more general—and therefore more neutral—than Delle's. They suggest that social memory is merely the "construction of a collective notion about how things were in the past" (2003:2) and thus are potentially interchangeable with the idea of collective memory. This definition has the advantage of being very broad and of making few assumptions about sociopolitical organization. But Delle is also absolutely right to implicate the political in his discussion of memory, and Van Dyke and Alcock's approach may run the risk of sidestepping the dialogues, discourses, and negotiations that are sure to characterize any group's formulation and reformulation of memory (public, social, personal, or otherwise). Instead might we find a middle ground for our understanding of the interplay between politics and social memory? I suggest that perhaps we consider social memory to be a contingent understanding of past persons, events, or beliefs that is shared by a group and negotiated with respect to the perspectives of contemporaries and/or predecessors.

Whether you prefer the more political slant offered by Delle, the more neutral one provided by Van Dyke and Alcock, or the middle ground I suggest here, both public and social memory—though they have very different sources, may arise in quite different contexts, and often spring from very different motivations—are both asserted through similar practices. On the one hand, inscriptive memorialization, such as the construction of monuments or buildings, can be used to materialize a vision of the past. On the other hand, embodied memorialization, such as the performance of ritual, can be enacted to convey and impress an understanding of the past on the performer or viewer (Connerton 1989). By building or repurposing a monument, defacing or erecting a public building, passing on a cherished heirloom, leaving offerings at the shrine of an ancestor, burning incense to an ancient god, or teaching a lesson on history to group of impressionable students, people have manipulated objects, words, and actions to shape the way they relate the past to the present.

As either active or passive purveyors of social memories about the past ourselves, archaeologists have a responsibility to consider these issues and to address how best to both investigate them in the past and document them in the present. And, happily, we are aided in this endeavor because memory and our stock-in-trade, materiality, go hand in hand. The making and recalling of social memory can occur at many spatial and social scales, being manifest

in the knowledgeable and repetitive manipulation of objects, movements through space, and social interactions and discourses that transpire as part of dwelling, producing, and consuming. And in this process, as Joyce (2003:108) reminds us, the "world of *things* is of critical importance." In his well-known treatise on social memory, Connerton also dwells briefly on the role of materiality—of the "unwritten"—in the historical reconstruction of social memory. Of archaeologically recovered materials, he states that "since they are not texts, they contain no ready-made statements" (Connerton 1989:14). But things, the stuff of archaeological inquiry, are no *tabula rasa* for our interpretations; they are not as inscrutable—nor as silent—as Connerton implies. Material culture is meaning-laden, or as Meskell (2004:6) observes: "we make our object world and it recursively shapes us." Indeed, many expressions of social memory are quite literally conveyed through objects, and their associations with other archaeological remains and the contexts from which we recover them can speak with just as much confidence as the "ready-made statements of texts."

It is not just objects, but also *places*—and particularly places of human settlement—that can be potent players in the material construction and expression of social memory. Settlements are built up by their occupants, but they also shape those occupants in their turn, creating dialogues not only between people but also between people and places (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Bourdieu 1977; Meskell 1999). Through the conscious and unconscious acts of constructing, dwelling, and reconstructing, places of human settlement can be interpreted as finished monuments to both public and social memories as well as dialogues *between* these two types of memory. As, in a sense, historical narratives in progress, spaces are built, manipulated, and memorialized and will be remembered, forgotten, and re-remembered through time. As contextualized loci of material culture assemblages, archaeological sites are sites of memory in the sense that they contain the remains of moments in the process of memory-making.

In other words, the making of memory need not always refer to a distant past or reframe the meaning of the past in the present. It may also be an active manipulation of the *present* in order to provide comment—either in praise, ambivalence, or caution—on events only very recently passed. Indeed, one thing that archaeology allows us to glimpse is this process of memory-making. For example, we can see this process as work in the materialized dialogues between, or among, elites or emerging elites as they strive to create public memory, as well as in the responses of social memory-making fomented within and deriving from inside the community. Through the peeling back of stratigraphic layers of landscapes, buildings, middens, and activity areas we can uncover representations and remnants of the beliefs and behaviors that shaped these multivalent processes of commemoration, forgetting, and remembering.

And lest we forget it, these processes continue right on into the present. Long after they have served the purposes (both intentional and unintentional) of their builders and shapers and long after they have been abandoned and left in ruin, the remains of settlements continue to make meaning, surviving "as reconstituted object[s] beneath the gaze of critical history" (Nora 1989:12). Here the scholarly gaze of the archaeologist not only uncovers traces of public memories but can actively and politically reclaim social memories that have been subsumed by forced, intentional, or incidental forgetting (Connerton 1989). Furthermore, as archaeologists we do not just "find" and recover lost social memories in our interpretations of the past—we also make them. Through excavation, interpretation, and publication we actively add to this palimpsest and

reinforce the idea of the archaeological site as a site for public or social memory (and often for conflicting ones). Archaeological sites are therefore appropriate places for the study of memory both in the sense that they represent memory as created—either intentionally or unintentionally—in the past and in the sense that we as archaeologists continue to shape the social memories of such places through our research.

In what follows I will offer a discussion of the use of spaces and objects in the process of memory-making in pre-Columbian south-east Mesoamerica and consider potential transformations from public memories to social memories. These transformations not only may have taken place in the pre-Columbian past but also have continued into the present through the sometimes collaborative and sometimes conflicting work of local governments, stakeholders, the interested public, and archaeologists.

MAKING MEMORIES IN SOUTHEASTERN MESOAMERICA: THE PAST IN THE PAST

Southeastern Mesoamerica in the Late to Terminal Classic period (A.D. 600–900) provides an excellent case study for observing and interpreting the process of memory-making as well as the push and pull between public and social memories. This suitability results from oscillations in the character of political organization in the region during this time period; in particular, the region's occupants appear to have been engaged in what might be described as a multi-generational debate over the merits of hierarchical versus heterarchical forms of sociopolitical organization. Over the course of several hundred years, and across a broad swath of settlements and polities from the coastal Sula Plain to the mountainous interior of Honduras, emerging community leaders struggled to gain a foothold using monuments, spaces, and objects as a means to actively construct places of power and engage in performances that would assert their right to claim and/or perpetuate that power. Just as often as not, however, communities would reject these efforts in favor of a more corporate style of rule and, in so doing, would transform politically charged spaces into decommissioned monuments that stood defaced but not destroyed, discarded but not forgotten.

Las Canoas as a Site of Memory in the Making

I begin by considering the site of Las Canoas as a case study for these processes. Occupied from at least the Late through Terminal Classic periods (A.D. 650–900) and possibly from the Early Classic into the Early Postclassic (Stockett 2005a, 2007; Urban 2006), the site of Las Canoas is located along the banks of the Chamelecon River at the terminus of the Naco valley within the region of southeastern Mesoamerica (Figure 1). Geographically, southeastern Mesoamerica includes parts of modern-day Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. In pre-Columbian times this region was occupied by a diversity of groups, including both Maya and Lenca speakers (Campbell 1979; Lara Pinto 1991; Stone 1948). The residents of Las Canoas and their neighbors were not Maya and most likely spoke a dialect of Lenca (Campbell and Kaufman 1976; Henderson 1977; Joyce 1991; Stone 1948). The region has a long history of pre-Columbian occupation (Ashmore 1987; Canuto and Bell 2008; Dixon 1992; Healy 1984; Inomata and Aoyama 1996; Joyce 1991; Joyce and Henderson 2001; Lopiparo 2003; McFarlane 2005; Schortman and Urban 1994; Schortman et al. 2001; Stockett 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Urban and Schortman 2004; Urban et al. 2002; Wells

2003) but was the most densely settled in the Late Classic period when the region was characterized by complex sociopolitical groups linked by ever-shifting networks of alliance and trade.

A mid-sized site consisting of approximately 120 surface-visible mounds organized in a dense cluster around a smaller group of monumental structures known as the Main Plaza Group (Figure 2), Las Canoas was located approximately midway between two powerful polity capitals, La Sierra in the Naco valley (Schortman and Urban 1994; Urban and Schortman 2004; Urban et al. 2002) and El Coyote in the Cacaupala valley (McFarlane 2005; Wells 2003). The occupants of Las Canoas seem to have carefully negotiated their position among the shifting political and economic alliances in the region. Material expressions of regional affiliative ties indicate early connections with the Naco polity (Stockett 2005a, 2007) administered by paramounts at La Sierra (Schortman and Urban 1994; Urban and Schortman 2004). As a result, I have suggested elsewhere (Stockett 2005a; 2007) that Las Canoas was founded as a small ceramic production outpost from the Naco valley. After its initial founding, Las Canoas grew in prosperity over three centuries, transforming from a subordinate site into a more autonomous community.

This transformation began to occur as La Sierra elites diminished in power at the end of the Late Classic period, their experiment with hierarchical governance apparently rejected by subordinates (Urban and Schortman 2004). At this time, Las Canoans began expanding their sphere of interaction into the neighboring Cacaupala valley, which was located to the north and organized around the large, centralized site of El Coyote. The Las Canoans seem to have actively guided this shift with an eye toward increasing their sociopolitical and economic independence and prosperity (Stockett 2007). Their ability to negotiate an intermediate standing between these two larger and more powerful places was likely due to their work as craft specialists; evidence for intensive pottery production is abundant across the site¹ (Stockett 2005a, 2005b, 2007).

It was during this period—as the decline in elite power at La Sierra was allowing Las Canoans to reorient their trade networks upriver toward El Coyote—that sociopolitical changes appear to have begun impacting social relations *within* the Las Canoas community. I argue that these changes eventually culminated in the material expression of a dialogue about power and the social memorialization of that dialogue within the site core. In particular, as the community grew increasingly prosperous and independent, the central architectural grouping—the Main Plaza Group—also grew to be somewhat larger and more elaborate, and its occupants appear to have become more prominently involved in economic and religious activities in the community. I have discussed elsewhere the ways that these changes may signal the emergence of status distinctions within a settlement that was previously unmarked (at least materially) by such indicators of difference (Stockett 2007).

Perhaps driving this shift in community dynamics, the residents of the Main Plaza Group appear to have emerged as aspiring local

¹ Evidence for pottery production includes pot stands, ground stone manos and metates bearing traces of pigment, pigment stones, polishing stones, wasters, and the produced pottery itself. These materials were recovered in varying densities across the site, including from buildings in the Main Plaza Group. Recently-completed excavations in the southern portions of the settlement yielded unusually dense concentrations of materials associated with pottery production, suggesting that this was a zone of more intensive production (Urban and Bell, personal communication 2004). Recent work at Las Canoas has also revealed evidence of several firing facilities (Urban, personal communication 2008).

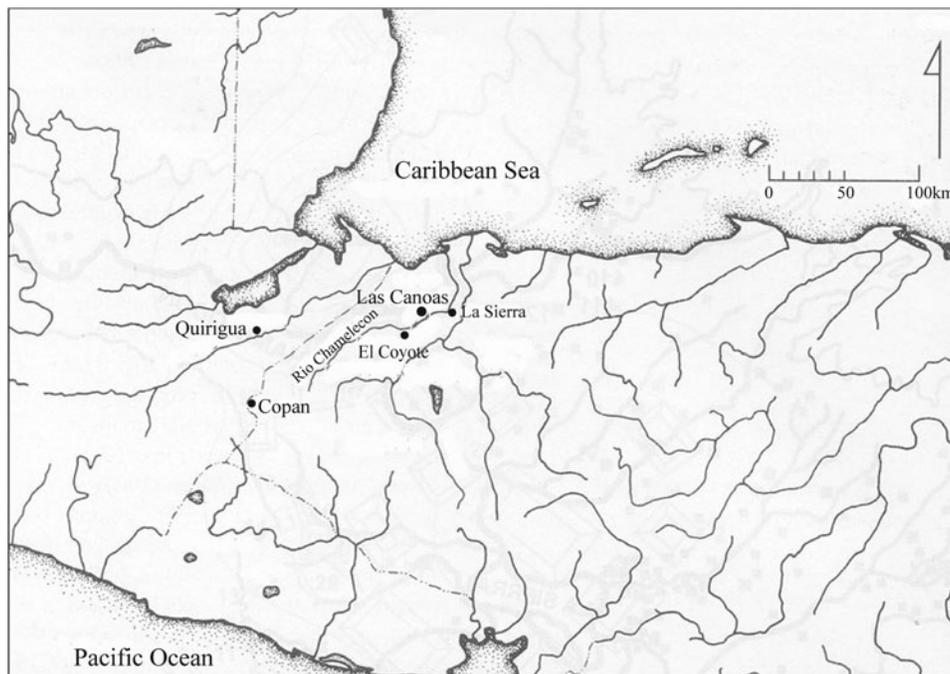


Figure 1. Map of southeastern Mesoamerica showing the sites discussed in the text.

leaders during the Terminal Classic transition, fostering and reinforcing an elevated socioeconomic position through the expression of identities as ritual specialists. Through the use of elaborate incense burners and anthropomorphic figurines as props and the newly expanded context of the Main Plaza Group as a stage for the ritual performances of these identities, these fledgling leaders attempted to provide a religious underpinning to their bid for political power (Stockett 2007). Eventually the material expressions of these socio-political transformations—the buildings and spaces of the Main Plaza Group—were decommissioned and then preserved

as a spatial testimony to the conflicted social memories of this time period. They remain as a material manifestation of the push and pull dynamic between public memories and social memories.

Below I present a chronicle of the construction histories of the buildings of the Main Plaza Group, highlighting their distinctiveness as compared to other buildings across the site. I conclude this section with a discussion of this area's decommissioning and abandonment. These data are intended to illustrate several things relating to processes of social memory-making at Las Canoas. First, they demonstrate the transformation of the Main Plaza Group from a relatively unremarkable patio group to a monumental setting for the performance of religious ritual (also see Stockett 2007). Second, they illustrate a concern with standardization and control over the growth and use of the Main Plaza that is unique within the community. This concern with uniformity further highlights the ways that this space was marked as special—and the ways its growth was controlled—during a critical moment in the community's history. Third, these data demonstrate the potential rejection of the ideology that some members of the community may have attempted to materialize through performance within the Main Plaza during the Terminal Classic transition. This rejection—manifested through the defacement, abandonment, and repurposing of the space—provides a key element in our story about processes of social memorialization at Las Canoas.

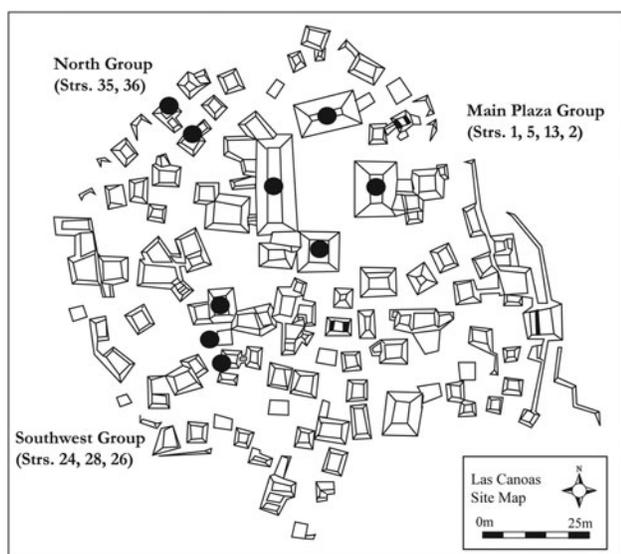


Figure 2. Las Canoas site map. Black dots indicate structures from the Main Plaza Group, Southwest Group, and North Group, all discussed throughout the text.

THE MAIN PLAZA GROUP AT LAS CANOAS—AN ARCHITECTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

The Main Plaza Group at Las Canoas (Figure 3) consists of three monumental cobble and earthen structures (Structure 1, 5, and 13) facing onto a large, open central plaza measuring 15- \times -27 m in its final form. The southern end of the plaza is bounded by the rear wall of Structure 2 (discussed below). The entire group is located in the northeastern portion of the settlement and is

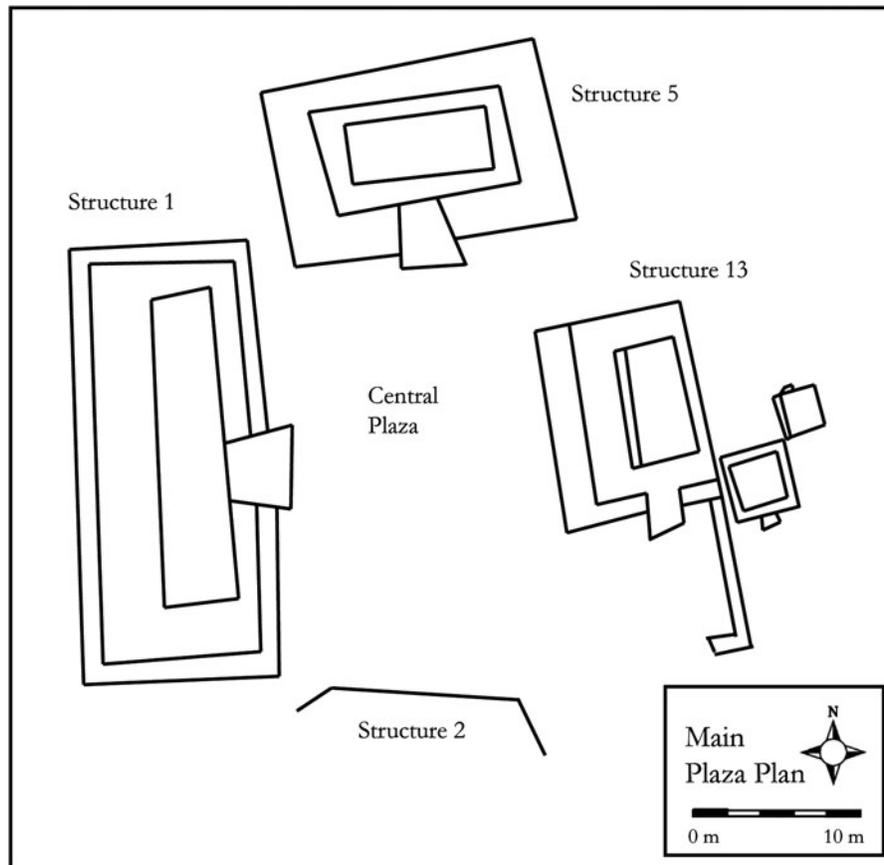


Figure 3. Schematic drawing of the Main Plaza Group, showing Structures 1, 5, and 13.

surrounded by smaller households that served as residences and craft working locales.

Partially complicating the reconstruction of building sequences at Las Canoas is the fact that the natural landscape surrounding and underlying the settlement appears to have been heavily modified by its occupants in prehistory. In some places, the natural topography seems to have been leveled by excavating away layers of soil, and in other places the occupants of the site appear to have built up the ground surface artificially by depositing fill. In fact, most of the investigated buildings at the site rest on top of deposits of fill containing cultural debris. In most cases the fill deposits themselves rest on culturally sterile soil (rather than providing a buffer between much earlier periods of occupation). These activities make it difficult to determine with certainty when each of the buildings—including those in the Main Plaza—were founded with respect to the others.

Structure 1: Architectural History

Structure 1 was built over the course of three major episodes of construction (refer to Figure 4). In the first phase, the building's core²

² As a point of terminological clarity, in the following architectural reconstructions I will use the term “core” to refer to the central component of the platform supporting the building's summit. The core consists of four cobbled walls (typically interlocking) defining a platform that is filled and consolidated with deposits of earth and refuse. Additions to the core may include terraces, porches, and staircases appended to its exterior as well as cobble shelves, benches, or walls constructed atop the building's

was established as a low, cobble platform consolidated with fill, measuring 19.5 m (north to south) by 4.5 m (east to west) and rising to a preserved height of 1.65 m above culturally sterile soil. It is likely that biodegradable walls and a roof may have once sat atop the core platform. The cobble walls of this phase of core construction differ from later phases, being built of medium-sized round river cobbles³ and chinking stones set in courses. A gray hardened ash or mortar was found on portions of the exterior surface of the western core wall, suggesting either aesthetic efforts or a building technique designed to strengthen the structure's foundations.

During the second phase of construction, Structure 1's core was elevated 0.4 m through the addition of round river cobbles much bigger than those used in the earlier phase. A new fill deposit, different in color and composition from the previous construction phase, was used to consolidate the newly raised core and create a level platform surface. To facilitate access to the summit, cobble and earthen terraces were appended to all four sides of the core's exterior. With the exception of the plaza-facing (east) terrace, which rose in two

summit and meant to demarcate rooms. These latter features probably supported perishable pole and thatch walls.

³ Round river cobbles refer to those measuring 5 cm (or less) longer than they are wide. Oblong cobbles are those measuring 5 cm (or more) longer than they are wide. The term “small” is used to describe cobbles whose largest dimension is less than 21 cm. The term “medium” refers to cobbles whose largest dimension ranges from 22 cm to 30 cm. The term “larger” refers to those cobbles whose largest dimension ranges from 31 cm to 50 cm, and the term “massive” is used to refer to cobbles whose largest dimension is greater than 51 cm.

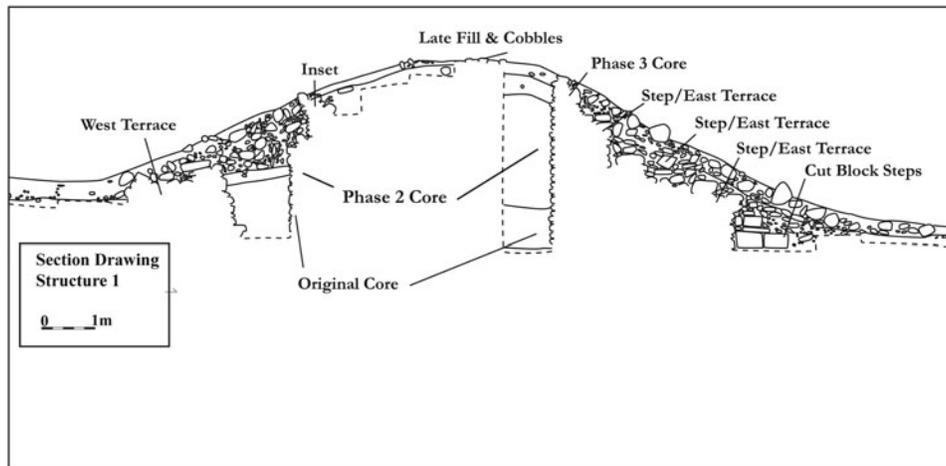


Figure 4. Section drawing of Structure 1, showing construction history as discussed in the text.

tiers, all were single-tier terraces. Interestingly, the plaza-facing terrace was oriented to match the orientation of the western core wall rather than the eastern core wall (which it abuts the length of), making it thicker at the northeastern end of the building. This adjustment effectively reoriented the building's plaza-facing façade from 2 degrees west of north to 5 degrees east of north. Finally, a series of cobble and cut block steps were added to the east terrace. These were composed of large-sized round river cobbles bolstered on either end by stepped, stacked, cut limestone blocks and were located at the centerline of the building facing onto the plaza. They were likely designed to aid ascent to the summit and give Structure 1 a more formal appearance.

At the close of this second phase of construction, therefore, Structure 1 reached its maximal exterior dimensions of 23 m (north to south) by 12.2 m (east to west). It was essentially a two-tiered building with a broad terrace surrounding an elevated platform (composed of the building's core). The core platform rose to a height of just over 2 m and was ascended via a formal cut-stone and cobble staircase on the plaza-facing (east) side of the building. The platform's summit appears to have been a large, undivided room likely enclosed by *bajareque* walls and a thatch roof. As the artifactual evidence (discussed below) indicates, these staircases, elevated terraces, and perhaps even the enclosed summit room likely served as venues for public and private religious rituals.

The third phase of construction on Structure 1 was not extensive, but it did involve the addition of a number of interesting features. At this point in time, the platform core was raised a final time by nearly 1 m, bringing the total preserved height of Structure 1 to 3.05 m. One reason for raising these walls appears to have been the incorporation of two niches into the eastern wall. These niches were located between the formal terraced staircase ascending to the platform and the southeastern corner of the building's summit. They each measured approximately 60 cm wide by 60 cm deep. The base of the southernmost niche was surfaced with cobbles, and the northernmost was surfaced with *bajareque*. The two niches were built 90 cm apart. The remains of an ephemeral cobble wall (only one course high by one course wide) abutted the newly raised eastern wall and divided the summit into southern and northern portions. It is possible that this wall was built to partition the section of the summit containing the niches from the section of the summit accessible by visitors ascending the formal staircase. Given the strong

ritual associations of Structure 1 (discussed below), it is likely that these niches were used for private rituals involving the use of figurine idols and incense burning.

The final evidence of pre-abandonment construction activity associated with Structure 1 may be related to the decommissioning or termination of this building as part of the process of social memory-making. A final layer of fill was deposited on the surface of Structure 1's summit, covering over and obscuring the niches; indeed, it is possible that this fill was deposited for just this purpose. Patches of scattered, small-sized, rounded cobbles were found on top of this layer of fill. These cobbles may represent an effort to create a level surface on top of the fill—perhaps as part of a repurposing of the building after it was decommissioned as a locus for ritual activity.

Structure 5: Architectural History

Similar to Structure 1, Structure 5 was constructed in three major episodes (refer to Figure 5). The first phase involved establishing the building's core, which measured 6.5 m (north to south) by 12 m (east to west) and rose 1 m. It was built of medium-sized oblong cobbles set end to end in courses without chinking stones and was consolidated with fill. Either during this initial phase of construction or immediately following, the occupants of Structure 5 built a low cobble surface off of the southern (plaza-facing) side of the core. Constructed of small-sized, round river cobbles with their flattest faces oriented upward, this surface extended 1 m south of the southern core wall. On Structure 5's north side, a surface of bright red-orange hardened material similar in appearance to *bajareque* and topped with a 3 cm thick layer of hardened gray ash extended north from the core for approximately 2.5 m.

The second phase of construction on Structure 5 involved additions very similar to those described for Structure 1, including raising the building's core to a height of 1.5 m. The newly raised core walls were built of medium-sized oblong cobbles with chinking stones; however, rather than being laid in alternating courses with the cobbles, the chinking stones were haphazardly wedged in among the cobbles. A new deposit of fill, of a different color and consistency than the previous deposit, was used to consolidate the building's core. Just as on Structure 1, terraces were added to Structure 5's core during the phase of construction. On the southern,

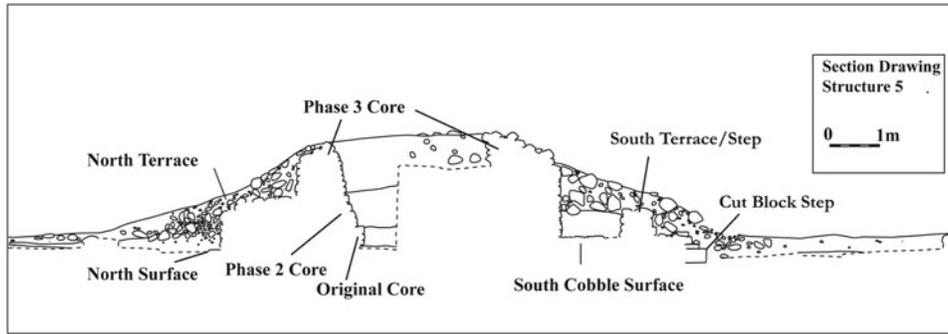


Figure 5. Section drawing of Structure 5, showing construction history as discussed in the text.

plaza-facing side of the building the cobble surface was obscured by a newly built cobble and earthen terrace supporting a cut-stone staircase nearly identical to the one on Structure 1. Also similar to Structure 1, the addition of this plaza-facing terrace on Structure 5 reoriented the building—in this case so that the building, which was originally oriented 10 degrees south of west, was now aligned in a perfectly east-west orientation. As with Structure 1, artifactual evidence (discussed below) indicates that Structure 5’s staircase, elevated terraces, and summit room interior were venues for the performance of specialized religious rituals, possibly deployed by emerging local leaders in an effort to shape public memory within the community.

The final elaboration to Structure 5 consisted of its occupants raising the core an additional 1.1 m in height, bringing the platform to its final preserved height of 2.6 m. The construction style of this addition to the building’s core was very different from that observed in earlier phases. Large, oblong river cobbles were set lengthwise, end to end, without the benefit of chinking stones to reinforce the courses. As a result of this rather crude style of construction, this phase of construction was poorly preserved (many of the walls were pressing inward on the fill consolidating the core or had begun to tumble precipitously down onto the terraces). In its final form, Structure 5 measured 20 m east-west by 12.5 m north-south and rose 2.6 m in height. The building’s summit was one large, undivided space, measuring 12 m east-west by 4 m north-south.

Structure 13: Architectural History

Unlike Structures 1 and 5, most of Structure 13’s earliest foundations were not exposed through probing excavations, making a

detailed reconstruction more difficult. However, from the remains we did expose, it appears that Structure 13 was also raised in three major episodes of construction (see Figure 6). The platform core was established in the first phase of building as a long low structure measuring 1 m in height, 7 m in width (east to west), and of an unknown length. The original core was built of medium rounded river cobbles and shaped limestone that was set in courses without chinking stones. The core was consolidated with fill. These particulars are very similar to the first phases of construction on Structures 1 and 5.

In the second phase of construction, Structure 13’s core was raised again, this time by 0.75 m, bringing the platform to a height of 1.75 m in height. The second phase of construction on the core is evident in the different construction materials and methods used, including primarily small rounded river cobbles set with even courses of chinking stones. Fill was used to consolidate the newly raised core and create a level platform surface. At this point in time, much like the construction histories of Structures 1 and 5, low terraces were added to the west, north, and south sides of the core platform. These terraces rose 0.9 m in height, and the western (plaza-facing) terrace was two-tiered, presumably to facilitate access to the platform summit from the central plaza. Deposits of fill were used to consolidate the elevated surfaces created by the addition of the terraces—the western terrace was particularly broad, stretching 1.8 m westward into the plaza. Just as on Structures 1 and 5, the addition of the western terrace reoriented the plaza-facing side of Structure 13 to match the orientation of its rear core wall (in this case a reorientation from 6 degrees west of north to 10 degrees west of north).

The third phase of construction on Structure 13 differed somewhat from those seen for Structures 1 and 5. Rather than raise the

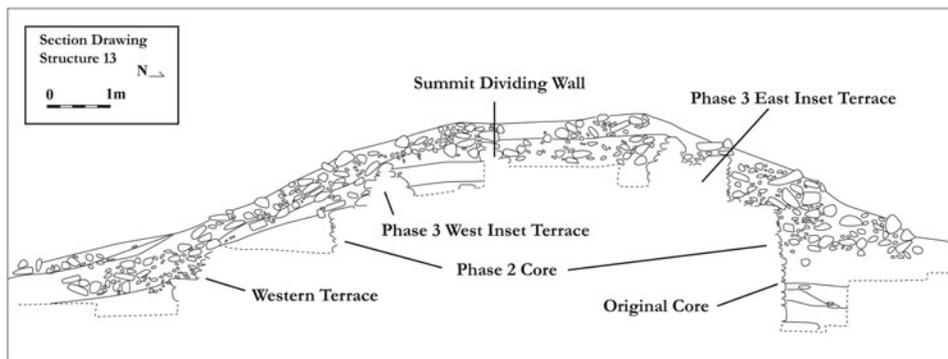


Figure 6. Section drawing of Structure 13, showing construction history as discussed in the text.

core a third time, the builders of Structure 13 chose to elevate the summit through the addition of inset terraces set atop the previous platform surface. This had the effect of creating a raised, more spatially constrained summit. The terraces, identified clearly on the east and west only, elevated the summit surface 0.9 m and reduced its width from 7 m (east-west) to 5.5 m. The space between these new summit walls was consolidated with fill. Either at this time, or during a subsequent construction phase, a long, low summit-dividing wall was built to segregate the summit into two separate rooms. Its length is unknown, but it divided the summit into a western room 1.7 m wide and an eastern room 3.8 m wide.

Also likely during the third phase of construction, but possibly subsequent to it, is that an elaborate cobble staircase was appended to the southern side of Structure 13. Unlike Structures 1 and 5, this staircase was not oriented onto the central plaza and was not bolstered with cut limestone blocks. Much of Structure 13, including its summit room interiors and elevated terraces surfaces, but particularly this southern-facing staircase, appear to have been loci for the performance of specialized religious rituals, particularly those involving incense burning.

In its final form, Structure 13 rose to a preserved height of at least 3.15 m, standing as a three-tiered platform of cobble, earth, and limestone; its maximal basal dimensions were 10.5 m by 11.75 m. Its small summit was likely accessible from the central plaza by a broad set of western terraces as well as from the formal staircase added onto the building's south side late in its construction history. The summit was divided into two small rooms. While Structure 13 bears significant similarities to Structures 1 and 5, including its size, overall form, construction history, and plaza-facing reorientation, the building also exhibits some differences, including the location and design of its formal staircase.

Structure 2: Architectural History

Structure 2 is a part of the Main Plaza Group in the sense that it forms the southern border of the central plaza space. However, its construction history, uses, and design differ greatly from Structures 1, 5, and 13—so much so that it may not be considered a functional part of the Main Plaza Group and instead appears oriented into a smaller patio located to the south. Most notably, Structure 2 was built from its inception to face away from the Main Plaza Group's central plaza. Its formal entrance was located on its south face and this entrance was expanded and elaborated upon over several phases of construction, emphasizing this orientation away from the central plaza. Structure 2 was also designed very differently from Structures 1, 5, and 13, being raised in at least four phases of construction and designed to include many rooms, with shelves and benches (Britain 2006). Furthermore, Structure 2 appears to have functioned fully as a domestic residence and lacks the evidence found in Structures 1, 5, and 13 (discussed below) signaling specialized religious ritual performances.

What is interesting about Structure 2—and the way in which it bears on our story of political maneuvering and the production of public and social memories at Las Canoas—has to do with its final phase of construction and use. Structure 2, it appears, continued to be occupied and used after Structures 1, 5, and 13 were abandoned (further evidence, indeed, of its lack of connection to the activities and events unfolding around these other three edifices). However, in its final phase of major construction, Structure 2 had a crude, six-tiered terrace appended to its north side, permitting—

for the first time—direct access into the Main Plaza Group (Britain 2006). Around this time, the occupants of Structure 2 also appear to have begun using the central plaza of the Main Plaza Group as a midden for trash disposal as well as a locale for small-scale groundstone production. The final elaborations to Structure 2 include an extension that may have connected the building to Structure 1 (Britain 2006). It is possible that these additions may be contemporaneous with the infilling of Structure 1's summit and niches and the possible repurposing of this formerly ritually sacred space.

Comparing the Main Plaza Group to Other Constructions at Las Canoas

In several respects, the buildings of the Main Plaza Group are unique among those investigated at Las Canoas. Not only are they larger and more impressive than all other structures at the site, but they were also constructed and used in very distinctive ways. Outside of the Main Plaza Group, I have investigated ten other structures scattered across four different households. All of them exhibited designs, construction histories, and uses that signal their similarity to each other and difference from Structures 1, 5, and 13.

In analyzing those structures' forms, designs, and histories of expansion, several clear patterns emerge. First, virtually all of them were small, being under 1 m high (and in most cases under 0.5 m high) and an average of 5–7 m per side. Their building cores, therefore, tended to be raised in only a single episode of construction and expansions to them were usually lateral (e.g., through the addition of appended terraces, attached cobble surfaces, steps, and porches) rather than vertical. Though many of these buildings were initially constructed around small patio groups, over time those patios were often dramatically reduced in size—and in some cases obscured altogether—by the addition of new buildings or other constructions⁴.

For example, when the Southwest Group (see Figure 2) was first established, Structures 24, 26, and 28 were situated around an open patio that appears to have been surfaced repeatedly. Over time, each building grew larger and more elaborate through the addition of terraces, niches, and workspaces; in particular, Structure 26 was dramatically expanded into the central patio space, and its earlier platform was abandoned. Diachronically, therefore, the Southwest Group accreted over a complex series of fill deposits and construction episodes from a patio-focused group into a densely packed architectural complex with no open patio. The exact same pattern was observed in the North Group (see Figure 2)—a relatively open patio between Structures 35 and 36 was eventually encroached upon by Structure 35's expanding architecture until the patio was completely covered over with new constructions. Thus, rather than having a fixed idea of how a household should be laid out and making a concerted effort to preserve that spatial design through time, the residents of Las Canoas appear to have repurposed and redesigned their households as needed.

Conversely, it is clear from our consideration of the construction histories of the buildings in the Main Plaza Group that the opposite was true. The buildings appear to have been raised as a unit and with a preconceived design in mind. The open space of the central plaza

⁴ An abundance of evidence associated with pottery manufacture was recovered from many of these newly added buildings and platforms, indicating that the expansion of buildings into patios may have been related to the increasing intensification of household production over time.

appears to have been a key part of that vision, as it was preserved over time in a way that patios in other parts of the site were not. A comparison of the majority of the buildings at Las Canoas with the Main Plaza Group emphasizes a contrast between informal design principles that prioritized the productive needs of the household and a carefully designed and controlled space that was maintained over several generations.

Structures 1, 5, and 13 were raised to their final heights over the course of three successive phases, with significant similarities echoed across all three structures. Each was founded as a low platform, expanded to a two-tiered building, appended with formal staircases, expanded again to a three-tiered building, and elaborated with special features such as niches. The summits of all three buildings remained largely undivided or separated into two or fewer rooms. Furthermore, all three buildings' plaza-facing sides were reoriented during their second phase of construction. These reorientations are not consistent (Structure 1 was realigned to run 5 degrees east of north, Structure 5 was realigned due east, and Structure 13 was realigned 10 degrees west of north); however, the fact that all three underwent the same type of change just as they were expanded from modest platforms to more substantial constructions suggests a potentially meaningful pattern of some sort, as well as furnishing additional evidence that their design was being carefully controlled.

Because of the Las Canoas' penchant for modifying the ground surface, it is difficult to establish when each building was founded in relation to the other, but given the remarkable similarities in relation to which features were added in each subsequent construction phase (particularly when contrasted with building practices across the rest of the site), I hypothesize that the buildings were expanded simultaneously and that they were designed not as individual buildings but as a single cohesive architectural space. Further contributing to this interpretation is the fact that the central plaza itself was carefully preserved as a large, open gathering space. This effort flies in the face of the larger trend at Las Canoas, which was to build households inward, eventually obliterating previously open patios through the construction of new buildings and additions to old ones.

Summary

The data presented here describes a gradual, three-phase expansion of the buildings of the Main Plaza Group from long, low platforms quite similar to other constructions at the site to relatively monumental buildings incorporating spaces, such as a large central plaza, formal staircases, broad elevated terraces, private summit rooms, and interior niches—all of which were purposed for activities related to the emergence of status distinctions at Las Canoas. This appears to have been particularly the case during the second and third phases of expansion to the Main Plaza Group when the buildings were elaborated on a (relatively) monumental scale. Indeed, artifactual data indicate that the features constructed during these phases (staircases, elevated platform surfaces, niches, and private summit rooms) appear to have been used for the performance of both public and private religious rituals. As the structures in the Main Plaza Group were being dramatically expanded in size and grandeur, some occupants of the site began using them as stages for ritual performances that may have been designed to set them apart from other members of the community.

Excavations in the Main Plaza Group yielded two types of artifacts often associated with ritual activities—a distinctive style of anthropomorphic figurine head and *incensarios* (Figure 7). Most were recovered in association with the second and third phases of

construction and use of the buildings. In some sense, the discovery of these objects was not unusual. *Incensarios*, for example, were recovered from nearly every excavated context at Las Canoas, suggesting they were used by and held ritual significance for the whole community. However, those recovered from smaller residences across the site were found in low densities and were typically recovered from garbage middens. Those recovered from the Main Plaza Group were found in much greater densities, were more elaborate, and were found in contexts associated with their last use; specifically, they were grouped together and (1) resting directly atop ancient living surfaces, (2) intentionally cached beneath floors or patio surfaces, or (3) mixed with fallen architectural elements, suggesting they once rested atop structures prior to their decay (see Stockett 2007 for more information).

The distinctive style of figurine heads had an even more pronounced distribution, being found almost exclusively in the Main Plaza Group, specifically from contexts associated with Structure 1's staircase and along the edge of the plaza surface. Many of these figurines bore a T-shaped (Romero B) dental modification, nearly a third had their noses bashed off, and all were head fragments only and showed evidence of predepositional breaks between the neck and body, perhaps suggesting intentional defacement and/or deanimation, such as in termination rituals. Both their relative abundance and the contexts they were recovered from indicate that *incensarios* and figurines were used differently within the Main Plaza Group than elsewhere at the site, perhaps in performances visible to groups gathered in the central plaza as well as those occurring in the secluded interiors of the building's summits (Stockett 2007). These objects may have been used in ritual performances designed to evoke gods or ancestors and reinforce memories within the community relating to the status and authority of ritual specialists.

These artifactual and architectural data could suggest that in orchestrating the coordinated construction of monumental buildings and using the resultant spaces to conduct religious performances, a group of aspiring ritual specialists may have attempted to materialize a new ideological orientation for the community that was rooted in sociopolitical differentiation. As embodied performances of culturally meaningful beliefs, these ceremonies harkened to both past and contemporary southeast Mesoamerican and Maya strategies for the fomentation and preservation of power (Lucero 2003, 2006; McAnany 1995). By engaging in ceremonies designed to reference and memorialize those strategies, these ritual specialists may have intended to shape the political here-and-now by materializing their political power and minimizing—or encouraging forgetting of—the community's past lack of status distinctions. These efforts might be interpreted as part of a process of the production of public memory.

However, the efforts of the individuals engaged in ritual performance do not appear to have met with enduring success. As noted previously, the fortunes of the Las Canoas community were tied to larger regional trends and dramas being enacted at the polity centers of La Sierra and El Coyote. Just as La Sierra faltered during the Late to Terminal Classic transition, El Coyote also appears to have experienced its own political and social upheavals near the end of the Terminal Classic (discussed below). Dramatically different trade networks seem to have emerged from these changes, with El Coyote occupants turning their attention to the west and north and importing large quantities of Pachuca green obsidian from Mexico (McFarlane 2005). None of this obsidian was found in any of our extensive excavations at Las Canoas, suggesting that Las Canoas were cut off from interactions with El

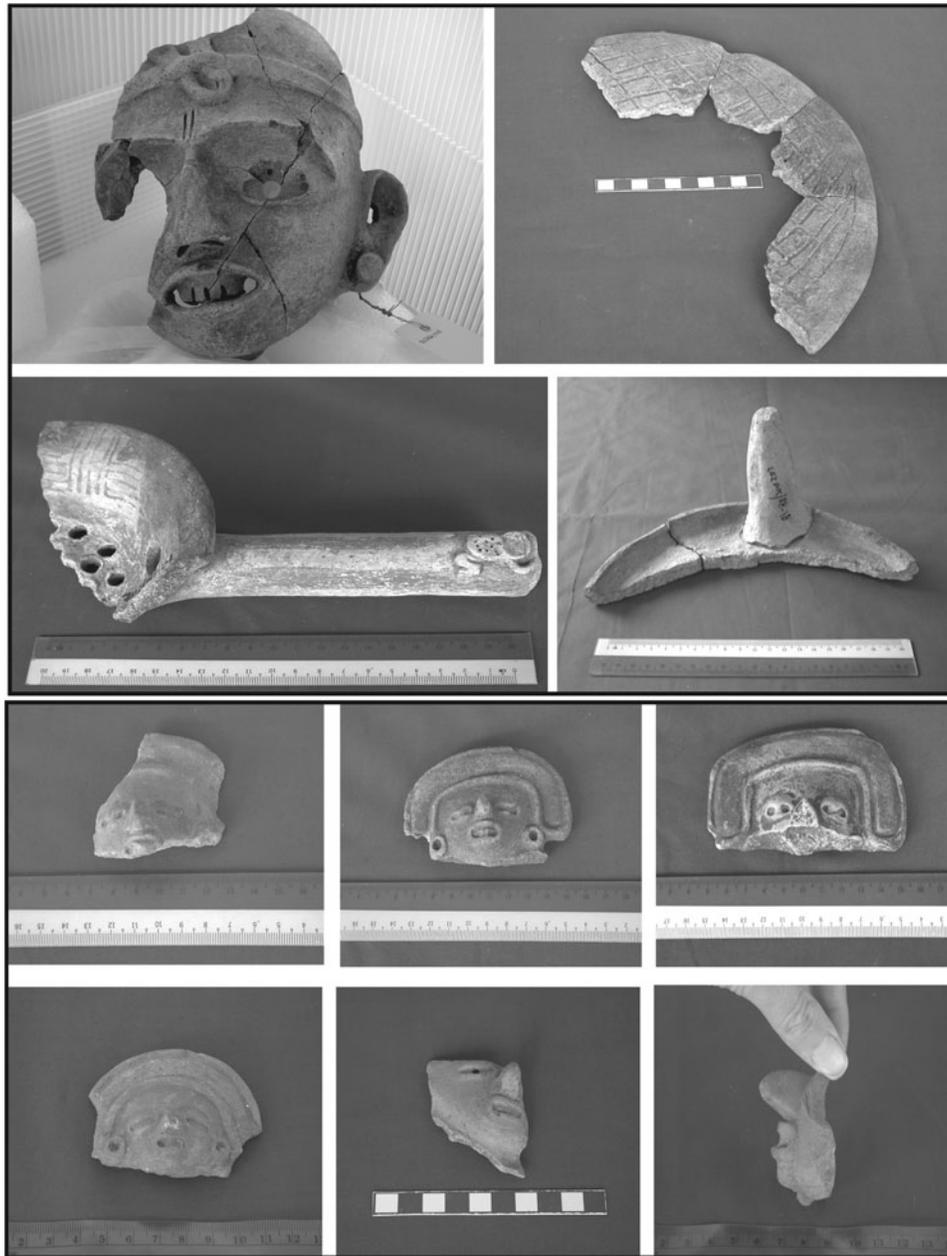


Figure 7. The top half of this figure shows *incensarios* recovered from the Main Plaza Group, and the bottom half shows the distinctive anthropomorphic figurine heads associated with them.

Coyote at this time. These disruptions in the trade networks relied upon by the emerging leaders at Las Canoas appear to have thwarted their ambitions. In response to the apparent loss of El Coyote as a trade partner at the end of the Terminal Classic period, the Main Plaza Group was decommissioned, and the ritual activities carried out therein ceased to occur.

The data related to this transformation of place at Las Canoas seems to reflect an active effort on the part of the Las Canoas community to shape social memory and comment on the recent past—namely on the way that the ritual performances once held in this space were to be remembered. The architectural reconstruction of the buildings of the Main Plaza Group presented above yielded several clues about their abandonment—most notably the layer of fill deposited atop Structure 1, which covered over the niches

built during the final phase of construction. This may have been intended as an intentional erasing of features on Structure 1 that once served as a focus of ritual activities—perhaps particularly because these niches were in the most private and difficult to access part of the Main Plaza Group, they may have been seen as embodying the spatial and social segregation fostered by Las Canoas' emerging leaders.

The burial of Structure 1's niches was also accompanied by other, more dramatic, acts of decommissioning. After their final phase of construction (the time when ritual performances in the Main Plaza Group appear to have reached their peak), points of access and entry into the Main Plaza were intentionally restricted through the deposition of mounded cobbles between the monumental buildings and the structures appear to have fallen into disuse—with one

exception. As discussed earlier, Structure 2, distinct from the other three buildings in the Main Plaza Group from its inception, continued to be occupied into the Terminal Classic period (and perhaps even into the Early Postclassic period). This building's occupants, in fact, appear to have even repurposed the space out their back door by dumping garbage into the Main Plaza and using portions of its margins as a zone for the production of groundstone manos and metates (Britain 2006; Urban, personal communication 2008).

The decommissioning of this space suggests a rejection of the activities that once took place within it (as well as the intents and ambitions of those activities' authors). Yet, the fact that the abandoned buildings of the Main Plaza were allowed to stand empty rather than being torn down and replaced with something new suggests that rather than wishing to completely forget the events of the past, the community wished them to be remembered, or at least to be remembered in a particular way.

In sum, I argue that the concerted expansion of the Main Plaza Group and the ritual performances that appear to have accompanied, and perhaps even motivated, that expansion were part of a process of public memory production, while the decommissioning that followed after was an attempt to memorialize a newly minted view of the space's significance to the community—the response of the community as they attempted to shape social memory. In other words, the modifications to this monumental space can be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the occupants of Las Canoas to determine how the political machinations that occurred within their own community would be remembered by future generations.

REGIONAL TRENDS: COMPARING PROCESSES OF PLACE-MAKING AND SOCIAL MEMORY IN NORTHWESTERN HONDURAS

The processes of power negotiations and social memory-making interpreted from the archaeological remains of Las Canoas do not appear to have been unique; indeed, brief consideration of the

contemporaneous sites of La Sierra and El Coyote reveals similar strategies at work in this region during the Late to Terminal Classic transition.

La Sierra

Serving as the polity capital of the populous Naco valley during the Late Classic period, La Sierra (refer to Figure 1) was occupied from the Middle Preclassic through at least the Terminal Classic period (Schortman and Urban 1994, 2004), and its Late Classic monumental plaza stands as material testimony to the power of the local elite (Figure 8). Study of this space, however, reveals active manipulation of, and changes in, that power over time. Patricia Urban and Edward Schortman (personal communication 2009) suggest that elite leaders appear to have attempted to segregate power through privileged use of the monumental plaza for political gatherings and private ritual events. Eventually, in the face of broader social changes in the Terminal Classic, the material residues of these earlier strategies appear to have been actively decommissioned and a new plaza was built—one with a spatial form suggesting that a wholly new kind of political power was being expressed (Schortman and Urban 2004, 1994).

The Late Classic period Main Plaza itself was organized in a tightly enclosed D-shape and ringed by large range structures; traces of plaster flooring were recovered from the immediate environs of several of these buildings. The structures ringing the plaza enclosed six temple-like platforms that were faced with cut limestone blocks (Schortman and Urban 1994, 2009 personal communication). The unusual placement of these temples, enclosed within the central portion of the plaza, limited the amount of space available for crowds of people, blocked lines of sight, and emphasized the importance of private, elite, ritual activity. The monumental, raised, expansive, and featureless nature of the investigated range structures suggests they may have been used instead for political gatherings (Schortman and Urban 2004, 2006; Webber and

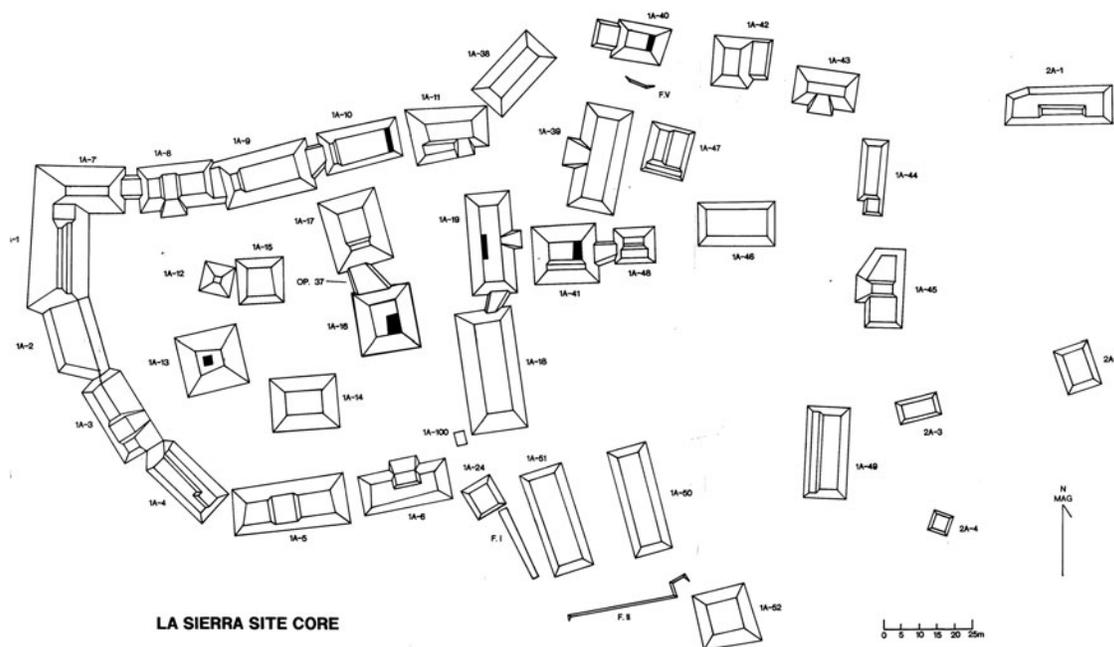


Figure 8. Site map of La Sierra's monumental site core.

Stockett 2003). If this was the case, the active construction of place in the plaza of La Sierra may have been the architectural expression of rulership revolving around high-level elites and their local contemporaries and likely spoke to the authoritative expression of public memory production.

The ultimate instability of this vision, however, is made clear by several acts of decommissioning of the space. At the end of the Late Classic, the monumental plaza was abandoned and the majority of the tuff blocks adorning building facades were removed and redistributed into Terminal Classic contexts—both monumental and mundane. However, Schortman and Urban note the following.

There was more going on here than stone robbing At least parts of six monumental platforms ... were covered by variably dense deposits of flat-laid cobbles set in an earth matrix. These additions effectively obscured large parts of pre-existing structures What was left was a series of constructions whose profiles were smoothed over, transformed into rounded hills from which vegetation likely soon started to sprout (2006:12).

A cache located between two of the central temples also implies a formal break with the past. This cache, characterized as a termination deposit, included modeled censers, spondylus shells, and one of the few pieces of stone sculpture found in the extensively investigated Naco valley (Schortman and Urban 1994). This sculpture, a tenoned portrait head, may depict an individual ruler of La Sierra, possibly commemorating his reign (Schortman 2009, personal communication). Prior to interment in the cache, however, the face of this portrait was disfigured through battering of the nose and mouth (Schortman and Urban 1994), suggesting an act of rejection and a wish to forget past leadership.

These buildings, spaces, and objects were material markers of place, social history, and political authority at Late Classic La Sierra. Through the decommissioning of this space we see the destructive dismantling of earlier monuments and rejection of the public memories they embodied. These acts of destruction were accompanied, however, by equivalent acts of creation. As the old plaza was decommissioned, a new one was built. This new Terminal Classic plaza was quite different in form and layout from its predecessor, though, interestingly, it was located immediately adjacent to the east. It is somewhat circular and amorphous in shape, and its central space would have been accessible from many points making it sufficiently large to host substantial gatherings of people. This stands in marked contrast to the tightly enclosed and densely packed Late Classic Main Plaza.

Schortman and Urban (2006) suggest that this transition marks a return to a more corporate style of rule in the Naco valley and a rejection of the hierarchical form of power imposed by the Late Classic La Sierra elites. But the materialization of that rejection is of an interesting sort. Rather than dismantling the previous plaza entirely or relocating their new power center to an unsullied location, the Terminal Classic rulers chose to erect the new buildings within a stone's throw of the old—the latter standing as a constant reminder of what came before and how dramatically it was thrown down. Just as we saw at Las Canoas, it may be argued that these material manifestations were actively designed to *alter* public memory into social memory rather than erase it altogether.

Power and Social Memory at El Coyote

At the site of El Coyote (see Figure 1), we can observe similar processes of social memory taking place but within a somewhat different sociopolitical context. As a primary parallel we see the tactic of preserving historical continuity of place within the transformation of power. Despite similar approaches to materializing and memorializing change, however, the El Coyote community appears to have been otherwise very different from La Sierra. First, based on the layout of the Late Classic monumental plaza, this settlement's leaders appear to have emphasized a far more integrative approach to social and religious life (Figure 9). The site of governance in the lower Cacaupala valley, El Coyote was occupied from the Late Preclassic through the Early Postclassic periods (McFarlane 2005; Schortman and Urban, personal communication 2008; Wells 2003). The Late Classic plaza was long, fairly rectilinear, surfaced with limestone plaster, and bounded by large range-type structures and tall buildings with steeply sloping sides that resemble temple-like structures. Those that were investigated were found to be faced with cut block and ascended via elaborate staircases (Schwartz 2002; Wells 2003). The plaza also incorporated two small, centrally located buildings that have been interpreted by Wells (2004) as venues for the ritual production and storage of materials associated with elite-sponsored feasting.

As we have seen at La Sierra and Las Canoas, the range structures surrounding the plaza supported large open rooms potentially useful for political gatherings or ritual practices. Unlike La Sierra, however, and perhaps more similar to Las Canoas, these architectural cues do not seem to translate into a wholly elite-privileged space. Rather than being a restricted and enclosed setting, the plaza was spacious, had both formal and informal routes of access channeling into it, and likely functioned as an occasional forum for elite-sponsored community events such as feasts (Wells 2004). This suggests an emphasis on the inclusion of non-elite members of society in plaza activities, integrating public and social memories through recurring social events.

Despite these differences from La Sierra, similar acts of decommissioning reflecting large-scale upheavals in political power can be seen at El Coyote and in many ways parallel what we've seen before. In particular, the monumental plaza appears to have been completely abandoned during the Late to Terminal Classic periods (Urban and Schortman 1999; personal communication 2009), a time that marks the beginning of dramatic changes in political strategies and community life at El Coyote. By the Early Postclassic period, an entirely new monumental core was constructed in a separate complex located to the northeast (McFarlane 2005). This new central space embodied completely different principles of building construction, spatial organization, and political structure from those seen earlier in the Late Classic core (McFarlane 2005). Here, as at La Sierra, the material manifestation of past political practices and public memories was decommissioned and probably left empty. Also like La Sierra, many of the massive monumental structures of the earlier plaza would likely have still been visible from the new Early Postclassic center, standing in mute testimony to abandoned political strategies of an earlier time.

Summary

As these comparative examples illustrate, though Las Canoas was a relatively small community, its occupants nonetheless appear to have been engaged in strategies quite similar to their larger and

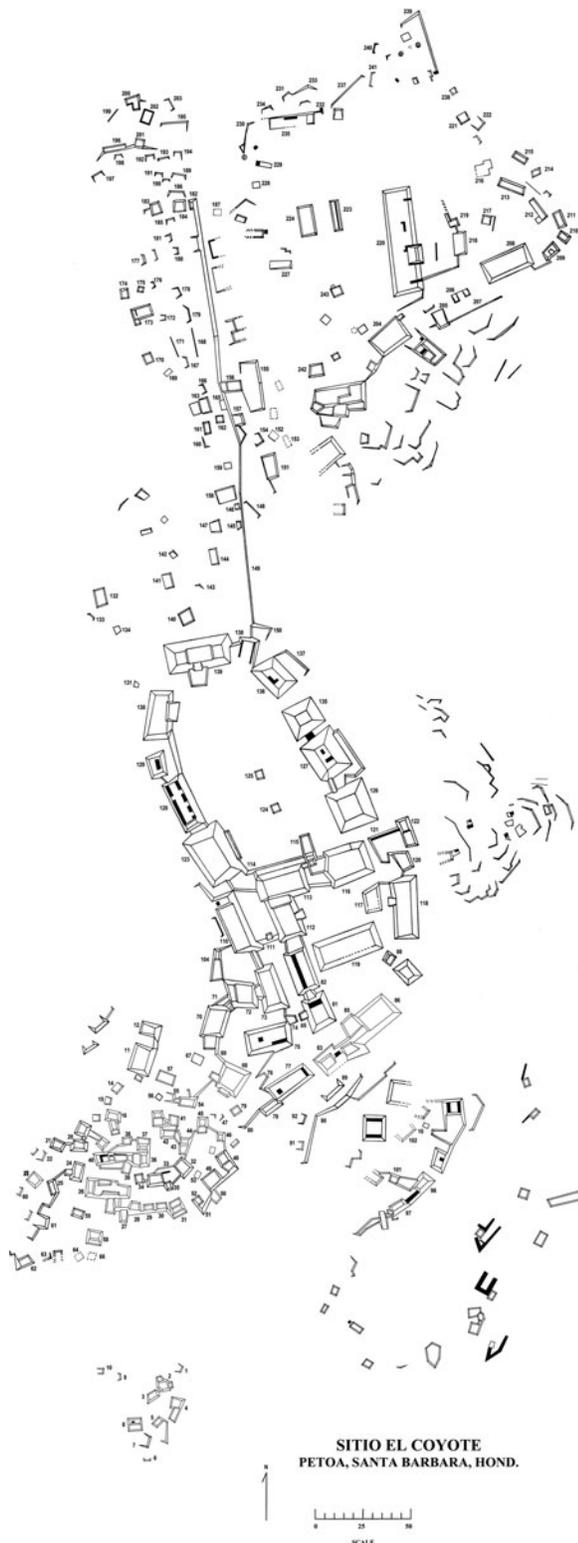


Figure 9. Site map of El Coyote's monumental site core.

more powerful neighbors. These shared strategies seem to have been focused around dialogues between public and social memories and about the proper role of status, power and religion within these communities. The construction, expansion, and elaboration of the

monumental Main Plaza Group at Las Canoas materializes a similar story to the one told through architecture at La Sierra and El Coyote, but writ on a smaller scale. As venues for the performance of political and religious discourses about sociopolitical segregation, the monumental spaces at all three sites at one point embodied the power of community leaders.

Similarly, all three case studies show evidence of having been materially commented upon through processes of social memory-making and altered through their decommissioning and abandonment. None of these spaces, however, were destroyed. Each of the three monumental plaza groups were preserved after their abandonment or defacement, even as the buildings and spaces nearby continued to be occupied and new ones built. These examples, I argue, offer evidence of the materialization of social memories in which communities shaped and reshaped spaces to commemorate, dialogue about, and eventually transform their vision for social and political power. As Ashmore (1996:48) has rightly pointed out, "For even a single building ... the act of construction is more than momentary, and then the monument persists. Some of the persistence is passive, but what happens to a monument during and after construction, whether it is maintained, modified, or dismantled, is important."

In the end, the political upheavals memorialized by these material processes resulted in the historical continuity of place; none of them provide evidence of the kind of true forgetting engendered or encouraged by outright destruction. The Late to Terminal Classic monumental plazas at Las Canoas, La Sierra, and El Coyote were not knocked down or demolished, and we do not find them as ephemeral traces of foundations buried under a new vision of social order. Instead, we find the crumbling remains of whole buildings and the plazas they bounded. True, some of their features may have been covered over, some of their facings may have been removed, and some of the trappings of their occupants' political strategizing may have been buried and done away with, but the spaces remained intact as a silent reminder of earlier times. They were entombed, enshrined, blocked off by the creation of rubble walls, defaced but not destroyed, and in all cases stood within sight of the spaces chosen as new contexts for the making and living of history—in their silent watching (and being watched), they remained a part of that process.

CONCLUSIONS—MAKING MEMORIES IN SOUTHEASTERN MESOAMERICA AND THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

As I observed at the outset of this paper, the processes of social memory interpreted from archaeological remains do not end with the abandonment of a site in prehistory but continue on through time and up into the present. Just as "The construction of memory can symbolically smooth over ruptures, creating the appearance of a seamless social whole" (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003:3), so too can archaeological research create and shape memories of the past that run the risk of obscuring their impact on (and influence from) the present. Archaeology has an important role to play in teasing out the differences between the public memories that those in power may attempt to encode as history and the social memories bubbling up from below and offering alternative narratives. As this case study from southeastern Mesoamerica has shown, social memories may even take the place of public ones, as communities memorialize the failure of political experiments engaged in by elites or emerging elites. By studying such processes, we as

archaeologists participate in the same processes begun by pre-Columbian peoples, rememorizing their efforts through our research and publications.

As such, it is imperative that we reflect critically on our role in this process. If we document the remains of public memories—those produced and authorized by recognized public authorities in the past—are we lending authenticity to versions of past events that may obscure the resistances and discourses of those not in positions of power? And indeed, do we run the same risk if we instead search for and highlight social memories encoded as efforts to counter potentially more hegemonic memorials? To convince ourselves that we are led only by the data and not by our preferred theoretical positions or even by political trends both within academia and society at large is disingenuous. Further, to ignore the political contexts of the governments and communities in which we conduct our research is to attempt to sidestep addressing the ways in which archaeological investigations take an active part in the continuing narrative of public and social memorialization. No matter which tack we take, we will always “privilege specific remembrances” and “reinforce visions of the past commensurate with” our own or others’ goals (Delle 2008:65).

For example, among archaeologists working in Honduras—and elsewhere—today there is an emerging (and, in my view, largely positive and laudable) movement toward active engagement with governments and local communities (Ardren 2002; Bell et al. 2007; Hodder 2003; Joyce 2005; McFarlane and Stockett 2007; Mortensen 2007; Salazar et al. 2007; Stonich 2000). These efforts, variously termed “public archaeology” or “community-based archaeology,” seek to identify and collaborate with various groups of stakeholders in the towns in which we live and work while in the field. At one extreme, such engagements might involve discussing local archaeological research with interested community members, bringing schoolchildren on site tours, or contributing materials to local museums and cultural centers. At the other extreme, such work involves directly shaping research agendas and questions to the interests of the local community—be they aimed at generally recovering a sense of cultural heritage or specifically targeted toward more pragmatic aims such as the development of local tourism linked with specific visions of past cultural identities.

The work of public archaeology brings to the surface the roles that archaeologists play in the process of memory-making in ways that more traditional approaches leave uninvestigated or inexplicit. Essentially, these efforts may force archaeologists to ask themselves, what vision of the past will my investigations and interpretations privilege—those that speak to my own research questions, those that tell the stories of the oppressed or oppressors in the past, or those that gratify the interests and agendas of the

stakeholders in the community in which I work (which, of course, may themselves be multiple and irreconcilable)?

Just as the process of making and expressing social memories in the past can be messy, complicated, and represent the voices of various and sometimes competing segments of society, so too is the act of archaeological interpretation in the present another step in that complex process. There is, of course, a clear distinction between social and public memories experienced by people in the past and those that are created *about the past* in the present. As archaeologists, we contribute to both processes as well as to the translation between them. As part of this process of translation, we must continue to ask ourselves who we are interpreting and producing these memories for and what our responsibilities as academics, colleagues, and visitors are to the communities in which we work.

An example from Delle’s work on historic period Underground Railroad sites highlights the potential disjunctions between what a local community wants memorialized by the archaeologist and what archaeological research may itself reveal about the past. Delle (2008:87) writes:

As a pursuit that still has at its core the recovery and analysis of material objects from the past, archaeology contributes raw materials for this kind of production and reproduction of memory. However ... what is remembered [in the present] may or may not be related to the actual data we recover and analyze.

In this case, Delle’s research ultimately recovered no evidence for the presence of Underground Railroad tunnels, but the local community believed in the social myth of their existence so firmly, and were so invested in that belief, that they ultimately dismissed his findings in favor of their own memories of the distant past. Those of us working in pre-Columbian Honduras (or anywhere else where engagement with segments of the public comprises a part of our work) may easily imagine similar scenarios should our research prompt interpretations at odds with the heritage interests of local communities.

I raise these issues and questions not because I have an answer to them or because I feel there is even a single answer to be found but because I believe that studies of social memory are about much more than a study of the “past in the past.” Indeed, they are also about a study of—and participation in the creation of—the past in the present. Theories of social memory, therefore, are potentially richer even than many scholars have thus far acknowledged because they provide us not only with an interesting entrée into the lives and experiences of past peoples but also a new way to dialogue about our responsibilities in academic and public contexts today.

RESUMEN

Los espacios arqueológicos pueden ser vistos como manifestaciones materiales del drama humano—sitios para la producción, expresión y manipulación de la vida social, poder e historia. Ver dichos espacios como escenarios para la ejecución de procesos de memoria social nos permite enriquecer las consideraciones sobre el intercambio entre materialidad e historia. Yo sugiero que podemos considerar a la memoria social como una comprensión contingente de personas, eventos o creencias del pasado que son compartidas por un grupo y negociadas con respecto a las perspectivas de contemporáneos y/o predecesores. Adicionalmente, abordo las perspectivas que los

arqueólogos pueden adquirir al interactuar con teorías de memoria social al explorar su aplicación al análisis de los asentamientos ocupados en el periodo de transición entre el clásico tardío y terminal (650–900 d.C.) en el sureste de mesoamérica precolombina. Al comparar tres de estos asentamientos, concluyo que las estrategias compartidas de las élites y las élites emergentes parecen haber estado enfocadas en torno a diálogos entre las memorias públicas y sociales y sobre el papel adecuado del status, poder y religión en las comunidades. Espacios monumentales dentro de los tres estudios de caso muestran evidencia de haber sido alterados

a través de su decomisionamiento y abandono. Sin embargo, ninguno de estos espacios fue destruido. Cada uno de los grupos de plaza monumentales considerados fue preservado después de su abandono o desfigurado, aun cuando los edificios y espacios alejados continuaron siendo ocupados y nuevos espacios fueron construidos. Al final, los levantamientos polícticos conmemorados por estos procesos materiales resultaron en la continuidad histórica del lugar a través de procesos de creación de memoria social expresados materialmente. Por último, considero la relevancia de los estudios

sobre la memoria hacia las iniciativas de arqueología comunitaria de hoy día. Argumento que las memorias sociales no dejaron de ser construidas cuando los sitios precolombinos fueron abandonados, sino que continúan hasta el presente mientras los excavamos e interpretamos. Como tal, tenemos la responsabilidad de considerar como nuestras interpretaciones contribuyen a este proceso y se cruzan con los intereses y las preocupaciones de los gobiernos y personas dentro de las comunidades donde realizamos nuestro trabajo.

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RITUAL REMAINS AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY: MAYA EXAMPLES FROM WEST CENTRAL BELIZE

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Abstract

The idea of collective or social memory is explored in this paper as a way to understand ancient Maya ritual behavior. The theoretical characteristics of collective memory are defined and a strategy to operationalize the theory of collective memory using archaeological remains is presented. Two archaeological examples from the sites of Minanha and Zubin in west central Belize are discussed in terms of how they fit this new model. Finally, the social motivations that underlie this behavior are examined.

One notion employed to explain the meaning behind archaeological materials of a ritual nature relates to the idea of collective memory. A number of recent publications have examined the relationship between memory and archaeological remains (Chesson 2001; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Williams 2003). Several terms have been used to refer to this phenomenon: collective memory, social memory, collective or social remembering, cultural memory, and group memory. First we discuss operant definitions of these terms, followed by an examination of the general characteristics and theory of social or collective memory in order to establish a basic framework of archaeological correlates that confirm the presence of this phenomenon. Finally, we apply these to two archaeological examples from the sites of Minanha and Zubin, located in west central Belize, and consider the utility of the model for other contexts. Archaeologists have difficulty interpreting the significance of ritual objects, and this paper provides one way to operationalize a model of collective memory to deal with material culture of a ritual nature and contributes a significant new way to understand that material.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Definitions used to refer to collective memory share several common points. These include a discussion of the location of the phenomenon of collective memory in relation to the remembrance of the individual subject; the relationship among memory, history, and identity; and the sense of a present purpose responsible for the active process of memory production (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1992; Misztal 2003; Nora 1989; Wertsch 2002). We agree with others in the assertion that the essential components of social memory in archaeology include a diachronic time scale, a group-oriented locus of action, and a specific or desired outcome for the ritual process on the part of the practitioners. Assmann (1995:126) describes cultural memory as a solution for the preservation of tradition. He defines cultural memory as “a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in

the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation” (Assmann 1995:126). Essential to this definition is the idea that cultural memory is something that serves as a repository for cultural tradition. In contrast to other definitions, Assmann emphasizes the conservation of tradition as the main function of cultural memory.

The notion of conservation raises an essential characteristic of any definition of cultural memory: time. Something cannot be classed as belonging to long-term cultural memory, as opposed to everyday or communicative memory, if it does not have a component of longevity on the order of decades, generations, or centuries (Assmann 1995: 129). This trait makes archaeological inquiry particularly appropriate for investigations of social memory production because archaeological data tend to encompass a diachronic perspective.

Another irreducible component of any definition of collective memory is that it is shared by a group and that it is constructed or mediated within a social context (Assmann 1995:127; Halbwachs 1992). Collective memory is something that does not exist at the scale of the individual, but rather it is intersubjective—a form of knowledge created and agreed upon by more than one individual, much in the same way that language is (Samuel 1990:6). But the group context is not a singular entity, for there can be many simultaneous groups to which a single individual belongs and thus many competing and parallel groups constructing different pasts as a means of solidifying their identity in the present (Halbwachs 1992). Misztal (2003:25) demonstrates the importance of the sanction of a group in her definition of collective memory as “the representation of the past, both the past shared by a group and the past that is collectively commemorated, that enacts and gives substance to the group’s identity, its present conditions and its vision of the future.” This definition emphasizes that the creation of collective memory is an active process, with group members selecting particular things to remember that are fundamental to their shared group identity. As well, it underlines the importance of the present in the creation of collective memory, suggesting that contemporary motivations are at least partly responsible for the production of group memory.

The creation and manipulation of a usable past is a key element to the creation of collective memory and also to the remembrance of events long past. Hobsbawm (1983) labeled the manipulation of a

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usable past as the invention of tradition. He defined the invention of tradition as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1983:1). Inherent in this definition is both an element of alteration (in which people consciously select particular aspects of a past to emphasize through ritual) and an element of conservation (in which the tradition being replicated in the present is represented as if unchanged). Even if traditions remain unchanged through long periods of time, the present milieu itself is different from all the contexts of the past in which the tradition or remembrance occurred.

The coalescence of a shared group memory also implies that the group has come to a consensus about the group’s identity in the past. Participants agree to some statement of underlying truth and use that truth to forge a continued claim about the present and future of the group (Fentress and Wickham 1992:25). Additionally, it is the use of the remembered past in the present that serves a particular purpose in the present—often a claim of naturalization or legitimation of authority, a defense of preferential status, or a reassertion of access to resources (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003).

The process of collective memory requires a mechanism to facilitate the successful operation of both the creation and maintenance of these memories. Wertsch (2002:6) suggests that an essential component of collective memory is mediation. Although Wertsch refers to text as the foundation for this mediation, other cultural tools, such as oral narrative or items of material culture, can stand as proxies for written text and serve in the same capacity as mnemonic devices that facilitate the act of remembrance. Elsner (2003:210) labels a system where objects hold a functional role as signifiers of memory as object-based semiotics, that is, a system where material forms themselves are a culturally based system of communication. The objects serve as a functional tool to facilitate the retention and recall of socially relevant information. The role of objects as mediator is a powerfully different interpretation of material culture than other forms of analysis based on style or appreciation of the piece in isolation from its mnemonic context.

Social memory can operate in different contexts, but one feature common to all mnemonic processes is a spatial component. The technique, known as “the method of loci,” is a cognitive system of remembering that links word, image, or object with a spatial location (Küchler 1987:249). This technique uses a socially and culturally specific spatial mapping to remember more than rote memorization alone can. For the individual, the spatial referent could be chosen at will, but in the case of collective remembering, the group agrees on the associative locale and objects to aid in remembrance. This agreement is constrained by particular social and cultural limitations. Locales and objects are standardized among a cultural group, a feature that is promising for the detection of long-term cultural remembrance through the examination of material remains. The relationship between memory and the spatial location where the remembered event took place is important because there is a great degree of specificity attached to a recollection when it has a spatial referent (Archibald 2002:74). As a shared group activity, social memory is performed. It is a discursive bodily practice that establishes a connection between the act of remembering and the space in which it occurs (Meskell 2004:65).

Küchler (1987:248) identifies mnemonic processes and the production of history as mutually related processes where both are

Table 1. A comparison between the material correlates of ritual that relate to cultural remembering and to ritual that does not have a component of cultural memory.

Cultural Remembering	Non-memory Related Ritual
<i>Longevity:</i> material evidence spanning a lengthy time period, connecting to temporally distant events.	<i>One-time occurrence:</i> material evidence that exists as a single occurrence or does not connect to events distant in time.
<i>Intersubjective:</i> an activity that occurs at the scale of more than one individual.	<i>Individual or group:</i> may occur at the scale of a single individual or at the level of a group.
<i>Mediated:</i> object or material culture present that mediates the recollection.	<i>Non-mediated:</i> ritually significant artifacts can be present but do not serve a function of recollection.
<i>Usable past:</i> some need in the present is fulfilled via the recollection of a usable past. Could relate to social status, legitimation, or bolstering a claim over social or material resources.	<i>Ritual present:</i> fulfills a ritual need of the present such as a role status transition related to a rite of passage, for instance.
<i>Feat of remembering:</i> the material remains constitute a link through time that could not be explained otherwise.	<i>Tradition, but not memory:</i> material manifestation of the ritual behavior may be in line with tradition but does not construct a specific context for recall.
<i>Spatial referent:</i> an important spatial referent that both accommodates the group participating in the ritual of remembering but also serves as an associative locus of recall for the group.	<i>Lack of specific spatial referent:</i> no necessary spatial referent to accommodate the minimally lone participant in the ritual, nor a consistency in spatial context for the enactment of the ritual.

connected to the attainment and maintenance of power and authority. Both mnemonic processes and the production of history are open to social and historical influence. Thus, the two processes coexist alongside one another—the difference lies only in the social milieu or context of their use. If formal writing and hence control over the recording of history was not accessible, apical elites from lesser sites and marginalized elites could have employed object semiotics or mnemonic processes as an alternate means to acquire and maintain power and legitimacy and to bolster social status through the process of collective remembering.

Several definitions and characteristics of collective remembering have been described in the preceding discussion, but we are still left with the task of how to operationalize these phenomena in the material assemblages recovered from archaeological contexts. The material correlates to the process of collective remembering have most of the following traits: temporal longevity, evidence of being shared by a group, presence of one or more object mediators, a present purpose for the creation of a usable past, a feat of remembrance that could not otherwise be explained, a strong spatial referent or location associated with the process, and evidence of the process taking place within a ritual context. One strategy to discern between conscious collective remembering and non-discursive repetitive ritual practices is to compare the characteristics of each through an imposed binary framework that places them in opposition to each other for analytical purposes (Table 1).

The first characteristic, longevity, relates to the temporal range of the material items. For long-term cultural remembering to occur, there must be material proof that something is remembered over time. Material remains related to rituals that do not reflect cultural

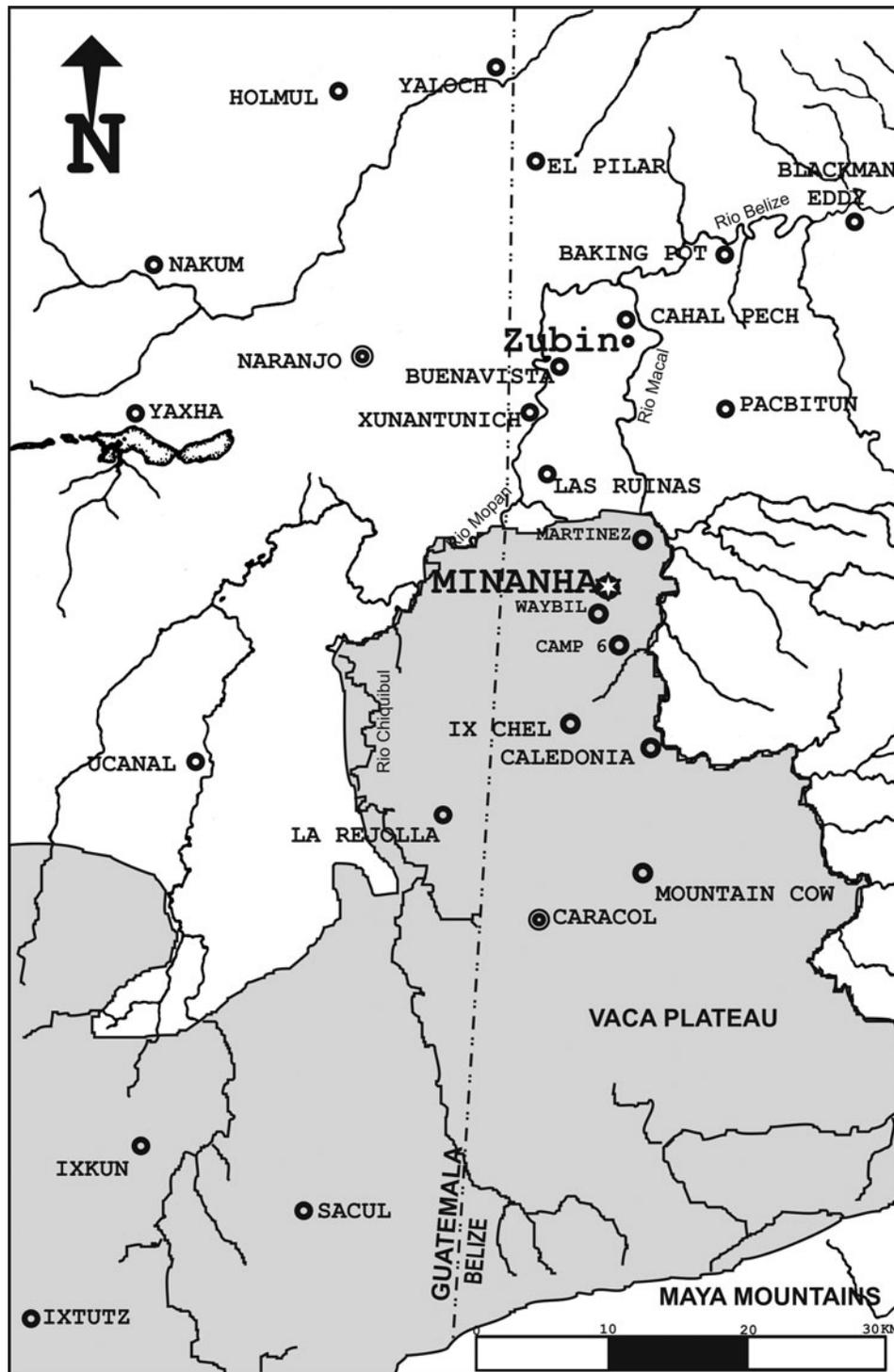


Figure 1. Map of west central Belize showing the location of the sites of Minanha and Zubin.

remembering might exist in a single time, in a particular moment, or outside of temporal comparisons. The second characteristic, that the remembering occurs at the scale of more than one individual, is a defining feature of collective memory. If the ritual can be enacted by a single individual, it cannot represent collective memory. This is not to say that all group ritual activity is by default an example of collective memory. Most ritual contexts do involve more than one individual, but if the ritual context is one that could entail a

single individual such as a private domestic ritual, it can be ruled out as an example of collective remembering. This feature is also linked to the spatial referent for collective remembering—the physical location of the ritual event must be one where the group involved could witness and partake of the ritual. Because of this, it is most likely that rituals associated with conscious collective remembering will not be in private, domestic contexts, but rather in public or semipublic open areas and shrines. In addition, the

presence of a spatial referent connects to the mnemonic function or role the physical space has in the recall process. The link with a particular spatial context is not necessary to a ritual that does not involve memory construction. The spatial context could shift or vary if it did not serve as a locus for associative recall. In addition, there must be material items that serve as mediators in the act of collective remembering. The material culture that serves as a mnemonic device or as a reservoir for culturally significant information related to the act of recall needs to be present in the recovered archaeological remains for archaeologists to be able to discuss collective memory. The context of the materials is integral to the role the specific spatial location serves as a locus for the creation of collective memory. In conjunction with the previously discussed material correlates, the material evidence must point to an interpretation that an unusual feat of remembrance occurred. The context of material remains, particularly if they are diachronic in scale, as well as of the spatial location of remains can be used as evidence of the feat of remembrance.

The final aspect of the interpretation of the archaeological correlates of a cultural memory event includes placing the remains within their local, regional, and cultural context to determine the motivation behind the ritual event. The reason for the creation of the connection to the past through a memory event could relate to multiple purposes in the event's present, and a description of the broader events can elucidate what that motivation may have been. The harkening back to a usable past could have served a multitude of social ends—to bolster status, to legitimate right to rule or access to resources, to legitimate social or occupational position, and to settle land claim or resource disputes, among other things.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXAMPLES FROM WEST CENTRAL BELIZE

The central lowland Maya sites of Zubin and Minanha in west central Belize contain archaeological examples of the creation and utilization of collective remembering in ritual contexts (Figure 1). We contend that the ritual remains associated with the apical elite at Minanha, recovered during the excavations in association with an E-group style ancestor shrine—Structure 3A—in the site epicenter, fulfill each of the preceding requirements and constitute a cogent example of an instance of the use of cultural memory in ritual as a strategy to maintain legitimacy and control rulership over the polity at a time of particular unrest. The ritual remains associated with two successive burial events in the eastern shrine of the main plaza at the site of Zubin likewise constitute an example of cultural remembering as a means to maintain and define elite group solidarity and identity at a minor site, a satellite of the larger Cahal Pech polity.

Minanha

Minanha is a medium-sized major center situated within the north Vaca Plateau of west central Belize (Iannone 1999:6). Minanha was once strategically located in an intermediate position between several of the large and important centers of the Classic period (A.D. 250–900), such as Caracol (to the south), Tikal and Naranjo (to the west), and the much smaller Belize Valley centers (to the north). Minanha itself contains a large number and variety of architectural features, both public and private, including a ballcourt, an ancestor shrine, *sacheob* or raised causeways, pyramidal structures, range structures, and variety of residences from commoner dwellings to an apical elite palace (Figure 2).

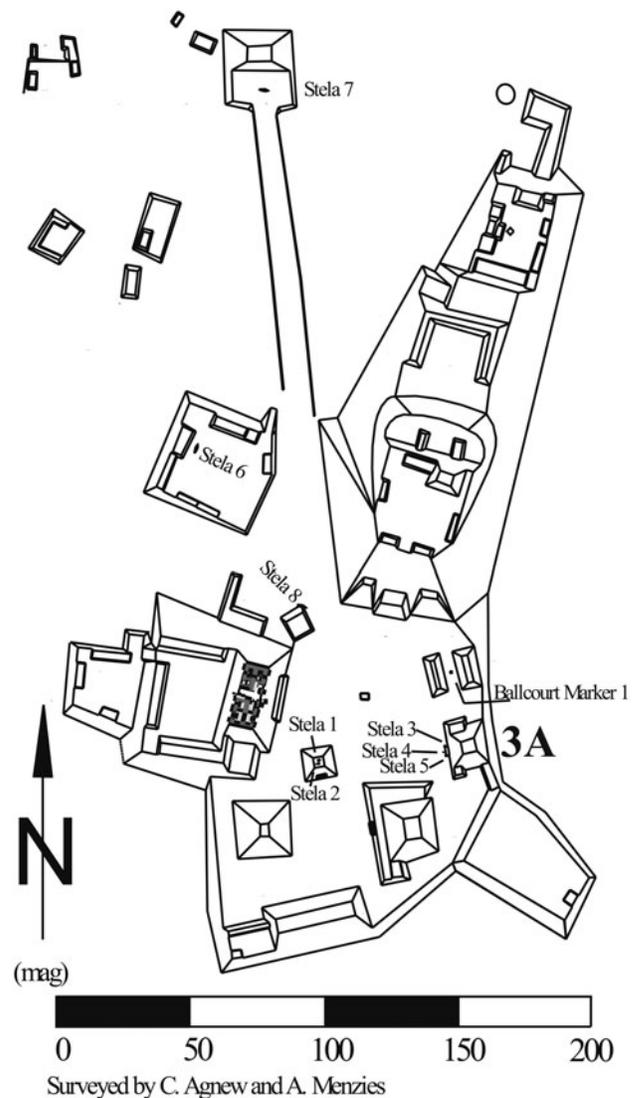


Figure 2. Map of the epicenter of Minanha, Belize.

The focus of this investigation is Structure 3A, the eastern ancestor shrine located in Plaza A. There are three stelae monuments in front of Structure 3A. The central of these is a deliberately broken slate stela aligned axially with the building. It is flanked by two limestone monuments that were also deliberately broken. Between the monuments and the building itself is a series of aligned caches (Figure 3).

The first of these (Feature 3A-F/1), sits just atop the penultimate floor within the terminal plaza floor. The feature consisted of a circular alignment of cut stones that enclosed a termination cache. Within the stones was a Belize Red: Belize Variety dish with rattle feet. This vessel had been deliberately smashed at the time of deposition. There were also two halves of two broken granite manos. Finally, there were some raw slate fragments, pottery fragments, and nonformal chert lithics found within the enclosed cache context (Schwake 1999:50). This feature was placed at the time of the construction of the terminal phase of architecture (the Late Classic period, which for Minanha dates from A.D. 675 to 810). The offering terminated the use of the penultimate phase of construction, as seen by its placement slightly cutting into the penultimate floor (Schwake 1999:50). It is interesting to note that this cache is in

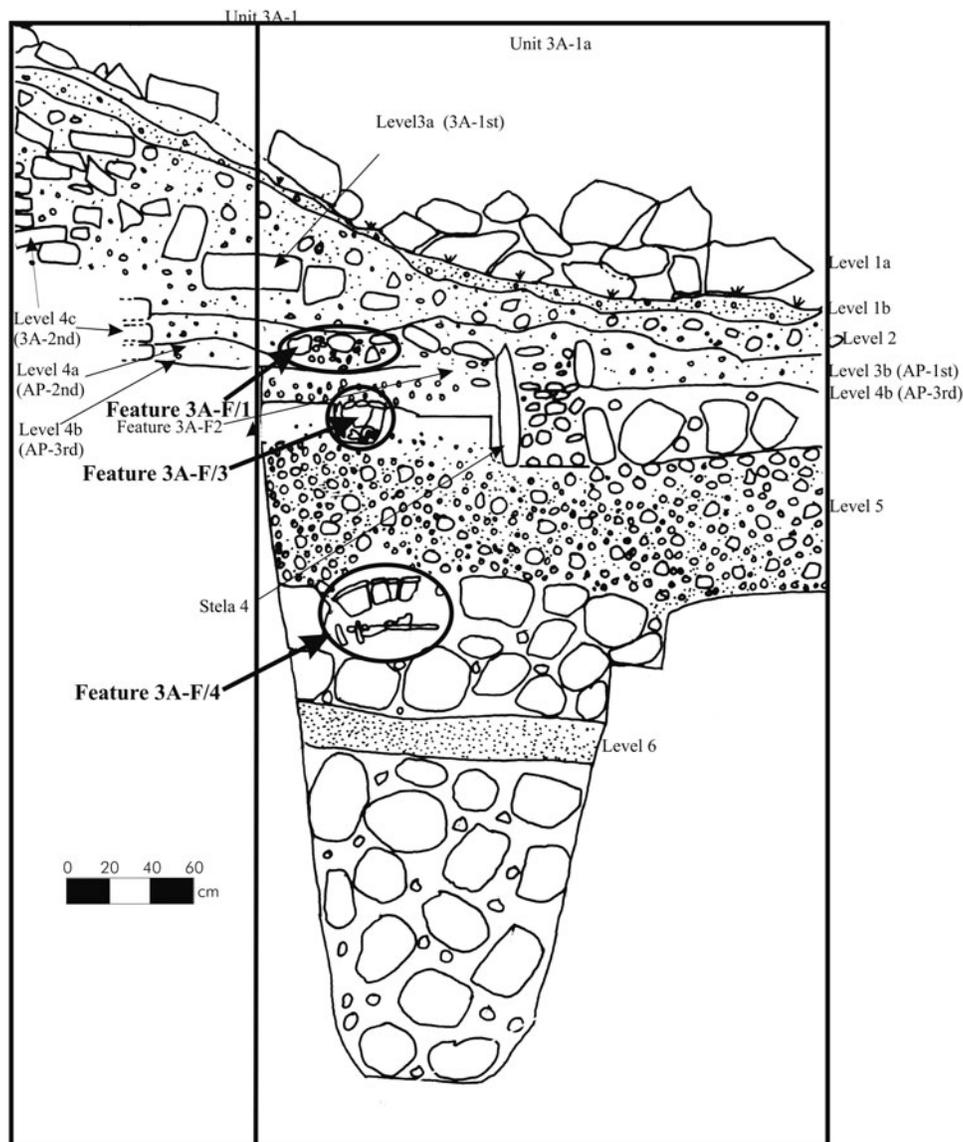


Figure 3. Profile of the aligned caches in front of Structure 3A.

what would normally be the expected location for a cache—on the penultimate floor, just in front of the terminal architecture.

Immediately beneath Feature 3A-F/1, within the antepenultimate floor but protruding into the penultimate floor, another cache was located. Designated Feature 3A-F/3, it consists of several pieces of slate lining the hole of the cache enclosure; within this was a large piece of a prismatic obsidian blade, two utilized flakes of pink chert, and two chert eccentric lithics. This cache dates to the Late Classic period (A.D. 675–810), and is both a termination and a dedicatory offering. It can be seen as a termination of the antepenultimate living surface, at the same time it is dedicatory toward the penultimate construction. The fact that there are relatively rare and mostly complete items within the cache further suggests a dedicatory function.

Approximately 80 cm below this, another cache was found (Feature 3A-F/4). This deposit was situated within the dry core fill of the rather thick antepenultimate floor. This fill sat atop a tamped earth layer of claylike soil. The deposit consisted of an inverted,

complete, but shattered Sierra Red: Society Hall Variety vessel. This is a Terminal Preclassic ware, thus dating the deposit to approximately A.D. 1–250. Beneath the inverted vessel were the partial remains of an adult individual. The only remains represented were the long bones, the skull, and the teeth. This reflects an intentional deposition of partial remains rather than differential preservation. When human remains form part of a cached deposition, it is almost always because the deposit is dedicatory to something else (Becker 1992). Thus, this was also labeled a dedicatory cache.

The material within these three caches, in fact the caches themselves, serve as object mediators for the remembrance of events. These objects create the material link between the first cache event and the subsequent cache events, fulfilling Wertsch's (2002) requirement for material intermediaries as integral to occasions of collective remembering.

What is most astonishing about these offerings is that they were separated by about 150 cm of depth and a temporal span ranging between 425 and 750 years, yet they are situated in *perfect* vertical

and horizontal alignment. This is seemingly contradictory, given the expectation that different offerings will be situated in standard locations associated with the architecture of their *respective* building phases. The pattern of deposition here varies considerably from a simple axial alignment model. The first question that comes to mind is, how did the Minanha Maya remember the precise spatial location of hidden offerings over such a long span of time, seemingly regardless of the immediate architectural constructions? This constitutes a remarkable feat of remembering, one of the traits that serves as a hallmark of long-term cultural recollection. Not only was there a feat of remembrance, but the span of time that stretches between the events also constitutes a scale of diachronic longevity: a span of years that goes far beyond communicative or everyday memory but crosses multiple generations of ritual participants.

The question of how the Minanha Maya accomplished such a feat of remembrance is answerable if the depositions are seen not as independent events, but as linked offering events that form part of a ritual process tied to a very specific spatial location. Our discussion of memory posited spatial location as one of the most important factors in the preservation of long-term cultural memory. The Structure 3A deposits corroborate that requirement by providing a ritually charged public space for experience and remembrance. The nature of the location, a large, open public area, also supports the interpretation that many people witnessed the ritual events associated with the deposition of the caches.

A final intriguing aspect of the Minanha example is the fact that the caches themselves transcend a period of dramatic political change for the center. In brief, at the onset of the eighth century a royal court established itself at Minanha. The material culture and architectural inventory suggest that the rulers of this royal court were elite immigrants, probably from the vicinity of Caracol (Iannone 2005). The upper two caches (3A-F/1 and 3A-F/3) were placed during the reign of this intrusive political body. These caches are important because they suggest that part of the new elite's success in establishing their royal court may stem from the incorporation of local power structures into their governing apparatus. Specifically, an obvious effort was made to link the aforementioned caches with the Terminal Preclassic one (3A-F/4). By doing so, the new elite were able to tap into the traditions and long-term social memory of the Minanha community and thus tie into one of their most powerful portals of communication with the past. Such actions would have undoubtedly provided an important level of legitimacy for the fledgling royal court and provided a reason for them to want to create a usable past via long-term cultural memory.

Zubin

The second example comes from the minor center of Zubin, located in the Belize Valley, roughly 25 km north of Minanha. Zubin is situated on an east-west running limestone ridge, approximately 2 km south of the larger center of Cahal Pech. The Zubin epicenter consists of two well-defined courtyards on the north and a raised platform to the south (Figure 4). Architectural remains include pyramidal, range-type, and other low-lying structures. Of specific interest here are events associated with a cache and two burials in Structure A1. Structure A1 is the eastern pyramidal mound of the restricted Plaza A configuration, and it served as the Zubin community's ancestor shrine (Iannone 1993). The structure is approximately 9 m in height. In 1993 an 11- \times -2 m axial trench was excavated along the buildings primary axis. A series of dedicatory and termination ritual deposits, and several richly furnished

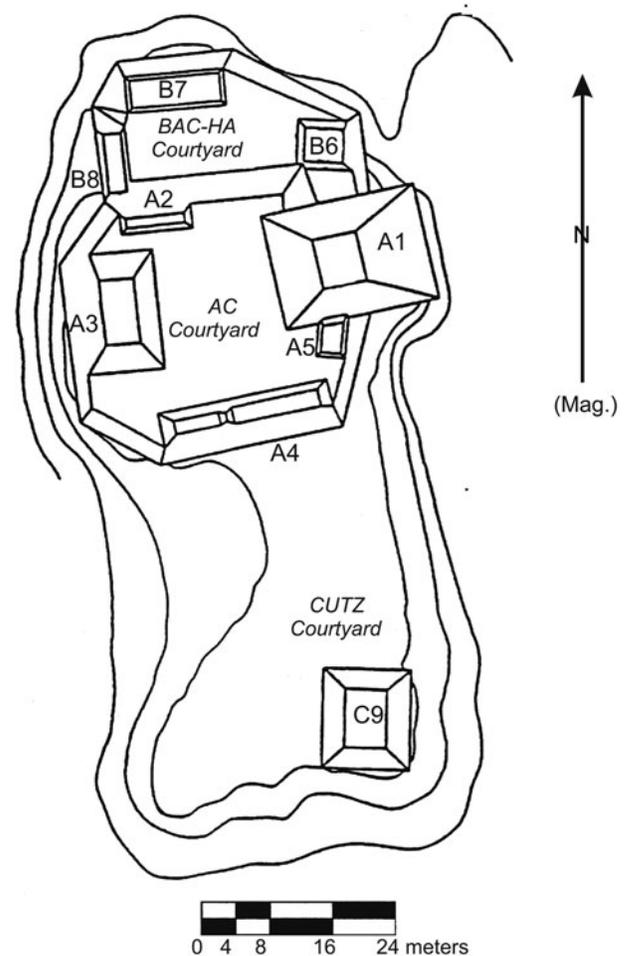


Figure 4. Map of the Zubin epicenter.

graves were recovered in association with various discrete construction episodes (Figure 5).

During the excavation beneath the basal section of the terminal stairs a large, axially aligned circular cut was revealed. This feature, designated Feature A1-F/1, was a subfloor cache that had been cut into the courtyard surface directly in front of the penultimate building, just prior to construction of the terminal architecture. Within the cache two San Pedro Impressed: San Pedro Variety vessels had been placed lip-to-lip within a large Mount Maloney Black: Mount Maloney Variety vessel. The San Pedro Impressed: San Pedro Variety vessels date to the local Tiger Run Phase (A.D. 600–700), and the Mount Maloney Black: Mount Maloney Variety vessel is characteristic of the Late Facet Spanish Lookout Phase (A.D. 700–875). It is interesting to note that there is a temporal disparity of as much as 175 years between the San Pedro Impressed vessels and the Mount Maloney Black vessel.

Even more intriguing is the fact that as the Feature A1-F/1 material was removed, it became apparent that the cache was actually intrusive into a simple crypt burial, Burial A1-B/7, which had been placed at the time of construction of the penultimate building. Given the preserved remains, the cache vessels had clearly been positioned where the head of the individual should have been. Besides the ceramic offerings, there was one other key artifact associated with this burial: a small jadeite disk bead that was also found in the region of the head. Burial A1-B/7 was originally

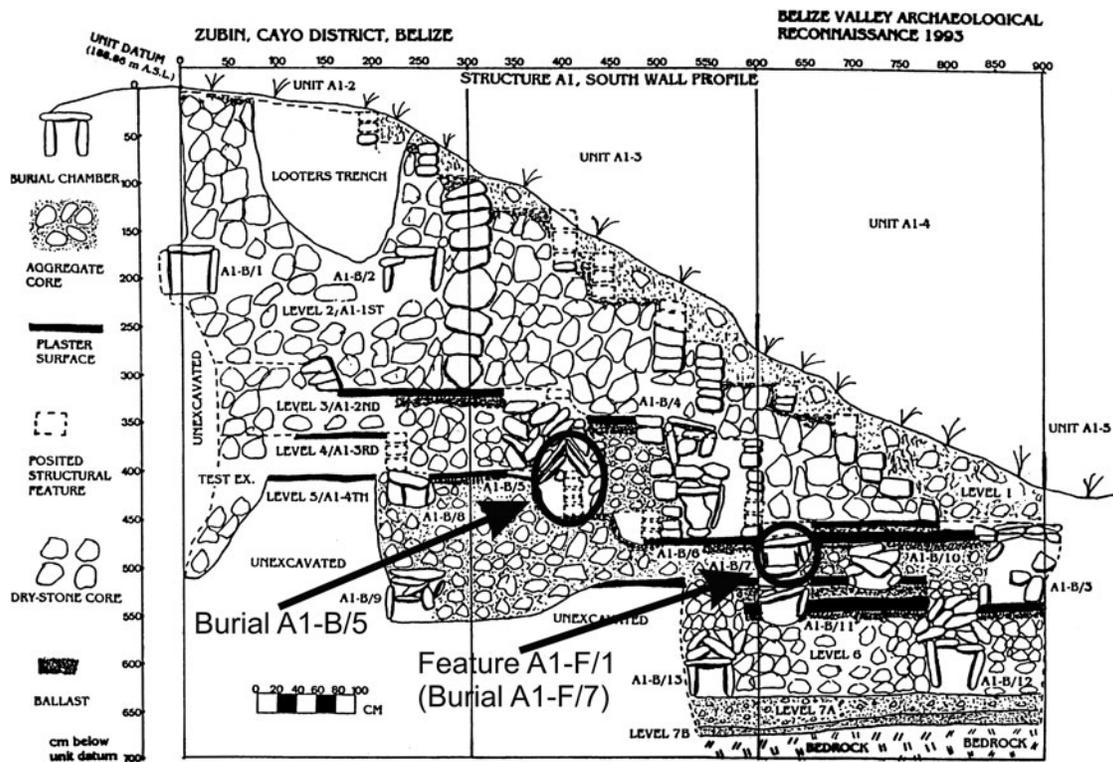


Figure 5. Profile of Structure A1, Zubin, Belize.

dated to A.D. 650–750, primarily because of its stratigraphic association with the construction of the penultimate construction, but also given the date for the associated San Pedro Impressed: San Pedro Variety dishes. What seemed anomalous, though, was the presence of the later Mount Maloney Black: Mount Maloney vessel. The excavation of Burial A1-B/5 considerably illuminated this apparent disparity.

Burial A1-B/5 was intrusive into the penultimate phase of architecture, and like Cache A1-F/1, it had been placed in conjunction with the construction of the terminal building. This burial consisted of a relatively large chamber with a rich assemblage of grave goods. For these reasons, the death of the Burial A1-B/5 individual is thought to have spurred the construction events associated with the terminal phase. The abundant grave goods in Burial A1-B/5 include a large Garbutt Creek Red: Paslow Variety bowl, a Sotero Red: Sotero Variety vase, shell and jadeite mosaic inlays, and 155 small jadeite disk beads.

The presence of the small jadeite disk beads in Burial A1-B/5 is integral to the hypothesized connection between this interment, Feature A1-F/1, and Burial A1-B/7. These beads were manufactured from a very distinctive “mottled” jadeite. Color ranges from dark green, blue, white, to translucent, often on the same bead. This mottled jadeite is identical to the solitary bead recovered from Burial A1-B/7. In addition, the Burial A1-B/7 bead is identical in size and shape to those recovered from Burial A1-B/5. Given this key piece of data, a likely scenario is that the death of the individual interred in Burial A1-B/7 spurred the construction of the penultimate building. Original grave goods included the two San Pedro Impressed: San Pedro Variety vessels, and a jadeite disk bead necklace. Some time later, in conjunction with the termination of the penultimate architecture, and the

construction of the terminal architecture, Burial A1-B/7 was reopened via the Feature A1-F/1 cache cut. This was a very specific cut, directly to the head and the beads, slightly south of the actual primary axis of the structure. At this time the jadeite beads were removed, except for one; these were exchanged for the Mount Maloney Black: Mount Maloney Variety bowl within which the San Pedro Impressed: San Pedro Variety vessels were then placed within. The skull of the individual interred in Burial A1-B/7 was probably also removed at this time, as it was not discovered within the grave. Subsequently, the jadeite beads obtained through the Feature A1-F/1 re-entry were redeposited within Burial A1-B/5. This scenario suggests that the Zubin residents knew *exactly* where to dig in order to obtain the beads. Although the time between the two interments does not appear to have been very long (possibly about 50 to 100 years), this example provides a different type of record in material remains to corroborate the importance of group remembrance associated with deposits of a highly charged ritual nature.

The Zubin example is also in accordance with all of the characteristics discussed as necessary indicators of the process of cultural remembering. The Zubin material spans a period of time; it constitutes a feat of remembrance; the context is a group shrine, so the ritual participants were more than one in number; the spatial location of the shrine itself serves as the spatial referent for the event; the ritual is mediated via the material grave goods; and the purpose for the event relates to the group’s need to solidify their identity and social status in the Zubin community. That these events took place at this location also reaffirms ancestral ties and serves to legitimate claims for those engaged in the ritual via the ancestor shrine.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Zubin and Minanha data provide examples of the types of micro-event reconstructions that allow insights into the material manifestations of long-term cultural recollection. Both cases involve multiple construction phases through time, and both illustrate an uncanny ability to remember the *exact* location of ritual deposits over long time spans. What is clear is that communities were quite adept at transferring these ritual maps between multiple generations. It is also apparent that it was important to periodically tie into these features in order to tap into a source of legitimation or confirmation of social position in a hierarchy. The information about the location of the materials is privileged knowledge that could not be claimed by outsiders; it is legitimate knowledge that is physically documented, and this is why it is a powerful attestation of group identity, place, and belonging. In some instances, such as at Minanha, this may have been initiated to provide legitimacy in a time of significant political change when two groups of people were attempting to merge as one. In other cases, such as at Zubin, the brief foray into the past via a cut through a floor into an ancestor's burial may have been far more personal in nature, specific to a small group's identity maintenance project. The motivation for activating social memory and recollection

are diverse, but as these cases show, the end result often has material correlates, particularly if we are open to contextualizing our finds in a way that links them to the long-term chain of events.

Our knowledge of ancient Maya ritual practice is significantly increased through the application of this perspective based on theories of collective remembering. Far from being relevant to only the Minanha and Zubin examples, the criteria outlined in this paper can be applied more broadly to the ritual assemblages of other Maya sites, allowing us to understand past ritual behavior in a new way. In the end, the use of collective memory in ritual contexts is a powerful tool that groups used to promote their own visions of a usable past for a particular goal in the present. Archaeologists can access the meaning of these events when an item of material culture was used to mediate the creation of this usable group past. As exemplified in this paper, a concrete list of traits can be applied to the material remains of past ritual events to evaluate whether they constitute an instance of collective memory. This approach is not limited to the two case studies discussed from west central Belize but instead can be applied to many excavated ritual contexts in the Maya area. The continued application of this model will contribute a new way to understand the complexity associated with ritual events in the ancient Maya world.

RESUMEN

Varios trabajos recientes se han ocupado de las relaciones entre memoria y vestigios arqueológicos (Chesson 2001; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Williams 2003). En este ensayo se introduce la idea de memoria colectiva o social como una herramienta útil para interpretar las prácticas rituales de los antiguos Mayas. Se definen las características teóricas del concepto de memoria colectiva, y se presenta una estrategia práctica para aplicar dicha teoría al estudio de materiales arqueológicos. Para que se pueda clasificar un conjunto de materiales arqueológicos como manifestación de memoria colectiva, es necesario que presente evidencia de las siguientes características: duración cronológica, intersubjetividad, usabilidad del pasado, objetos mediadores, referentes espaciales, y la ocurrencia de un acto de memoria significativo. Se analizan dos ejemplos procedentes de los sitios de Minanha y Zubin, en la región centro-occidental de Belice,

en términos de su compatibilidad con el modelo teórico propuesto, y se examinan las motivaciones sociales sobre las que se basan estas prácticas. En breve, el caso de Minanha consiste en una serie de caches ubicados en exacta alineación vertical; estos depósitos rituales representan las acciones de las élites dominantes del sitio con el propósito de legitimar su posición de autoridad. En el ejemplo de Zubin, un evento de re-entrada en un entierro también tuvo la función de legitimar el estatus social de las élites del sitio. En ambos casos se pueden identificar los elementos necesarios para la creación de memoria colectiva previamente enumerados. El hecho de que el enfoque propuesto se pueda aplicar a otros conjuntos de materiales arqueológicos que contengan las características de un evento de memoria colectiva, demuestra la validez y aplicabilidad de esta perspectiva.

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KA'KAW POTS AND COMMON CONTAINERS: CREATING HISTORIES AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AMONG THE CLASSIC MAYA OF XUNANTUNICH, BELIZE

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Abstract

Reconstruction of foodways at the Lowland Maya center of Xunantunich, Belize, illustrates how commensality is fundamental to the construction of multilayered identities. Collective memory and linear histories form the foundation of identities because they are the mental frameworks people use to construct shared pasts. At Xunantunich, community identity was expressed through pottery and practices associated with the preparation of foods for domestic consumption and public offerings. In a world of natural cycles centered on family reproduction, horticultural activities, and yearly ceremonies, these symbols and rituals structured the lives of all people and embodied within them a collective memory of community. Linear histories were recorded in images and texts on drinking paraphernalia that were likely used for toasting honored individuals, ancestors, or gods during commemorative rites. These inscriptions and bodily practices marked individuals and their houses as people and places of prominence with separate identities.

Was it happenstance or a fleeting act that symbolized the struggle for local identity and authority? In the process of covering over the massive plaster frieze that encircled the roof of the Castillo, the multi-tiered acropolis at the center of Xunantunich, someone wedged large pieces of a common black-slipped bowl into the white stucco. As far as I know, no other artifacts have been found among the buried sculptured elements—a Pax god, seated ancestors, and plaited cloth or twisted cords—that together reified the ruler's role as the *axis mundi* of his community (Fields 2004). By burying the frieze, the ancient Maya attempted to mitigate the power of the dead king and erase the collective memory of Xunantunich's previous royal charter. Although these sherds might have been part of the prosaic remains of a feast consumed during the building's termination rites, their significance may have had as much to do with the identity politics of the people involved as the rites themselves. As a fleeting—but to my mind—deliberate act, it juxtaposed common people and mundane things against kingly personages and divine programs, hinting at the tension between these social groups and their ability to imprint their own ideas and practices into the collective memory of the group.

In this article I explore how collective memories and linear histories worked to embody multilayered, and sometimes conflicting, identities among the people of Xunantunich, Belize, during the Late and Terminal Classic periods (A.D. 600–1000). Here, I take a bottom-up approach to understanding the formation of community identity by suggesting that the creation of a sense of commonality among all members of the Xunantunich polity was only partially rooted in the actions of its elites, whose political relationships with external overlords provoked local identity politics (Schortman

et al. 2001). Although the site's rulers may have identified more strongly with nonlocal kings in terms of class, strong political and social identities were constructed and communicated through local practices and symbols. Identities, whether they are of class, polity, or community, are dependent on collective memories and histories. They provide the mental frameworks that people draw upon to construct shared pasts, no matter how long, how short, or how fragmented these pasts might have been.

To study the mental and physical “acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible,” researchers must look not only at written histories and other explicit material symbols, but also the bodily practices of people (Connerton 1989:39). Grand symbols of the Xunantunich polity can be understood through civic monuments that served to inscribe the histories of kings and the polity's place within the larger political landscape. But the hieroglyphs and associated images provided the rulers only a starting point to recount the past during commemoration rites. It was the spoken words and repeated performances associated with these rites that cemented polity interests and sentiments into the hearts and minds of its members. Ideas about *who* were members of the Xunantunich community also were rooted in bodily practices that all polity members shared through their collective memories of daily routines and more common annual rituals. Paul Connerton (1989:35–36) suggests that repetitive bodily practices, like inscribing history, are legitimating performances, and as such, they are essential for membership in a kin group, community, or social class. Salient identities were performed, therefore, not only through high public art and civic rituals, but also ordinary community practices and symbols, which embodied a sense of people, place, and polity in the collective memories of its members.

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Histories, as surviving individual narratives, and collective memories, as more generalized notions of a shared heritage, exist in an uneasy and contested relationship. In order to resonate and survive as collective memories, histories must play an essential role in a master narrative that pulls together group interests and sentiments. If not, they may easily be forgotten, modified, or rewritten. Histories are more likely to be retained in the collective memory of the larger group if they are publicly read or performed as part of a more complex set of public ceremonies (Connerton 1989). In this way they are embedded both in the mind and the body. Therefore, it is conceivable that reenacted or recited *parts* of histories are inseparable from the larger group's collective memory of the past.

The proliferation of competing histories among antagonistic Maya kings indicates that few histories became collective memories, at least for long. During the Late and Terminal Classic periods, when many kingdoms cycled through times of dominance and subordination, there was not one history but many histories; there was no monolithic collective memory but a set of overlapping and often conflicting notions about the ways things were in the past (Connerton 1989; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). It is within these histories and collective memories that the symbols and bodily practices of multilayered identities can be found.

History and collective memory are different in the ways they were reproduced by the ancient Maya and understood by archaeologists through material remains and practices. Oral histories, as well as legends, are accessed through cognitive memory—something that is remembered. For literate societies, like the Maya, histories were available through surviving texts and associated images. On the other hand, collective memories are often encoded in habit-memory—a performance that can be reproduced without resort to recall or cognitive memory (Connerton 1989:40). After years of constant chores, muscles remember how to perform tasks and minds subconsciously access embodied memories that they already “know” (Joyce 2003:105). Archaeologists can gain an understanding of past collective memories by focusing on the shared domestic tasks that were repeated daily across all households. But as I suggested earlier, histories are unlikely to be retained in collective memory, whether written down in texts or recalled from memory devices, unless they are repeated during public performances. Therefore, identities built upon histories and collective memories require repetitive actions, the most salient of which are embedded in bodily practices.

Maya foodways, including the tools and practices of cooking and serving, are a rich source of histories and collective memories since they are embedded in bodily practices. Surviving fragments of histories are available through the translation of the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) text along the rim of Late Classic vases. PSS texts are often proprietary statements that not only identify the owner of the vessel but also its maker, its use, and the social status of its owner (Houston et al. 1989). These texts also describe vases as containing chocolate; therefore, many researchers assume that their primary function was for drinking chocolate. Vases that display PSS texts are elaborately decorated with painted scenes, some of which appear to portray the owner engaged in a variety of elite practices. Other figural vases display mythological and cosmological themes, especially elements from the legend of the Hero Twins from the *Popul Vuh* (Kerr 1989). Although some may have been used solely as funerary items or as pristine memory devices to recall political, religious, or social relations (Coe 1978:11), close examination of vases reveals heavy wear patterns on their surfaces

(Chase 1985; Reents-Budet 1994:75). Therefore, they were repeatedly used during the lifetime of the owner.

It is possible that the inscriptions along the rim of vases, as well as the scenes painted on the body of the vessel, may have functioned as memory devices to recall legends or histories while offering toasts during feasts or public events. Painted scenes on Classic period vases, cups, and plates, only some of which contain PSS texts, appear to confirm this. Those that display historical scenes focus on kings and queens exercising their authority including presentations, performances, religious rites, and feasts (Reents-Budet 2000, 2001). Food service and toasts were important parts of these courtly activities as evidenced by the central position pottery vessels command in these scenes and the fact that people in some scenes are shown gesturing with vases. Vases and the bodily practices they reflect, therefore, can be used to understand how elite foodways embodied individual and class-based identities.

Commoners also used foodways and domestic pottery to evoke collective memories, but rather than using highly decorated and inscribed pottery to recall particular events, quotidian foodways may have elicited collective memories by linking an experiential present to a communal past. All families cooked and served meals in the home around the hearth using domestic pottery, and these daily repetitive tasks were embedded in bodily practices. As such, cooking and serving meals may have evoked feelings similar to what Steven Feld and Keith Basso (1996) call a “sense of place,” especially a sense of home and family, and as I hope to demonstrate, a collective memory of the larger community as well.

Reconstructing what the Classic Maya ate and drank or the kinds of vessels in which they cooked and served their meals is beyond the scope of this paper. In other publications I have linked common bowls and jars found at Xunantunich to the preparation of maize and the hauling of water (LeCount 1996, 2010), and many epigraphic, formal, and chemical analyses have identified the specific uses of serving forms (Houston et al. 1989; Reents-Budet 1994; Stuart 1988; Taube 1989). Rather, it is the ritualization of domestic practices (Bradley 2005) and the construction of collective memory that forms the body of this discussion. Certainly, many foodways inculcate habit-memory among the people who perform them every day—but which practices become integral parts of the collective memory of the community, so much so that they come to embody community identity? Similarly, which foodways allow individual histories to be “written” in the collective memory of community? It is not enough to say that many components of domestic life form the basis of collective memories; one must understand how collective memories and histories are constructed out of the materials of everyday life.

ANCIENT XUNANTUNICH: THE CREATION OF A NEW IDENTITY AND A VENERATED PAST

Unlike many Classic period sites in the Maya Lowlands, Xunantunich had an abbreviated past. Although occupation of the hilltop stretches back to the earliest known ceramic phase of the Preclassic period (LeCount et al. 2002), the immediate area sustained only modest construction and habitation until the site was established as a major center in the Samal phase (A.D. 600–670). After this time, Xunantunich rapidly grew to its maximum size and architectural grandeur during the early *Hats' Chaak* phase (A.D. 670–750), when the area was likely directly incorporated into the Naranja state and the center served as the larger site's provincial capital in the upper Belize River valley (LeCount and Yaeger 2010). By the

latter part of the *Hats' Chaak* phase, approximately A.D. 750 or so, the center appears to have experienced a violent event and many parts of the site were abandoned. It was during this time that local rule was restored and the plaster frieze on the summit building of the Castillo discussed in the opening paragraph was likely buried. In A.D. 820, Xunantunich erected stelae and proclaimed supreme political authority over the area in the *Tsak'* phase (A.D. 780–890). But the site's ties to Naranjo were never entirely broken. Naranjo's influence was written in Xunantunich's architecture, stelae, and other permanent monuments during the Late and Terminal Classic periods (Ashmore 1998; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004).

Besides Xunantunich, many major centers are found on or near the tributaries that form the Belize Valley, including Actuncan, Buenavista del Cayo, Baking Pot, Blackman Eddy, Cahal Pech, Las Ruinas, and others, whose deep and substantial histories stretched back into the Middle Preclassic period (Garber 2004). Contrary to expectations, these centers are virtually the same size and do not exhibit equidistant spacing predicted by Central Place theory for the gradual emergence of centers on the landscape. Based on recent epigraphic evidence, it appears that perpetual competition for political dominance between the tightly-spaced sites of the upper Belize River valley likely resulted in a succession of territorial capitals beginning with Actuncan in the Late Preclassic period and ending with Xunantunich in the Terminal Classic period (Helmke and Awe 2008; see also LeCount and Yaeger 2010).

Xunantunich's sudden and rapid expansion within this political *longue durée* reorganized political relations in the valley and may have prompted the people of the upper Belize River valley to clarify their affiliations through local symbols associated with sculpture (Fields 2004) and pottery (Connell 2000; LeCount 2010; Preziosi 2003), and perhaps other salient markers of identity. Before this time, pottery types and their frequencies are nearly indistinguishable between sites found in this part of the Belize valley and those downstream, a pattern often associated with interactive polities that mutually reinforce each other (Freidel 1981; McAnany 2001; Sabloff 1986). The formation of a pottery-style zone around Xunantunich during the Late Classic period suggests a breakdown of social and political relations between polities and a conscious development of a new local identity and a new past to differentiate this polity's members from surrounding populations. Elsewhere, I present data that document the rise in popularity of an obscure domestic pottery group, called Mount Maloney, to become a collective symbol of social identity for the people of the upper Belize River valley (LeCount 2010). Assemblages from sites down valley, such as Cahal Pech and Baking Pot (Audet 2006:319, Table 6.5), contain more red-slipped groups of similar forms and composition, while those from Minanha, located on the Vaca Plateau, are distinctly brown in color (Gyles Iannone, personal communication 2006). These local style zones are interesting because they are distinguished from each other by simply-decorated pottery groups used in the home to cook and serve food, not the more highly embellished groups that form the bases of ceramic spheres across the Maya lowlands.

In many cases, a collective identity is forged in the face of competition and boundary marking (Jones 1997; Wobst 2001) and materialized through ordinary items such as clothing (Anawalt 1981), lip plugs (Brumfiel 1994), and pottery (Thompson 1958). Rarely are these kinds of core symbols sacred in the conventional sense; rather, they are powerful metaphors for life (Ortner 1973: 1340–1342). Their prominent display reinforces the prosperity and strength of the group (Wiessner 1983) and promotes a collective

memory of shared heritage. Since all individuals can obtain and use these items, they unify people separated by social class, economic background, or original homeland.

An equally important factor for the development of a salient identity for members of the Xunantunich society was their relationship to powerful groups in the Peten. Naranjo, one of the largest and most bellicose Classic Maya centers situated in the eastern Peten, was less than a day's walk to the west and a major player in social and political affairs of the Belize valley (Helmke and Awe 2008; Houston et al. 1992; Reents-Budet 2005). Naranjos's influence in Belize valley politics may have prompted Xunantunich's populace to define themselves in opposition to or affiliation with them.

Although Xunantunich's rulers were subordinated to Naranjo overlords during portions of the Late Classic period, they nonetheless participated in elite Maya identity politics. Maya kings actively sought to associate themselves with other individuals of the same political rank and social status and distance themselves from others of lesser sociopolitical status. Good relations were marked through gift giving, marriage alliances, and visitations, but bad relations did not deter the display of broadly shared elite symbols and practices such as clothing canons and protracted burial rites. Ideas about kingship, cosmology, and other conceptual frameworks transcended geopolitical rivalries.

Like other lowland elites, Xunantunich's rulers garnered international pottery styles that conveyed membership in the upper echelons of lowland society (Schortman et al. 2001). One of the best examples of international pottery styles are highly decorated figural and textural vases that display PSS texts, described above. These items were produced by specialists for elite patrons and often circulated through the elite stratum as reminders of social and political relations (Reents-Budet 1994). The histories inscribed on them were likely read during toasts at feasts to recall personal events and relations.

Possibly because of their provincial status, Xunantunich leaders did not commission or receive many vessels that displayed PSS texts. Instead, vases that exhibit pseudo-glyphs rather than readable inscriptions are common at Xunantunich. Pseudo-glyphs do not conform to the established canons of glyph morphology; rather they repeat glyphs in the same position as PSS text (Longyear 1952). Some pseudo-glyphs cannot be pronounced, but others are words with decipherable meanings (Calvin 2009). Fragments of texts and repetitive glyphs may have acted as mnemonic devices to reactivate the presence of a known individual (Meskell 2003: 44–45) or recall personal events and relations in the same way figural and textural vases were used.

In sum, pottery styles from Xunantunich lend evidence to suggest that the Late and Terminal Classic Maya who lived in the upper Belize River valley created new social and political identities based on a venerated past. Interestingly, these new identities are more easily understood through practices associated with domestic pottery groups than elite vessels. Xunantunich's rulers and nobles were tied together with other lowland Maya elites through class and therefore they performed many of the same international foodways seen at other sites. As I will argue below, their specific social identities derived from the creation of linear histories associated with estates and ancestors through feasting practices. Classic-period domestic pottery, on the other hand, expressed affiliation to the immediate area through shared bodily practices associated with cooking and serving practices all Xunantunich community members shared.

COMMON POTS AND BODILY PRACTICES AMONG THE MAYA: PAST AND PRESENT

The importance of common pots in memory work derives from the ways they are used to cook, store, and serve food and how these practices embody collective memory. In this section, Mount Maloney pottery vessels from Xunantunich are linked to bodily practices associated with cooking food and hauling water. Today, similar kinds of pottery and bodily practices are sources of cultural and community identities, patterns that are used to infer similar linkages among the ancient Maya of Xunantunich.

At Xunantunich, Mount Maloney vessels were the most common tools for cooking and serving daily meals at Xunantunich. These sturdy black-slipped, calcite-tempered bowls and jars were made in seven forms, including incurving bowls, ritual forms, jars, closed bowls or ollas, and rimmed bowls (Figure 1). As a ceramic group, they dominate Xunantunich domestic assemblages, comprising 38–47% of the Late and Terminal Classic complexes (LeCount 1999). Their initial use among people of the upper Belize River valley dates to the transformation of Xunantunich as a major center in the Samal phase, and possibly earlier. Early Classic assemblages at the nearby center of Actuncan contain an early prototype of this pottery, but it makes up a very small percent of the assemblage (Wyman 2006). Based on ethnographic analogies and archaeological data, I have suggested that Mount Maloney bowls were the primary vessels used to prepare maize-based foods for everyday consumption, and restricted-necked jars were the primary water-carrying containers (LeCount 1996; 2010).

For the Classic Maya, daily meals consisted of simple foods made with water and ground maize meal or dough (*nixtamal*). Beans, root crops, avocados, chiles, insects, greens, fruits, and mushrooms lent variety to a repetitive diet, and meat was a minor component of the meal (Lentz 1991; Powis et al. 1999).

For the vast majority of ancient Maya people, growing and preparing maize and fetching water from a sacred waterhole were strenuous everyday chores, much like those performed by Maya women today. Modern Maya women spend the better part of each day preparing and grinding *nixtamal* for meals using pottery bowls as

vessels to soak, mix and store the maize dough (Vogt 1969: 24–25). Girls fetch water by balancing jars on the head, hip, or back depending on the *costumbre* (tradition) of the community (Reina and Hill 1978). Because washing, soaking, and grinding maize kernels for *nixtamal* and hauling jars full of water are laborious chores, these bodily practices are fixed within the muscles, bones, and minds of people who perform these tasks. A lifetime of chores inculcates habit-memory of community foodways into the collective memory of women.

Domestic foodways code for more than habit-memory; they also recall associations with family, home, and community. David Sutton (2001:5) suggests that foodways are a potent source of collective memory because they create relatedness among people who eat together. Eating food together constitutes a communal whole, essentially a family, whose members understand that they are bound together and altered through “shared substance.” Shared substances need not be special foods. For the Japanese, rice is a metaphor of self, community, nation, and ethnicity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993), just as feta cheese is a source of metaphors of Greek life (Sutton 2001:85).

For the Classic Maya, shared substances were maize and water, which not only made up the bulk of their meals, but the human body as well. According to legends in the *Popul Vuh*, the first true human beings were created when the gods made people out of maize dough (Tedlock 1996). In their ritual role as recapitulators of the Maya creation, rulers wore ritual paraphernalia that transformed their appearance to match the maize god (Freidel et al. 1993; Taube 1985). In death, maize dough was placed in the corpse’s mouth, presumably to sustain them on their journey to the underworld. Maize was governed by a deity, who was placated by a series of rituals tied to the agricultural cycle.

For the Classic Maya, maize and blood sustained humans and gods alike (Taube 1989), much the same way the modern Maya believe these elements invest the body with both spirit and energy. Chimaltecos call maize *qtxu? Kjo?n*, “Our Mother Corn,” which suggests profound respect for this source of all life and livelihood (Watanabe 1992:66–67). Maize plants, like humans, have inner souls or *ch’ulel* (Vogt 1969:36). Eating corn transfers this spirit to the human body. Similarly, the Nahuatl of Amatlan, Veracruz, believe that the force that provides human energy is carried in the blood and is renewed when people eat corn. Thus the Nahuatl say “corn is our blood” (Sandstrom 1991:247). According to June Nash (1970:17), flowing water, liquor, and blood are symbolically linked as spirit media, and this connection may be one reason that excessive drinking is allowed at public festivals among the Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas. For the modern Maya of Zinacantan, water is drawn daily from a sacred waterhole, which is considered to be an opening in the earth’s crust where people can communicate with the Earth Lord (Vogt 1969:387). Water from these sacred waterholes is not only used to draw water for people and livestock, but to heal the sick (Vogt 1969:146).

Pottery vessels are part and parcel of this transfer of energy since they are the containers in which raw ingredients are cooked into daily meals and made available to family. Pots, hearths, and homes are therefore similar generative loci. They transform the outside world into the inside world of the family and community (Douglas 1966, 1971; also see Goody 1982, Levi-Strauss 1970, and Sahlins 1976). In a “natural” world of annual cycles centered on family reproduction, horticultural activities, and ceremonies tied to the solar calendar, domestic practices were the foundation of a collective memory of community (see Gillespie 2010).

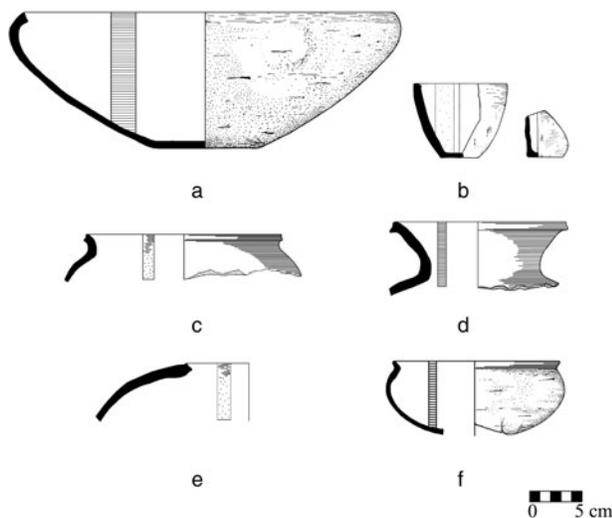


Figure 1. Mount Maloney Group forms: [a] incurving bowl, 79DD/3.7050, [b] rare forms, 116M/3.12917, and 117A/3.12123, [c] open-necked jar, 90G/8.7552, [d] restricted-necked jar, 22O/3.4464, [e] large closed bowl, 117G/1.10711, and [f] rimmed bowl, 18C/5.4047.

For the modern Maya, common pottery forms and styles are considered community property, not the property of individual families (Riena and Hill 1978:254; Thompson 1958:123, 145). This connection may be due to the fact that the Maya believe they were invented by the first ancestors, who became models for correct behavior (Warren 1978:49). Nash (1970:53) suggests that the Tzo'ontahal Maya metaphorically equate parts of pottery vessels to those of the human body, and more importantly, believe that they have a soul. The close relationship between community property, corporeal identity, and domestic pottery might have also been true for the ancient Maya, who also modeled pottery attachments after human body parts. Pots may have reflected human aspects of the people who made them, a pattern recognized by many anthropologists (David et al. 1988; DeBoer 1984; Hodder 1988; Miller 1985).

COMMEMORATIVE RITUALS AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY AT XUNANTUNICH

If Mount Maloney pottery were found only in domestic contexts, it would be harder to argue that it played an integral part in the formation of a collective memory at Xunantunich. But not only is Mount Maloney the most frequent pottery group found in domestic contexts in upper Belize River valley sites, it is also one of the most common whole vessel types found in Late and Terminal Classic civic caches at Xunantunich (Table 1). The connection of Mount Maloney bowls with dedication and termination rites indicates that practices associated with maize preparation were important elements in ritual performances at Xunantunich.

Whole Mount Maloney bowls were placed beneath the south construction stairs of Structure A-1 and on a west-facing terrace of Structure A-4. Large rim fragments were found wedged into

the Castillo's western frieze (Robin 1994) and burnt on a bench in Structure D-7 (Braswell 1993). At Actuncan, a whole Mount Maloney bowl was placed atop a large termination ritual deposit of smashed vessels on the stairs of one of the structures making up the major triadic temple group. Other kinds of vessels were also cached. Incensarios are also found in termination and dedicatory deposits, but they are often broken. Small, unslipped lip-to-lip bowls are common in burials, as are decorated vases and plates. But these are more likely to be found in house dedicatory caches or burials than in civic contexts.

As the most common civic cache vessel, Mount Maloney bowls can be thought of as votives associated with public commemorative rites. Richard Bradley (1990) suggests that votives were not intended to be retrieved, but were offerings given to the gods as part of rites of passage associated with life or death. The objects deposited in these kinds of caches do not reflect the status or achievement of the individual who deposited them *per se* but are intended to placate supernatural powers for the benefit of the entire group. For the Classic Maya, temple dedicatory and termination rites may have been indirectly associated with events in the life and death of a particular leader who commissioned civic works, but they are not directly linked to a person like grave goods. They are more strongly associated with public rituals and sacred offerings enacted at the dedication or termination of civic buildings.

It could be suggested that the bowls themselves were not votives but merely containers that held food offerings. This certainly may be true. As the primary vessel for the preparation of maize, the presence of Mount Maloney bowls in caches lend evidence to suggest that maize-based foods were offered to the gods when civic buildings were dedicated or terminated. They could have held kernels, cobs, maize dough, or possibly a maize-based food item such as

Table 1. Whole Pottery Vessels Recovered from Ritual Contexts at Xunantunich and Actuncan*

Location	Cultural Context	Contents	Reference
Xunantunich			
Str. A-1	Temple dedication: placed on construction stairs	Mount Maloney Black bowl	Zeleznik 1993 ^a
Str. A-4	Temple dedication: cache deposits under floor summit	Cache 4: Five incensarios, two Benque Viejo Polychrome vases, and numerous Mount Maloney Black bowls	Audet 2006:140
Str. A-4	Termination rite on summit	Five small bowls and two frying pan type ladle censers	Audet 2006:138-140
Str. A-4	Burial in tomb	Two Saturday Creek Polychrome plates	Audet 2006:146
Str. A-4/A-3 junction	Sequential rites on terrace surfaces	Two Mount Maloney Black bowls	Lewis 1995:66-67
Str. A-6	Temple dedication: fill over Quetzal building	One complete and one partial vessel	Miller 1995:33
Str. A-9	Burial under summit floor	One yellow and red bowl over face	Gann 1925:62
Str. A-11	Desecratory rite: fill inside dismantled room	Red-slipped bowl, probably Garbutt Creek Red.	Yaeger 2010
Str. A-13	Palace termination	Mount Maloney Black bowl	Jaime Awe, personal communication, 2006
Str. B-2	House dedication	Belize Red dish and Big Falls vase	LeCount 1996:100
Str. B-5	House dedication: Axial cache	Censer and Belize Red dish	Pendergast and Graham 1981:17
Str. B-1	Burial B3	Five plain lip-to-lip bowls	Thompson 1942:28
Str. B-5	Burial into floor	Ceramic flute	Pendergast and Graham 1981:17
Str. D-8	74HH/4 Burial 1	Ten small, plain lip-to-lip bowls	Braswell 1994:219
Actuncan			
Str. A-5	Temple termination	Mount Maloney Black bowl	McGovern 1994:112

*Chart modified from Jamison (2010) to include Hats' Chaak and Tsak phase caches only. Caches may include other items including sherds, obsidian, shell, and human remains, but only whole or reconstructable vessels are listed.

^aUnpublished field notes.

tamales or *atole* (maize gruel). Offerings of maize kernels and stalks have been found in caves (Brady 1989, 1995; Brady and Stone 1986; Brady et al. 1997; Lentz 1991:272), but it is unclear how or why they were cached there. Scenes on plates and vases illustrate tamales in ritual settings associated with important Maya deities such as the Tonsured Maize God, God K, and God N (Taube 1989), but most are shown offered in shallow serving vessels such as plates and dishes. It is more likely that deep bowls held maize dough or soupier food items like *atole*.

Maize-based foods are the most common form of sacred food offering among the modern Maya today. Sacramental meals include *tuti-uah*, a baked maize cake and maize gruel in which chicken may be added (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1967:141, 145; Vogt 1993:69). The Yucatec Maya state that maize-based foods are suitable for gods, not simply because they are traditionally correct, but because they evoke the rain-giving functions of the gods and signify purity and divinity (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1967:128–129). Offerings placed on altars are called “substitutes” among Zinacantecos (Vogt 1969:70). Much like *torma* for the Buddhists (Ortner 1975:139), they provide a temporary body for the ancestor or deity while they eat at the mesa. After the ancestors have eaten their fill, ritual participants consume the food and drink (Tozzer 1941:154) presumably because eating these gifts transferred spirit to the bodies of the participants.

Nash (1970:210) suggests that Tzo’ontahal Maya of Chiapas are tied together as a community by eating together at sacred ritual meals and large-scale public feasts associated with festivals. Because these meals offer the same kinds of foods, the Tzo’ontahal Maya merge profane and sacred domains together into an unbroken universe. Ritual meals are intended to integrate rather than differentiate participants, even though senior men initiate and coordinate action. In Zinacantan, “men of low status may sit around the foot of the ritual table, [but] no one sits at the head” (Vogt 1993:41). Elders preside over the meal as ritual drinking and eating is repeated until all participants are served. According to Evon Vogt (1993:41), ritual meals express communality and continuity from deceased ancestors down to the youngest Zinacanteco capable of drinking and eating.

In sum, Mount Maloney vessels, as the most common household container and votive item, linked the sacred realm of the supernatural world and the profane world of daily bodily practices. Catherine Bell (1992:74) suggests that ritual is a part of the reality of social life and cannot be clearly differentiated from more quotidian activities. Daily routines and ritual actions are therefore better understood as a range of actions and materials that reveal dominant concerns of society (Bradley 2005). If ritual is recognized as a form of action, context can be used to determine the importance of ordinary things (Bradley 2005:34). For the Classic Maya at Xunantunich, Mount Maloney bowls were an integral component of both bodily practices and commemorative rites, and as such, they fostered a collective memory about family and community, and their place within the greater universe.

Classic Maya Feasting Paraphernalia: Performing Histories and Legends

Public ceremonies associated with mortuary rites or civic rites recognize political personages and the inheritance of social or political positions (Helms 1999:63). They established linear histories and bounded recollections that allowed some individuals to appropriate a separate past and legitimate their positions. By tapping

into a temporally defined world order, these kinds of rituals secured a point of origin and a memory of named ancestors for a house, corporate group, or polity (see McAnany 2001:127). Most public ceremonies would have provided food and drink for honored people, ancestors, or gods who cement bonds of affiliation by eating shared substances. Public feasts therefore are powerful venues to create, reinforce, or modify history. As integral parts of commemorative rites, they bring together large numbers of people to eat and witness oral presentations and performances.

Among the Classic Maya, the host may have also danced and performed legends. Based on the scenes painted on figural vases, they ate and drank. Personal feasting paraphernalia, especially vases with texts and scenes, would have acted as memory devices for the narration and reenactment of history, legends, and calendrical events. Toasting, as a way to honor important people and command the audience, stands out as a way to separate the histories of a few men and—possibly some women—from the redundant and cyclic memories shared by all Maya.

Classic Maya festival foods, as opposed to more sacred ritual meals, included tamales, roasted meats, chocolate drinks, and *balche* or other fermented beverages. Much of what we know about Classic period celebratory feasting comes from hieroglyphic texts and scenes painted on ceramics (Reents-Budet 1994; Taube 1989). By far, the most commonly depicted items are tamales served on plates and chocolate drunk from vases. Bishop de Landa stated that the sixteenth-century Yucatec Maya festival foods were served in abundance, and eating meat—specifically deer, peccary, turkey, and dog—was one of many important treats consumed at festivals (Tozzer 1941:92).

These festival foods, as well as the pottery forms used to serve them, probably had deep historical precedents for the Classic Maya. Plates date back to the Middle Preclassic period in the Central Lowlands (Gifford 1976; Merwin and Vaillant 1932; Smith 1955), which indicates that solid foods, such as roasted meats and possibly tamales, were an important component of Maya festivals for a very long time. The ancient Maya also consumed freshwater snails or *jute* (*Pachychilus* spp.) in large quantities at public ceremonies. Massive pits filled with *jute* shells at the base of Preclassic pyramids are common in Belize valley civic centers (Powis et al. 1999). *Jute* shells have been found in pits within Xunantunich’s plaza on the north side of Structure A-1 (Jamison 1992; Zeleznik 1993), as well as in Classic period construction fills at Xunantunich and Actuncan.

Consuming chocolate also had deep antiquity for the Classic Maya (Coe and Coe 1996; Joyce and Henderson 2007; McNeil 2006). Charles Miksicek and colleagues (1981) found evidence of cacao charcoal at Cuello dating back to Preclassic times, and more recent chemical studies have documented cacao compounds in Preclassic spouted vessels (Hurst et al. 2002). The word *ka-ka-wa* is inscribed on an Early Classic cup from Uaxactun (Grube 2001:33), and the earliest chemical evidence of cacao drinking from vases or cups also dates to the Early Classic period (Stuart 1988). Cacao seeds found at Ceren also date to the Early Classic period (David Lentz, personal communication 2006).

The drinking paraphernalia used to consume chocolate changed during the transition from the Preclassic to Classic period, and this shift has important implications concerning how personal histories proliferated in the Classic period. Terry Powis and colleagues (2002) suggest that Preclassic period chocolate consumption revolved around small spouted jars with basket-like handles. Although some are effigy vessels, they do not appear to be portraits.

A Terminal Preclassic effigy vessel from Actuncan (Figure 2) is similar to an “old god” vessel from K’axob (McAnany 2004). These pots may depict a deity, possibly associated with cacao beans or cacao rites, rather than historical individuals. They might have functioned as pitchers or “teapots” for the serving of cacao but could have been preparatory vessels used to froth the chocolate before serving.

Preclassic period chocolate preparation and drinking may have been similar to modern tea ceremonies in Asian societies, where religion, aesthetics, philosophy, discipline, and political relations are brought into play by the simple act of serving and receiving tea (Plutschow 2003; Sen 1979; Tanaka and Tanaka 2000). The objective of a modern tea ceremony is to create a “sacred” environment in which the host and guests strengthen their bonds of friendship by performing a tightly choreographed ritual. First, a secluded setting is properly constructed to reflect the larger universe. Utensils, bowls, and braziers are arranged in a way to facilitate the smooth and tranquil performance of the ritual. Then tea is brought to the guest in a small individual-sized container and consumed after a series of spoken exchanges. An enduring aspect of the ceremony is the way making and sharing tea establishes a personal bond between the host and guests.

In the Classic period, chocolate was drunk from personally-owned cylinder vases. Scenes painted on Classic vases illustrate that drinking was a vital part of competitive feasting and history making. Men drank on the steps of range buildings, while women and bystanders looked on (Reents-Budet 2001). The large size of some cylinder vases confirms that chocolate drinking was meant to be a conspicuous performance, or possibly a drink that was consumed by more than one person in a public venue. Drinking also occurred in intimate palace settings between a few individuals, and in some cases, cylinder vases can be seen next to divination mirrors, patterns which indicate that chocolate drinking was part of personal private rituals.

Making chocolate during the Classic period, however, does not appear to be part of the drinking ritual itself. Sophia and Michael Coe (1996:50) suggest that women might have made chocolate behind the scenes by pouring chocolate from vase to vase in order to froth it. This interpretation is supported by the high frequency of vases in middens associated with the service area adjacent to the ruler’s compound at Xunantunich (LeCount 1996:268). Classic

period chocolate drinking, therefore, was obligatory in both public and private sociopolitical and religious rites and helped establish personal histories associated with political and social position within families.

At Xunantunich, Classic period chocolate vases are highly diverse in style and form and not limited to cylinder vases bearing PSS texts. Nearly all lineage heads apparently owned drinking paraphernalia since cylindrical and barrel-shaped vases are found in both elite and commoner households (LeCount 2001). Most commoner and noble vases lack hieroglyphic texts, but many display repetitive pseudo-glyphs or simple images (Figure 3). In some commoner burials, rim sherds bearing portions of PSS texts have also been found (Chase 1992:50). Although vases with personal messages inscribed in hieroglyphs may have been limited to Xunantunich kings, the fact that pseudo-glyph vases are common at households in the center and hinterland settlements indicates that many men may have used vases with mnemonic inscriptions to recount oral histories and legends. As mnemonic devices, these textual fragments may have helped individuals recall stories during presentations, but as non-readable texts, they were subject to reinterpretations. The power of these “texts” to maintain linear histories therefore comes from the repetition of the message conveyed during toasts and feasts.

This functional and contextual difference between Preclassic period spouted vessels as preparatory and serving vessels and Classic period vases as solely drinking vessels signals a shift in the nature of ceremonies that called for chocolate. Rituals surrounding the Classic Maya chocolate ceremony were more prone to competitive displays and personal narratives than Preclassic rites, which might have been more intimate and communal. There is additional written evidence to support this contention. In Classic Mayan hieroglyphs *wi’*, “to eat or to consume,” is often the verb associated with “flint and shield” warfare expression and interchangeable with *jub’*, “to down or to topple.” Therefore, eating and war were ways to absorb, to conquer, to rob, and to eliminate in later Maya society. As a competitive act, *wi’* allowed one individual to supplant another or one group to supersede its rival.

Painted scenes on Classic period cylinder vases illustrate much drinking and carousing at public festivals. Festival behavior shocked

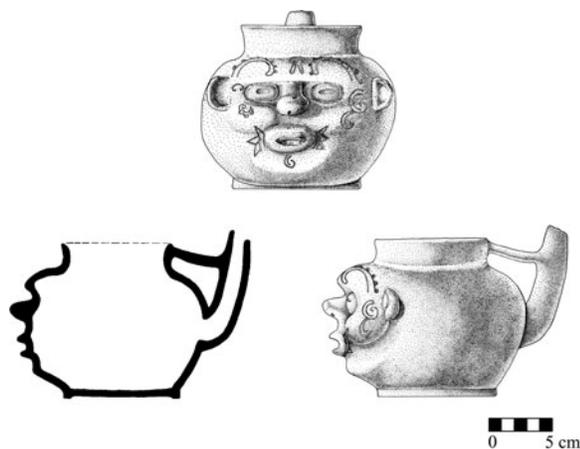


Figure 2. Protoclassic orange ware spouted effigy pot from Actuncan, (ID/25B4SA3).

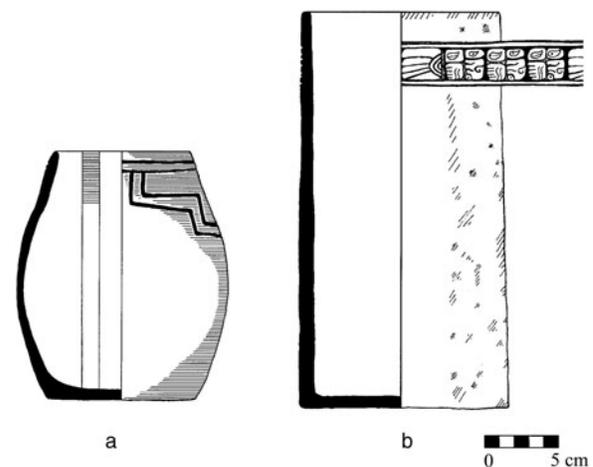


Figure 3. Late and Terminal Classic vases from Xunantunich: (a) Belize Red Incised Type barrel-shaped vase, 85L/7.6596 and (b) unspecified ash ware pseudo-glyph cylinder vase, 1E/12.20066.

sixteenth-century Spaniards who commented on the debauched nature of these affairs.

“These Indians were very dissipated in drinking and getting intoxicated, on account of which many evils resulted, such as killing each other and violating the conjugal rights of each other, the poor women thinking that they were receiving their husbands, behaving also with their fathers and their mothers as if they were in the houses of their enemies, and setting fire to their house, and in spite of all this they ruined themselves (in order to) get drunk. And when the drunkenness was general and accompanied with sacrifices, everyone contributed to it; because when it was a private occasion the host bore the expense of it with the aid of his relations” (Tozzer 1941:92).

As the antithesis of structure, festival eating and drinking can be seen as liminal, the liberation of human cognition from the normative constraints imposed on individuals by society (Turner 1982:44). As such, Maya celebratory feasting contained the germ of future social and political developments. The overwhelming affects of celebratory drinking and eating were ripe for tactics that enhanced the host's prestige and forged individual memories.

CONCLUSIONS

Inscribed memory practices associated with elite symbols and individual histories are often times privileged over more mundane material culture and bodily practices that form the foundations of collective memories for all community members (Connerton 1989:4; Thomas 1996). With examples from the Maya center of Xunantunich, Belize, I make the case that common bodily practices associated with preparing maize and hauling water contributed to the collective memory of community identity as strongly as the personal histories of kings. This situation was especially true during the Late and Terminal Classic periods, when shifting political power erased the history of many Maya kings. I suggest that if histories are embodied in public performances, they are more likely to survive, at least in part, to become collective memories shared by all members of the community than those that are not.

For the ancient Maya, daily commensality and ritual feasting were a continuum of performance and meaning. In the upper Belize River valley, a black-slipped pottery group, called Mount

Maloney, was the most common pottery in households, as well as in civic caches. Based on ethnographic analogy and archaeological data, I suggest that Mount Maloney bowls were used to prepare *nixtamal* and that constricted-neck jars were used to carry water. Today, pottery styles and bodily practices of preparing maize and hauling water are considered community property and tradition, patterns evidenced in the Classic period archaeological record as well. Therefore, the repetition of these strenuous practices over a lifetime of daily chores created habit-memory shared by all community members.

The fact that these vessels were found in both domestic and civic contexts indicates that bodily practices associated with the preparation of *nixtamal* were not limited to the preparation of daily meals but also to sacred public offerings. In a world structured by short-term cycles centered on horticultural activities, domestic reproduction, and annual ceremonies, these food practices blurred the separation between the past, present, and the future in the collective memory of polity members. Conceived as ancient practices and rites even to the Classic Maya, food rites centered on maize-based foods were deeply embedded in the cosmological order of things and the cognitive memory of community members. Because collective memory forms part of the mental framework people use to construct a shared past, it is a necessary component of identity formation. A salient identity of community was played out, therefore, through ordinary practices and symbols of community affiliation.

The formation of a community identity around common bodily practices did not prevent Maya men or women at Xunantunich from developing linear histories of their own, which were layered on top of the group collective memory. Indeed, the maintenance of linear history was a tool by which kings and nobles could appropriate a separate past that legitimized rights to power. As a critical aspect of many Classic Maya rituals, chocolate drinking served to create linear histories through toasts that commanded the audience to honor individuals, ancestors, and gods. Some kinds of feasting paraphernalia, such as personalized chocolate vases, marked individuals and their houses as people and places of prominence with separate identities and histories. Therefore, drinking chocolate was incorporated into the rites used to codify the linear memories and histories of some men and their associated houses, which marked them as distinct from those cyclical memories of the larger group.

RESUMEN

Costumbres de memoria inscrita relacionadas con los símbolos de los élites son a veces más privilegiado que la cultura material banal y las costumbres corporales que constituyen los fundamentos de la memoria colectiva de todos los miembros de la comunidad. Con ejemplos de un centro de los mayas en Xunantunich, Belize, yo hago el caso que las costumbres corporales asociados con preparando maíz y el transporte de agua, contribuyeron a la memoria colectiva de la identidad comunal tanto como las historias personales de los reyes. Esta situación era especialmente cierto durante los períodos clásico tardío y clásico terminal, cuando cambios en poder político borro la historia de muchos de los reyes mayas. Yo propongo que si historias fueran representadas en actuaciones públicas sería más probable que durarían, al menos en parte, para llegar a ser memorias colectivas compartidas por todos los miembros de la comunidad más que los que nos son representadas en actuaciones públicas.

Para los mayas antiguos, comensalidad diaria y banquetes rituales eran un continuo de actuación y sentido. En el Upper Belize River valley, un grupo de engobe-negro cerámica, llamada Mount Maloney, era el más

común tipo de cerámica en los hogares, así como caches cívicas. Basada en estudios etnográficos y datos arqueológicos, yo propongo que los cuencos de Mount Maloney fueron usados para preparar *nixtamal* y jarros para cargar agua que tenían cuello apretado. En día presente, estilos de cerámica y costumbres corporales de preparar maíz y cargar agua, son consideradas propiedad comunal y tradicional, también demostrado en el período clásico de el registro arqueológico. Por lo tanto, la repetición de estas costumbres agotadoras durante el curso de vida de tareas domésticas, crió memoria de hábito compartido por todos los miembros de la comunidad.

El hecho de que estos buques fueron encontrados en ambos contextos, domésticos y cívicos corporales, indica que las prácticas relacionadas con la preparación de *nixtamal* no se limitaba a la preparación de las comidas diarias, sino también las sagradas ofertas públicas. En un mundo estructurado por ciclos de corto plazo, se centraron en las actividades hortícola, reproducción doméstica y las ceremonias anuales, estas prácticas del alimento hizo borroso, la separación entre el pasado, el presente, y el futuro

en la memoria colectiva de los miembros de la clase política. Concebido como antiguas prácticas y ritos hasta para los maya clásicos, los ritos centrados en alimentos elaborados a base de maíz estaban profundamente arraigados en el orden cosmológico de las cosas y la memoria cognitiva de los miembros de la comunidad. Porque la memoria colectiva forma parte del armazón mental de las personas, lo utilizan para construir un pasado compartido, es un componente necesario para la formación de identidad. Una identidad más destacados de la comunidad fue formada, por lo tanto, a través de las prácticas ordinarias y los símbolos de la comunidad de afiliación.

La formación de una identidad comunal, centrados en prácticas corporales comunes, no previno hombres o a mujeres del maya en Xunantunich de desarrollar historias lineales propios, que fueron acomodadas encima de la

memoria colectiva del grupo. De hecho, el mantenimiento de la historia lineal es un instrumento mediante el cual los reyes y nobles podían apropiarse un pasado diferente que legitimaba los derechos al poder. Bebiendo chocolate, un aspecto crítico de muchos rituales de maya clásico, sirvió para crear historias lineales a través de brindis, que comandaba la audiencia a dar honor a las personas, antepasados y los dioses. Algunos tipos de parafernalia de la fiesta, tales como jarrones de chocolate personalizado, marcaba las personas y sus casas como las personas y los lugares de preeminencia que tenían identidades y historias distintas. Por lo tanto, beber chocolate se incorporó a los ritos y fue utilizado para codificar los recuerdos y la historia lineal de algunos hombres y sus casas, que los marcaron como distintos de los recuerdos del grupo grande.

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COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE FRONTIERS: A CASE STUDY FROM THE ANCIENT MAYA CENTER OF MINANHA, BELIZE

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Abstract

The examination of the internal frontiers between ancient Maya polities is a topic that has received little focused attention. This article explores various topics associated with frontiers and frontier communities, including: (1) how they might be located archaeologically; (2) what their material correlates might be; and, (3) what we might expect in terms of their sociopolitical characteristics. Special attention is paid to the role that collective memory plays in both the definition and reaffirmation of territorial limits and in the production and reproduction of frontier identities. The ancient Maya center of Minanha is used as a case study.

Frontier studies have a long and varied history in the social sciences (Parker 2002:371). The attraction to frontier research is understandable, given the qualities that are usually attributed to these zones. As summarized by Hamilton (1999:48), frontiers “are interstitial zones; they are places of skirmish and engagement, of shifting alliances and changing identity.” Thus, the examination of the territorial qualities of frontiers has the potential to tell us a great deal about the dynamic character of state formations, past and present (Donnan and Wilson 1999:16; Wilson and Donnan 1998:8–9).

In general terms, a frontier is a geopolitical *zone* that exists prior to the delineation of precise borders (Prescott 1987:1). More accurately, a frontier is a “loosely defined area or transition zone that lies between two political, administrative or cultural units of varying degrees of complexity or between one such unit and a hinterland either where no such polities exist, or where such polities do not come into direct physical contact” (Parker 2002:373; see also Prescott 1987:36). The first of these frontiers conforms to Kopytoff’s (1987, 1999) *internal frontier* (a zone between two adjacent polities), whereas the latter corresponds with his *external frontier* (a zone formed as a result of the colonial expansion of a polity into a sparsely populated and/or less politically complex region). It is the first type of frontier, the internal frontier, which is the focus of this discussion.

Over the past few decades Mayanists have made small strides toward locating the frontiers between polities. The characterization of these internal frontiers and the frontier communities themselves has, however, lagged far behind. As a result, we continue to have a very limited understanding of how frontiers and frontier communities developed, the role that they played in inter-polity relationships, and the types of interaction that occurred between frontier communities and the heartlands of ancient Maya polities. This paper explores the nature of ancient Maya internal frontiers, with a particular emphasis on the various ways that collective memory factored into the formation and dissolution of frontier communities.

Late Classic period developments at Minanha, located in the internal frontier between Caracol and Naranjo, are used to illustrate the discussion (Figure 1).

ANCIENT MAYA INTERNAL FRONTIERS

Some scholars have argued that boundaries and territories are concepts that are not applicable to the ancient Maya. For example, Hammond (1991:276–277) indicates that, beyond Emblem Glyphs and a limited number of “frontier markers,” there is little indication that the Maya were concerned with “territorial integrity” or “boundary maintenance.” Adams (2001:349) echoes these sentiments in pointing out that there is little evidence to suggest that the Maya defended well-defined frontiers (see also Henderson and Sabloff 1993:466–467). Grube (2000:553) concurs, arguing that “... borders and territories ... were not the emic concepts in which Maya polities defined themselves” (see also Houston 2006). In contrast, McAnany (1995:87) posits that there is a tradition of “... hyper-boundary maintenance among high-density tropical agriculturalists [such as the Maya] who are configured in dispersed settlement arrangements.” Yoffee (1991:293–294) agrees, suggesting that regional “sub-boundaries” were indeed important to the ancient Maya (see also Iannone 2006). There is, in fact, considerable ethnohistoric and ethnographic data to support these latter assertions, as well as a growing body of archaeological evidence.

Territoriality, Collective Memory, Community Boundaries, and Internal Frontiers

Restall’s (1998:49) detailed examination of the Maya accounts of the Spanish conquest and Colonial period lead him to conclude that “[b]oth the *Cah* [self-governing municipal community] and *Chibal* [the Maya lineage, or extended family] were built upon territorial control and access to cultivable land.” According to Restall (1998:49–50), “... land not only sustained *Cah* and *Chibal*, but it

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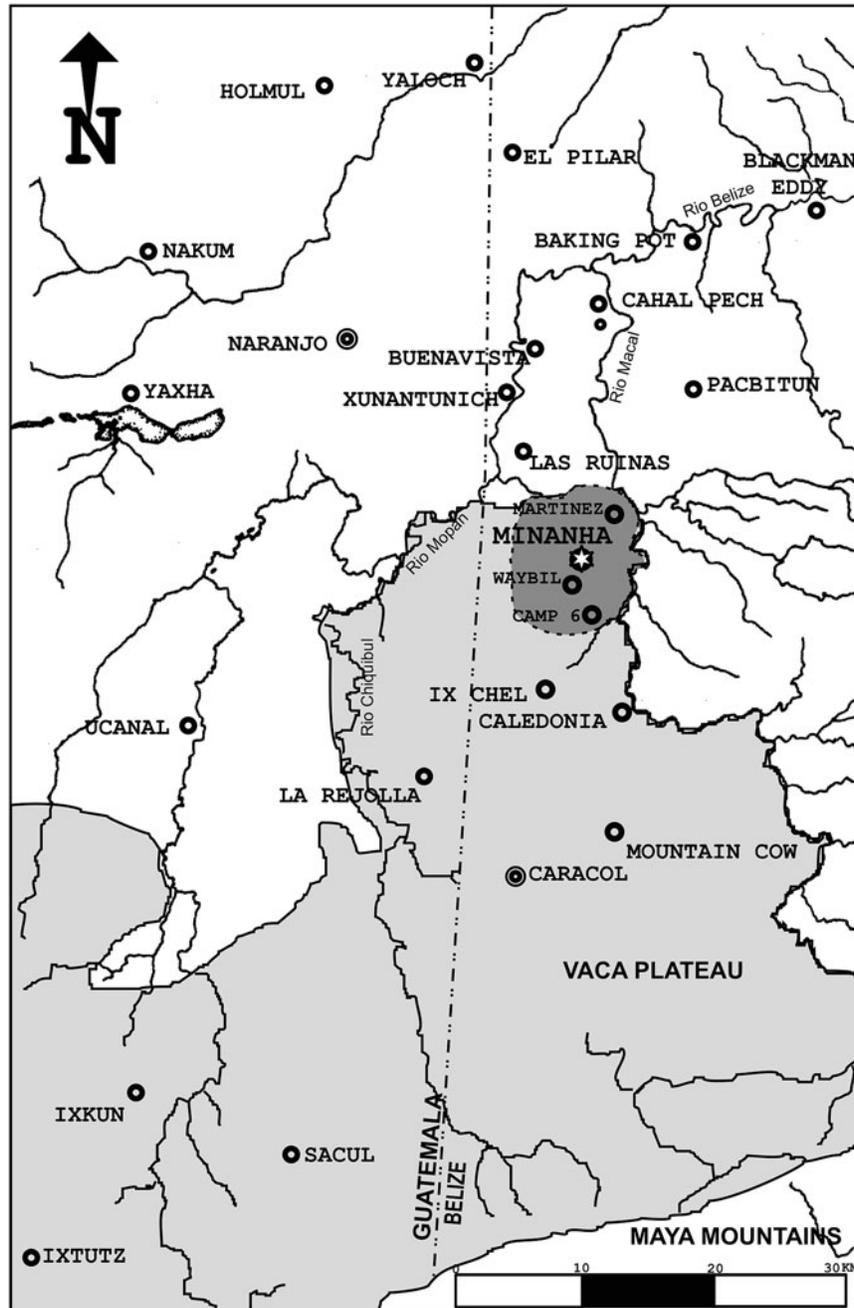


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Minanha and its approximate territorial limits.

acted as a mnemonic for collective memory; the toponyms of the countryside surrounding the community prompted remembrances of past events and present realities.” The importance of community boundaries to the Colonial period Maya is best exemplified by the documentation of territorial rights within the *títulos*: collections “of maps, testaments, deeds, border agreements, and every other scrap of paper referring to land that each community guarded so assiduously” (Farriss 1984:272). According to Restall (1998:56), aside from their role in territorial claims, *títulos*, or “primordial titles,” “are intended as repositories of community memory; they are a collective effort at recording—and rewriting—the past for the benefit of future community members.” Of particular interest

are the maps that were sometimes included as part of the *título* submission, such as the *Pepet Tsibil*, which was associated with the *Land Treaty of Mani*. This map depicts an outer ring of towns and natural landmarks that appears to signify the territorial edges of a *polity* rather than an individual community (Marcus 1993: 125–126).

Other ethnohistoric data reaffirm that the Maya demarcated their community boundaries through the use of natural features such as *cenotes*, springs, caves, ponds, and prominent hills, as well as through the construction of artificial mounds and the erection of cross-shrines (Hodge 1997:211–212; McAnany 1995:87; Marcus 1993:126; Moyes 2005:291; Roys 1943:181, 192; Trigger 2003:94).

The ethnohistoric documents also inform us that these territorial limits were regularly surveyed by community leaders and their subordinates, and it was during these processions that both the natural and artificial features were reconfirmed as legitimate territorial markers (McAnany 1995:87; Moyes 2005:291; Roys 1943:181, 192). A passage from the *Title of Calkini* (ca. 1579–1595) provides an excellent example of the range of natural and artificial features that were employed during one such territorial procession:

On the north-east side they went to confer, beginning at Xkalakya, moving to the lagoon at Calxub, passing on to Lake Tixcum to the west of Claxub, coming out at the base of the mound of Kochyol, passing to the north of Tahpuc lake, emerging to the north of Lake Xicinchah, at the corner of the savannah at the foot of an oak tree; on the rise a cross [*cruz*] was planted at the foot of a calabash tree; [the boundary] continued and came out next to the savannah of Chanap, then emerging at Xnob, some distance from Matu [Restall 1998:95].

Elsewhere in the same document territorial markers are said to include: “hills,” “forests,” “lagoons,” “end of the savannah,” “middle of the great savannah,” “edge of the forest,” and “stone mounds” (Restall 1998:93).

Ethnographic accounts of the Tzotzil Maya *K'in Krus* ceremony also underscore the importance of ritual circuits in reaffirming and sanctifying community boundaries (Vogt 1970:43; see also McAnany 1995:87). Once again, both natural and artificial features were visited during the processions, including various water sources, cross-shrines, and stone mounds. It is in the formal manner in which community boundaries were demarcated where the role of collective memory becomes particularly consequential. Specifically, through the cyclically reoccurring ritual processions discussed above, collective memory was engaged to activate previously established natural and artificial features so that they could be formally reconfirmed as authentic signifiers of community limits.

Summary. Considerable ethnographic and ethnohistoric evidence exists to suggest that the Maya did recognize their community limits and that they demarcated them through the use of a variety of natural and artificial features—the territorial significance of which was inscribed into collective memory during periodic ritual processions. It seems plausible that the territorial limits of polities may have also been demarcated in some manner—as is implied by the *Pepet Tsibil*, which was included as part of the *Land Treaty of Mani* (as discussed above). Some of our more astute examinations of the Colonial era documents do suggest that the territorial limits of polities were of great concern to the Maya—these are often referred to as “provincial” territories by the colonial observers (Farriss 1984:148–150). Unfortunately, how these larger territories were demarcated is not always explicitly discussed in the documents themselves. Nevertheless, it would not be prudent to rule out the potential that the territorial limits of Colonial era polities were defined through the same features and processes as the better-documented community boundaries.

At the same time, it is equally important to heed Restall’s (1998) conclusion that the emphasis placed on territoriality during the Colonial period, as suggested by the increased need to formally settle territorial disputes by conducting formal land surveys (i.e., royal and/or community circuits), and the compilation and submission of *títulos* and *Pepet Tsibil* to the authorities, was really a byproduct of increasing competition for land and the imposition

of new economic and legal systems by the Spanish that required formal land agreements be drawn up. This suggests that these practices are not inherently Maya in origin (see Restall 1998:49, 57). In fact, Restall’s (1998:56) analysis leads him to conclude that these documents “contain some elements that are Spanish in origin, others that are indigenous, and others that so reflect the regionally varied intermingling of cultural influences that they can only be deemed, for example, Colonial Maya.”

Does this mean that internal frontiers were foreign concepts to the *ancient* Maya? Not necessarily. McAnany (1995:88) aptly notes that there was likely a greater propensity for territorial disputes during the Classic period (A.D. 250–900), given that the southern lowlands would have been densely packed with polities of varying sizes and degrees of political power. She therefore suggests that similar processions, and similar natural and artificial features, were likely used to frame territories in antiquity. There may even be epigraphic data, specifically some texts and toponyms, which refer to the types of practices that would have been part of the “royal circuits” that were used to engage collective memory in order to reconfirm territories (McAnany 1995:89–90). The fact that ethnohistoric data from central Mexico confirm the use of natural and artificial features such as springs, caves, ponds, prominent hills, and stone mounds in boundary and territorial demarcation processes suggests that this was a long-standing way of delineating territory that likely existed throughout Mesoamerica prior to the arrival of the Spanish (García-Zambrano 1994; Hodge 1997: 211–212; Moyes 2005:291, 293; Smith 2008:81–83; see also Henderson and Sabloff 1993:454). This does not, however, invalidate the claim that issues of territoriality took on greater importance throughout Mesoamerica as a result of the imposition of Spanish legal practices. Consequently, the practices associated with demarcating territories *may* have become more formalized over time (Smith 2008:83, 93).

Ultimately, the debate concerning whether the ancient Maya were concerned with their internal frontiers or not seems to turn not on whether they recognized such territorial limits, but rather on why these territorial edges were not demarcated more vigorously. With respect to this issue, two factors need to be considered. First, those who deny the importance of territoriality are likely basing their arguments on the fact that the ancient Maya do not meet their expectations when it comes to marking the edges of their territories. That is, they did not signify the edges of their polities by building defensive walls and/or establishing garrisons of armed border guards. We must keep in mind, however, that these features are characteristic of territorial/regional states, and we should expect more subtle demarcation in city-state societies, such as that of the Maya. As Trigger (2003:398) underscores, frontiers and frontier control were far less developed amongst city-states, particularly because the economic system was based on the continual flow of materials between economically autonomous states—even during times of war—and because there was less concern for population control. At the same time, Trigger’s (2003:94) cross-cultural analysis of early states does force him to conclude that the “boundaries between early city-states *were* clearly demarcated by natural features, artificial markers, or walled fortifications” (emphasis mine).

The second issue revolves around the fact that arguments for or against the existence of Maya territorial limits frequently fail to distinguish between two very different types of geopolitical landscape. Specifically, those who argue that territories were poorly developed in the Maya world are more often than not focusing on the larger geopolitical landscapes that are associated with hegemonic

federations and/or tribute networks (e.g., Graham 2006; Grube 2000; Smith 2008:91). In regions supporting city-state cultures, such “territories” tend to be “patchy” in nature, as they often encompass both subordinate polities with tribute obligations, as well as autonomous polities that have no tributary commitments or that are part of a competing federation and/or tribute network (e.g., Graham 2006:117–119; Smith 2003:130; Trigger 2003:113–119; see also Dirks 1987; Schnepel 2002). Such “territories,” to use the term loosely, have poorly defined limits precisely because: (1) they are based on fluid sociopolitical and socioeconomic relationships that are perpetually under negotiation (e.g., *tributary* relationships); and, (2) they encompass a myriad of political actors spread across what is often a very large and exceedingly diverse sociopolitical landscape.

In contrast, those who support the idea that some approximation of a polity territory was conceived of by the ancient Maya are clearly referring to what might best be perceived as the “home” territories of individual city-states. Such territories are based on more firmly established *tax* obligations—rather than the considerably more contentious *tribute* obligations (Trigger 2003:375–394). For this reason, these territories are *comparatively* more stable—if only because the perpetuation of the state is steadfastly grounded in its ability to consistently control the political economy of its “homeland.” As a result, the internal frontiers *between* polity homelands have a far greater propensity to be consciously acknowledged, demarcated, and defended in some manner, when compared to the more amorphous landscapes associated with hegemonic federations and/or tribute networks. That is not to say that the internal frontiers between polity homelands were inherently stable, as they clearly were not (see below). Rather, it is simply to suggest that the rulers of individual polities had a vested interest in maintaining their home territories to the best of their abilities because this was critical to sustaining the actual foundations of their higher authority. The importance of controlling the landscapes associated with their far-flung alliance and/or tribute networks was important but far less crucial to their political stability.

Supporting the idea that territoriality was focused first on communities and then on the homelands of individual polities—rather than the geopolitical landscapes of the broader hegemonic federations and/or tributary networks—is the fact that the ethnohistoric documents throughout Mesoamerica refer to the walking of circuits defined by what are clearly locally significant landmarks (natural or artificial). The ability to activate the edges of the vastly larger geopolitical landscapes of the hegemonic federations and/or tributary networks through the use of these aforementioned practices and mnemonic devices would be virtually impossible.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the important question does not appear to be, Did the ancient Maya formally recognize the internal frontiers between city-states? Rather, the more appropriate question seems to be, how might we recognize these frontiers archaeologically?

Locating Ancient Maya Frontiers: Heuristic Devices

The most prevalent methods for determining frontier location have been through the application of either Thiessen polygons or the hexagonal lattices of Central-Place theory. In its most rudimentary form, the Thiessen Polygon method simply calls for frontiers to be drawn equidistant between centers. Fortunately, Mayanists have rarely employed the technique in such an unsophisticated manner. Rather, they have tended to use Thiessen Polygons in

conjunction with other evidence, such as the distribution of Emblem Glyphs (e.g., Mathews 1985, 1991), environmental characteristics (Hammond 1974), or the differential size and assumed political power—and hence “gravitational pull”—of individual centers (Dunham et al. 1989:261; Hare 2004). Nevertheless, Hammond (1974:322) has stressed that, regardless of the efforts made to enhance their effectiveness by combining them with complementary data sets, Thiessen Polygons remain artificial impositions on a landscape, and they therefore should only be employed as an initial guide as to where ancient frontiers might be located.

The alternative approach, Central-Place theory, creates models that are based on the premise that a settlement system will be ideally structured so that dependent communities are evenly spaced in a hexagonal pattern around a multifunctional primate center (Christaller 1933; Haggett 1966:49). Although this approach also produces somewhat artificial results, there is, in fact, plenty of evidence to suggest that the distribution of ancient Maya communities was far from random. For example, it has been demonstrated that city-state capitals are normally surrounded by a network of regularly spaced minor centers (see various papers in Iannone and Connell 2003). On a broader scale, it has been suggested that frontier dependencies tend to be located roughly 30 km from a city-state capital, and they are generally evenly spaced *vis à vis* each other (Hammond 1991:278; Harrison 1981; Houston 1993:137; Marcus 1973, 1983:463, 1993:Figure 20; Webster 1998, 1999).

The 30 km distance appears to have universal significance as the distance that can normally be covered by a one-day walk (Grube 2000:552; Hansen 2000:17; Hassig 1992, 1999:376; Marcus 2003:93). This distance may have been particularly crucial in terms of warfare (Hassig 1992, 1999:376). As Webster (1998:331, 1999:347) points out, the average linear distance between antagonists in Classic period Maya warfare is 57.5 km. If battles tended to take place in the frontiers between city-states, as Webster suggests, this would mean that the territorial limits of individual city-states fell somewhere close to the proposed 30-km limit (see also A. Chase and D. Chase 1998:18). It is important to point out, however, that cross-culturally the 30-km radius approximates the edge of the *largest* city-state territories, with most city-states historically controlling a much smaller realm (c.f., Charlton and Nichols 1997:7; A. Chase and D. Chase 1998:18; Hansen 2000:17; emphasis mine).

Summary. The aforementioned approaches to delineating territorial limits are all somewhat artificial in the end. However, they are still useful as heuristic devices in that they do provide us with rough approximations for the locations of internal frontiers. These approximations can then be evaluated further by searching for a range of material correlates that are normally attributed to frontiers and frontier communities.

The Material Correlates of Ancient Maya Frontiers

There are a variety of material correlates that have been advanced as probable indicators of ancient Maya frontiers. Some cues can be gleaned from the ways that smaller-scale community boundaries were demarcated. Examples of such markers include stone walls (Kurjack and Andrews 1976:323), the rubble mounds at Sayil (Dunning 1992:120–121; McAnany 1995:89; Tourtellot and Sabloff 1988), the earthworks at Tikal (Fry 2003: 144–155, 169; Grube 2000:554, 556; Haviland 2003:134–142; Puleston and Callender 1967; Webster et al. 2007), the moats and walls at

Becan, Oxpeul, Ek Balam, Yaxuna, and Uxmal (Grube 2000:554; Webster 1998:324–325, 1999:343–344), and the hilltop stelae surrounding Copan (Fash 1991a:101; Sharer 1994:316; Spinden 1913). The question remains, however, were larger scale territories signified the same way? This question is not so easily answered.

As Olivier de Montmollin (1988:164) points out, “boundary definition problems increase with scale.” Compounding this problem is the fact that there has been little concerted effort to isolate the territorial extremes of city-states archaeologically. The most common approach has been to use zones of declining settlement density to determine territorial limits (de Montmollin 1988; Ford 1986; Fry 2003: 144–155, 169; Grube 2000:554, 556; Haviland 2003:134–142; Hutson et al. 2008; Puleston 1973; Puleston and Callender 1967). Nevertheless, there is a whole range of data sets that can be marshaled to this task. If we use the ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and comparative central Mexican examples as guides, along with the ethnohistoric and ethnographic evidence from the Maya themselves (see above), it is likely that the ancient Maya delineated city-state frontiers through a combination of natural features, such as prominent hills, caves, and water sources (e.g., *cenotes*, springs, ponds), edges of forests and savannahs, significant trees, and artificial features such as stone mounds and cross-shrines (Grube 2000:555–556; Hammond 1974:322; Marcus 1993:126; McNaney 1995:87; Roys 1943:181, 192; Trigger 2003:94). Unfortunately, some of these markers will be difficult, if not impossible, to relocate (i.e., edges of forests and savannahs, prominent trees, cross-shrines).

The extent of causeway systems, such as those located in the northwest Yucatan and at centers such as Caracol, Yaxha, and Coba, also has the potential to inform us as to the limits of communities and/or territories (A. Chase and D. Chase 2001; Grube 2000: 554; Dunning 1992:143–149; Kurjack and Andrews 1976; Shaw 2001). As Kurjack and Andrews (1976:323) conclude, these causeways “... must have constituted permanent markers attesting to the relationships between dominant centers and satellite settlements.” They are therefore interpreted as a sign of increasing “boundary maintenance” activities, a process which, according to Kurjack and Andrews, eventually culminates in the construction of stone boundary walls.

Other material correlates of frontiers include evidence for armed hostilities. Smith and Montiel (2001:250) confirm that warfare was commonly conducted along the frontiers of ancient states. They also point out that, if frontiers remain relatively stable, the construction of fortifications may be initiated by one or both of the antagonistic polities. Unfortunately, the Maya rarely employed formalized defensive features (Adams 2001:349). Although there is evidence for the use of earthworks, ditches, stone walls, and palisades at some centers, less sophisticated means of defense were much more common, such as the use of hedges of thorny plants, the “cultivation” of strategically positioned stands of secondary growth, or *waymil*, quickly erected barriers on pathways, and naturally defensible locations, such as hilltops (Iannone 2008; Webster 1998: 324–325, 328; 1999:343–344). In reality, most Maya centers appear “open and vulnerable” (Schele and Mathews 1991:150). Does this mean that Maya frontiers were simply demarcated in a unique manner? Or does it confirm that inter-polity frontiers were not recognized by the Maya?

Importantly, Hassig (1992:33) has pointed out that the presence of fortifications does not always indicate endemic warfare, just as the absence of such features does not necessarily imply peaceful conditions. He also notes that fortifications are more common

within territorial/regional states than hegemonic states, such as the city-states of the Maya (Hassig 1992:167). In fact, within hegemonic states frontiers are more commonly signified by an “unfortified zone” (Hassig 1992:33). It is clearly significant, therefore, that Kurjack and Andrews V (1976:319) have documented the presence of fortified centers in the frontiers between three pre-Conquest Maya states in the northwest Yucatan. Dunning (1992:97) has also confirmed that “minor centers” are often strategically located at the edge of “hypothetical” Maya territories.

In terms of other material correlates, it has been postulated that frontiers will exhibit a significant degree of “hybridity” as a result of the blending of traits and affiliations (Henderson and Sabloff 1993:466–467). Smith (2001) has recognized material cultural hybridity in the communities between Ek Balam and Chichen Itza. According to Henderson and Sabloff (1993:466), households may reflect this “blending” more readily, as they are less prone to the “noise” of elite status items and exotics, neither of which “reflect differences in cultural identity in any straightforward way.”

Alternatively, frontiers may also be characterized by emulation. Hammond (1991:281–282) notes that during periods of balkanization the rulers of frontier centers often solidified their local standing by adopting the symbols employed by polity capitals, such as stelae and public architecture. He points out that the frontier centers around Quirigua built “administrative/elite residential compounds,” comprised of multi-roomed range structures on platforms that are clearly “simpler versions” of those in the polity capital. In another example of emulation, Smith (2001:33–34) argues that the ball court at Yaxkukul is a scaled-down version of the Great Ball Court at Chichen Itza. He concludes that this replication is indicative of Yaxkukul’s role as a frontier community between the Ek Balam and Chichen Itza polities. That the Mesoamerican ball game probably played a role in boundary maintenance lends support to this interpretation (see also Gillespie 1991:34).

Summary. Mayanists have employed a number of heuristic devices, as well as a variety of material correlates, to locate ancient Maya frontiers. It is clear, however, that we require more robust theoretical and methodological frameworks through which the positions of ancient frontiers may be determined. Conjunctive approaches combining the powers of GIS, Gravity and xTent modeling, Cost Allocation and Cost Extent modeling, Spatial Clustering analysis, and epigraphic information—as has recently been presented by Anaya Hernández et al. (2003) and Hare (2004)—appear to be particularly fruitful. The development of a better understanding of the qualities of frontier communities would also aid in our recognition and understanding of past frontiers. It is to this latter topic that I now shift my attention.

MAYA FRONTIERS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF FRONTIER IDENTITIES

Three of the characteristics that are often assigned to frontier communities have been alluded to in the previous discussion. These are volatility, hybridity, and emulation. Another characteristic is that of “negotiation,” which refers to the conflicts, contradictions, and accommodations that typify the hinterland/heartland relationship.

Volatility

Volatility is a quality that is often associated with internal frontiers (see above). For their part, Mayanists have long recognized the

volatile character of the internal frontiers between Maya polities. Indeed, there is abundant evidence for frontier conflicts during both the Postclassic (ca. A.D. 900–1525) and Colonial periods (Farriss 1984:141; McAnany 1995:87, 89), and these are likely characteristic of the Classic period as well. The latter is suggested by the apparent frequency that small city-states located in plausible frontier settings, such as B'ital and Ucanal, were engaged in hostilities with what were clearly more powerful polities, such as Naranjo and Caracol (e.g., A. Chase 2004:330; Martin and Grube 2000).

The ethnohistoric documents underscore that raids into the frontiers between polity capitals was a common occurrence (Farriss 1984:272; Hassig 1992:99; Schele and Mathews 1991:245; Webster 1999:348; see also Hammond 1991:281). The perpetual conflict meant that guards were often stationed in the frontiers to monitor incursions and provide early warnings of attack (Roys 1943:67, 188; see also McAnany 1995:89). It has also been postulated that frontier communities played key roles as staging areas and resupply points for military excursions into the adjacent frontier (A. Chase and D. Chase 1998:18, 25; Webster 1998:331). Although skirmishes on the roads and trails in the frontier zones were the norm (Roys 1943:67; see also Farriss 1984:141, 272), in some cases these frontier disputes did escalate into territorial warfare (Farriss 1984:129). However, Farriss (1984:129) suggests that such conflicts were generally not aimed at gaining land *per se*, but rather at maintaining territorial integrity. In the end, regardless of intent or intensity, the volatility of ancient Maya frontiers must have played a key role in the development of community identities within these zones.

Hybridity and Emulation

As outlined above, Mayanists have used archaeological evidence for either hybridity or emulation in their efforts to identify frontier communities (e.g., Hammond 1991:281–282; Henderson and Sabloff 1993:466–467). They have rarely acknowledged, however, that both processes are active in the development of frontier identities (but see Smith 2001). This has been demonstrated by Kopytoff's (1987, 1999) seminal work on African frontiers. Specifically, Kopytoff underscores that the blending of local and immigrant cultures, the latter often emanating from multiple capitals, is key to the emergence of unique frontier communities. These communities can eventually develop into capitals of their own polities, and the cyclical process of frontier formation will begin again, as immigrants from the new capital move out and coalesce with established communities in the new frontiers. For this reason, it is not just the interstitial character of the frontier itself—and the institutional vacuum that it provides—that leads to the hybrid qualities that we often ascribe to frontier communities. The intermingling of local and immigrant cultures within frontier settings is equally important. Unfortunately, the latter process has been virtually ignored by Mayanists.

At the same time that mixing and innovation are part of the frontier experience, there are also emulative and conservative qualities to these emerging communities. As pointed out by Kopytoff (1999:33), “inherent in the frontier process is a certain level of cultural conservatism. The [frontier inhabitants] see themselves as being innovators, free to construct what society they will, but in reality they bring to the traits of social construction a given cultural baggage: a technological tradition, assumptions about the human nature of political [life], notions of legitimacy, conceptions of power and authority, principles of institution building, and so on.”

This “cultural baggage,” which Kopytoff (1999:34) equates with “political culture,” manifests itself in the form of “ideal patterns and ideal institutional models, rather than being a matter, as in the [capitals], of active practice.”

Once again, it is here where the concept of collective memory has particular value. Because the ideal patterns and institutional models are so widely shared, they provide a template that is utilized by the various groups that share the frontier, allowing them to fuse into what Kopytoff (1999:34) calls “composite frontier communities.” As Kopytoff points out, this shared, albeit “ideal,” charter “facilitates interaction, mutual understanding, and common cultural construction.” Collective memory thus serves as a form of connective structure “involving particular sets of practices like commemoration and monument building and general forms like tradition, myth, or identity” (Olick and Robbins 1998:105–106).

The Kopytoff model provides a plausible explanation for why there is such a high degree of structural similarity in sub-Saharan social and political institutions (Wendl and Rösler 1999:5). It may also explain the relative structural conformity exhibited by the myriad of city-states that made up the Classic Maya world. In neither case does emulation appear to signify a simple transfer of ideals from the capital to the frontier. In fact, one should not underestimate the complex processes that may underlay the practice of emulation. As Stein (2002:907–908) stresses, “we need to focus on comparing the social contexts in which the foreign material culture, knowledge, or symbols were or were not used as a way to understand its symbolic importance and its relation to broader-scale aspects of political economy.” In his consideration of the matter, Kopytoff (1999:41) concludes that, “The issue ... is not whether the frontier is innovative or conservative. It is rather how faithfully the political culture of the metropolises is reproduced on the frontier and how far it becomes modified by frontier circumstances.” Emulation can therefore not be read simply as a signifier of core dominance (see also Smith 2003:137). Immigration, cultural coalescence, and collective memory also contribute to the emulative process.

Negotiation

The process of negotiation and its role in creating unique frontier identities is a topic that has only rarely been addressed by Mayanists. Stuart (1993:332) has, however, suggested that one of the potential causes of “pre-collapse” tensions was the need for “principal rulers to establish and strengthen the frontiers of their territories—which in turn led to the growing prominence of political subordinates.” Kopytoff's (1999) frontier model is particularly valuable here because it highlights the key role that such negotiations play in the development and perpetuation of frontier communities.

Frontiers are unique places precisely because they are components of the state, but at the same time they exhibit a degree of spatial separation from the state's administrative apparatus (De Atley 1984:5). This does not mean that early states had no interest in developing greater command over their frontiers, but rather that, because frontiers were spatially insulated from polity capitals, exercising control over them was inherently difficult. The desire to bring frontiers and frontier communities more firmly within the ambit of the administrative apparatus may result for a variety of reasons. Within Mesoamerica it was often these regions that were required to increase their production through terracing and other more intensive farming methods to meet the tributary demands of

the polity capital (Smith and Montiel 2001:249). In other instances administrative components were established in the frontiers to regulate trade and the movement of people, or to facilitate territorial expansion (Trinkhaus 1984:33). The role that frontiers play as the first line of territorial defense and/or as a symbol of state power should also not be underestimated. As noted earlier, it is clearly significant that it is the frontiers between polities where both territorial warfare and/or small scale raids tend to be focused (Hassig 1992: 99). Most significantly, frontiers may require administration because they are home to people who are part of “political institutions and informal networks” that “compete” against the state (Wilson and Donnan 1998:10). Lest we forget, frontier communities and their leaders have their own agendas, many of which conflict with those of the polity capitals. This is where the process of negotiation becomes particularly relevant.

The hinterland/heartland relationship is best understood through models that accommodate the fact that frontiers are both peripheries and centers (Crumley 1979:157). Of considerable importance here is the work of Victor Turner, who “highlighted the anti-structural qualities of liminality and *communitas* (‘betwixt and between’) that allows for both challenging and reconfiguring the boundaries of existing orders” (Wendl and Rösler 1999:2). The crux of the argument is that, although the rulers of ancient polities had to contend with a myriad of adversaries in their efforts to maintain control of their regimes, the leaders of frontier communities would have been particularly difficult to keep in check, if only because their distance from the polity capital afforded them a significant level of autonomy (Browman 1997:230; Canuto and Bell 2008; Dunning 1992:150; Hare 2004). For example, in his discussion of the “jungle kingdoms” of East India, Schnepel (2005) underscores that the distant and inhospitable nature of the frontier between established states meant that these regions could serve as crucial buffer zones controlled by the allies of a particular state or, alternatively, as zones where aspiring kings could relocate to establish their own semiautonomous kingdoms (see also Quigley 2005:17).

In discussing the negotiated aspects of the frontier/heartland relationship, Smith and Montiel (2001:249) underscore that, because patrons often have to placate subordinate elites located along their frontiers, these zones are likely places for the emergence of “client states” that are only weakly controlled by the polity capital. The indulgence of frontier elites is often reflected in the emulation of regnal styles in the frontiers, as well as the presence of prestige imports from the polity capital (Smith and Montiel 2001:150). Nevertheless, when interpreting the presence of these prestige items in the frontiers, it is important to remember that they are usually firmly entrenched in the collective memory of a regional population, and they are therefore viewed as appropriate symbols that are often adopted by the frontier elite precisely because they are widely accepted as being “prestigious.” Their use outside the heartland should therefore never be simply equated with strong political control and/or integration on the part of a polity capital (Smith and Montiel 2001:250).

Finally, because they are often located between competing polities, frontier communities and their leaders often have the ability to ally themselves with the polity that is most beneficial to local power structures and institutions and/or the polity that has taken the upper hand in a territorial dispute (Hassig 1992: 98). Such shifting of alliances, which may happen many times, will eventually enhance the hybrid qualities of frontier material culture assemblages. Ultimately, these shifting alliances lead to the formation of new holes in the “swiss cheese” of the broader

geopolitical landscapes associated with specific hegemonic federations and/or tributary networks.

Summary. Because of their unique spatial and sociopolitical positions vis à vis the heartlands, frontiers were one of the main regions from which political dissent emanated in early states. Thus, rulers needed to maintain some degree of control over these regions in order to guarantee the political stability and territorial integrity of their polities. Because the true power of the leaders of most early states was limited, the constant negotiation required to maintain the loyalty of frontier communities and their leaders—which manifests itself in the form of indulgences, strong-arm tactics, or a combination of both—eventually sowed the seeds of independence and political realignment. As Parker (2002:374) concludes, “it is often interaction taking place outside the core polity—in the frontier—that influences and often precipitates change in the center The formation of complexity in regions peripheral to core polities [is] the most likely location for the formation of new core polities”

MINANHA: A CASE STUDY

My own interest in frontiers and frontier communities derives from my ongoing investigation of the ancient Maya center of Minanha, located in the rugged north Vaca Plateau of west central Belize (Figure 1) (Iannone 2005). Minanha itself meets a number of the criteria for a frontier community. For one, it is medially positioned between the powerful and antagonistic city-states of Caracol and Naranjo. Its 25-km distance from the capitals of these two polities also conforms to the roughly 30-km radius expected for the largest city-state territories (Charlton and Nichols 1997:7; Hansen 2000:17). In terms of its strategic value, Minanha is located atop a prominent hill, at the junction of four important valley passes. One of these valleys leads north towards the Belize Valley, another extends west toward the Peten, a third stretches northeast toward the Macal River, and a fourth runs south, deeper into the plateau toward Camp 6 and eventually Caracol. Recent research in the vicinity of Minanha has also located what appears to have once been a large *aguada*, a crucial resource given the paucity of surface water in this karstic environment (Primrose 2003; see also McAnany 1995:87).

The Minanha Royal Court

Minanha itself was one of the largest, if not *the* largest Late Classic period community in the north Vaca Plateau. Its period of florescence was, however, rather brief. Although there is evidence for occupation going back at least as far as the Middle Preclassic (ca. 600–300 B.C.), it was not until the eighth century A.D. that Minanha emerged as the seat of a fully functional “royal” court. The establishment of this “royal” court is evinced by the construction of a large court complex on the most prominent hill in the area (Figure 2).

Before proceeding to discuss this court complex in more detail, it is important to point out that when I refer to Minanha’s “royal” court I am using the concept in its broadest sense—to refer to a court headed by a “king.” My perspective is grounded in the belief that in most city-state contexts there were a myriad of “kings,” all of whom were ranked in relation to each other. For this reason, kingly rights and privileges were not, in my view, confined to the largest and most ostentatious centers. Rather, the essence of kingship was diffused throughout the sociopolitical landscape through

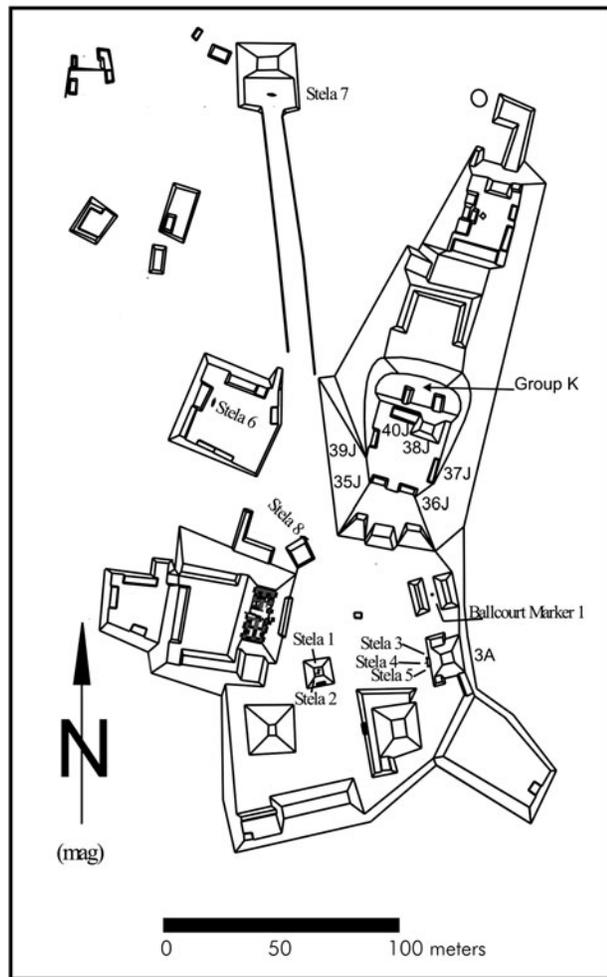


Figure 2. Rectified isometric plan of the Minanha epicentral court complex.

the formation of alliances, the performance of service, the gifting of emblems and symbols of authority, and the successful cultivation of legitimacy on the part of subordinate lords. In terms of the ancient Maya, the epigraphic record and material culture distribution patterns are both consistent with a more diffuse system of authority grounded in strategies of service and gifting.

The nature of such kingly hierarchies has been lucidly articulated in the “great king–little king–jungle king” model that has been explicitly crafted to capture the dynamic sociopolitical landscapes of south and east India (Schnepel 2002, 2005; see also Berkemer 1993:13; Dirks 1987). Within this model, “great” kings are those rulers who are eligible to possess all of the potential royal titles (Dirks 1987:65; Schnepel 2002:62). Schnepel (2002:82) also underscores that the classification of a kingdom, or king, as “great” is not necessarily based on the size of the realm or of the population being ruled. Rather, it is based on a king’s relationship with other kings who can be classified as “little.”

Berkemer (1993:13) defines “little” kingdoms in the following manner:

A political system whose ruler can regard himself as independent as regards internal politics—for example, maintaining his own army, collecting taxes, receiving tribute from smaller kings and

chiefs, and bestowing titles on them—and who, in addition, pursues an independent ritual politics within his own territory, but who at the same time must recognize a politically, ritually and militarily superior overlord over him, whose authority he shares and whom he needs to legitimize his own internal rule, is to be described as a “little kingdom” (translated in Schnepel 2002:81).

Finally, according to Schnepel (2002:135), a “jungle” kingdom is a special category of “little” kingdom that is defined by two primary criteria: (1) it is located in comparatively inaccessible forested and/or hilly subregions that were often considered “impenetrable” and “dangerous” and that could only be accessed with great difficulty from the centers of power of the “great” kings, as well as the other “little” kings; and, (2) the population of a “jungle” kingdoms included a high percentage of individuals of tribal origin.

Informed by this construct, I conceive of Minanha as the Late Classic home to a line of “little” kings—or more appropriately, given the frontier setting, “jungle” kings—whose kingdom was located in an interstitial zone between the realms of two dynasties of “great” kings, one dynastic line residing at Caracol, the other at Naranjo (Iannone 2008). I assign Minanha’s rulers to this sociopolitical status because, although the Minanha court complex is a somewhat scaled down version, it still contains all of the features found in the court complexes of the aforementioned “great” kings. This implies that the same basic range of activities was carried within these various architectural spaces.

In summary, during the eighth century Minanha was likely a “peripheral” kingdom both sociopolitically and economically (i.e., it was located at a “social” distance from the “great powers”), as well as in spatial and ecological terms—given the remote and rugged character of its realm (Schnepel 2002:62; cf. Dirks 1987: 95–96). Taken together, this means that Minanha’s rulers are best classified as “jungle” kings (see Iannone 2008).

To return to the discussion of the Minanha royal court complex, it consists of two large plazas, nine courtyards, three smaller patios, a ballcourt, and one causeway termini shrine (see Figure 2). The southern portion of the epicenter was apparently civic-ceremonial in orientation, comprised as it is of large public plazas and courtyards. This is also the location of the eastern shrine complex, the ballcourt, and Minanha’s more administratively orientated range-structures.

The northern portion of the court complex is dominated by a multi-level elite residential acropolis group. The focal point of this acropolis is the royal residential compound located at the southern end (Group J). When the royal court was at its peak, this royal residential group sat atop a basal platform, approximately 13 m high, which served to elevate it above the main public features of the epicenter, and which provided its inhabitants with a panoramic view of the Minanha realm. Excavations have shown that this royal residential compound included a formal, vaulted entrance on the south (Structure 35J-2nd), a throne room/royal residential building on the east (Structure 37J-2nd), a pyramidal structure, approximately 8.5 m high with rounded corners on the north (Structure 38J-2nd), a large performance platform on the west (Structure 39J-2nd), and an appended servant’s area to the north (Group K; Slim 2005). Most of the buildings associated with this courtyard appear to have been painted red, with the exception of the throne room/royal residential building, which may have been multicolored (red, green/blue, and white). There is also evidence that a stucco frieze once adorned the 38J-2nd pyramidal structure.

Eight stelae have been discovered within the court complex. None exhibit glyphic texts, although at least two may have originally been inscribed. Of the latter, one is a soft limestone monument located at the main entrance to Plaza A (Stela 8). Unfortunately, this stela is too highly weathered to allow a confident assessment of whether it originally had incised glyphs. The second is a broken slate stela (Stela 4) located on the primary axis of Structure 3A, the eastern shrine structure in Plaza A. This stela was broken off at its butt, thus we have no clue as to whether its upper portion was indeed carved. That this breakage occurred in antiquity is implied by the fact that the two “compact” limestone monuments that were associated with the slate monument were also broken off at their butts. Because these latter two monuments could not have been carved, given that they were made of extremely hard limestone, the breakage of all three monuments appears to have been a result of ancient Maya political discord rather than the actions of contemporary looters (i.e., the uncarved monuments would have held no value for looters). Significantly, destruction events are often aimed at removing key mnemonic devices from the symbolic repertoire of a community, but their past existence and significance are often maintained in collective memory for a considerable length

of time following such an event—a fact that also attests to the importance that collective memory plays in the perpetuation of community histories and the production and reproduction of community identities.

The Minanha epicentral court complex, which covers 9.5 ha, is surrounded by a range of other settlement components with proposed ritual, administrative, and domestic functions (Figure 3). Although our research outside the epicenter has been limited to date, the region surrounding Minanha was apparently home to a fairly dense support population (ca. 405 people per km² according to Connell [2001:109]). There is evidence that this support population grew substantially with the establishment of the Late Classic royal court. The minor center of Waybil, which is located roughly 2 km south of Minanha (see Figure 1), also appears to have been oriented toward the royal seat of power at Minanha (Sam Connell, personal communication 2001). This suggests that the Minanha royal court quickly became the primary focus for a fairly large and diverse population. Significantly, reconnaissance has shown that many of the hill slopes and valleys surrounding Minanha are terraced. It thus appears that one of the means through which the newly established royal court strove to sustain

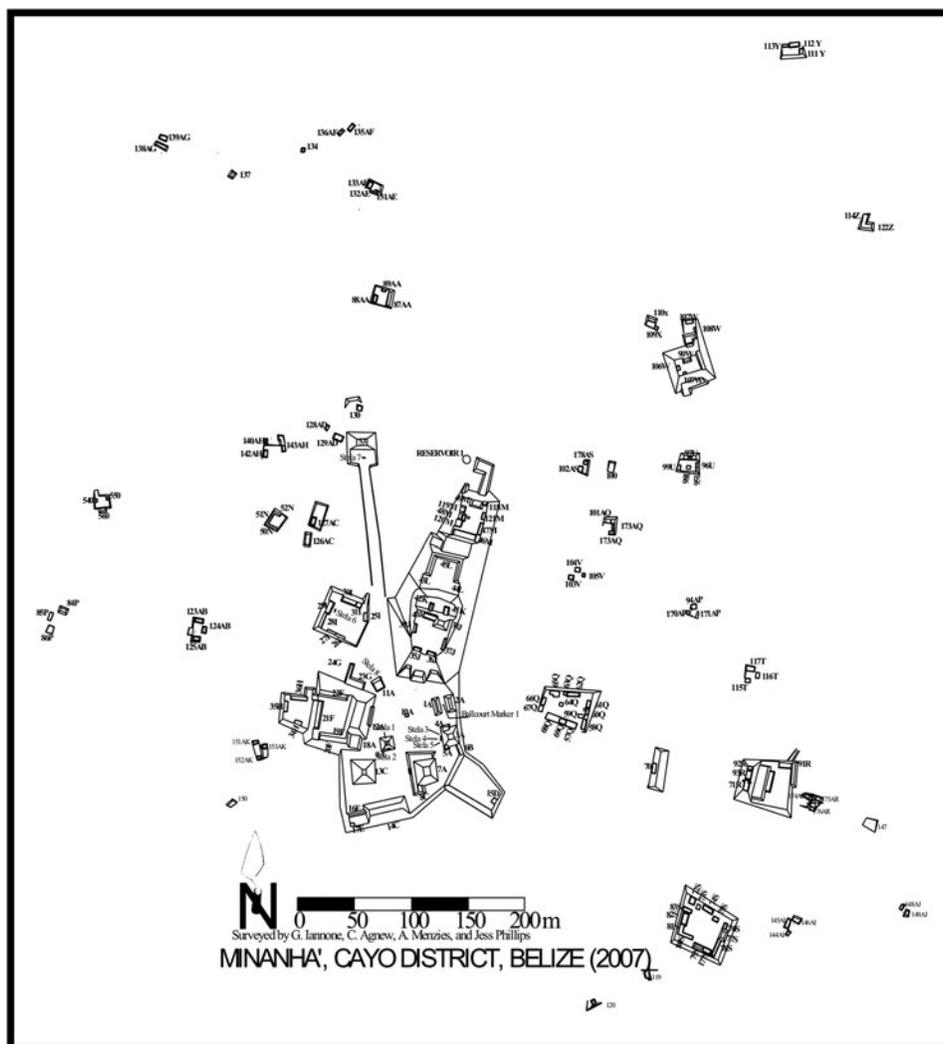


Figure 3. Map of the Minanha site core.

itself, along with its support population, was through the construction of an extensive terrace agricultural system.

On the broader scale, the establishment of the Minanha royal court in the early eighth century would have undoubtedly resulted in the shifting of the various internal frontiers in the region. Given the propensity for employing natural features to define frontiers in Mesoamerica, it seems likely that Minanha's northern frontier would have been demarcated by the northern edge of the Vaca Plateau itself, located approximately 5 to 7 km away from the Minanha epicenter. As one of the most conspicuous natural features in the eastern Maya lowlands, the northern edge of the plateau would have served as an ideal frontier between Minanha and Xunantunich (located roughly 15 km northwest of Minanha), the latter also emerging as a small, but significant, city-state during the late seventh to early eighth centuries (LeCount et al. 2002; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004). Minanha's eastern frontier would have also likely been delineated by another highly prominent, natural feature—the Macal River gorge. Once again, this frontier would have been situated roughly 5 to 7 km from the Minanha epicenter, and it would have served as a natural frontier between Minanha and Pacbitun, the latter located roughly 16 km northeast of Minanha. The southern and western frontiers of the Minanha polity are more difficult to isolate, but it is likely that they too would have been situated approximately 5 to 7 km from the Minanha epicenter. (The projected polity extent is depicted in Figure 1.) Although this territory may seem too small to sustain a kingdom, supporting evidence for the efficacy of such a small territory can be found in the Valley of Mexico, where city-state capitals were located on average only seven kilometers from each other (Trigger 2003:100).

Emulation at Minanha

Analysis of the architectural and artifactual data from eleven field seasons indicates that the great center of Caracol was a significant source of emulation for the eighth-century Minanha royal court. In recognizing this, it is important to stress that, although the following traits have wider distribution as discrete cultural practices, it is in their manifestation as a *unified* program of political and ritual practice at both Minanha and Caracol that is suggestive of emulation. The Late Classic Caracol-style attributes exhibited by Minanha include (1) a preference for caches and burials to be associated with eastern structures (A. Chase 2004:328; D. Chase 2004:344; D. Chase and A. Chase 1996, 1998); (2) the construction and repeated use of multiple-entry grave chambers in both the epicenter and surrounding site core (A. Chase 2004:329; A. Chase and D. Chase 1994a:9, 1994b:56; 1996:71; D. Chase 1994:123, 1997:21, 2004:340; D. Chase and A. Chase 1996, 1998:311); (3) the construction of grave chambers long before they were actually used (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994b:55; D. Chase and A. Chase 1998:311); (4) the use of slate capstones in graves (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:46; D. Chase 2004:342); (5) the carving of slate monuments (Anderson 1959:211; Houston 1987:85); (6) the practice of caching *crude* obsidian eccentrics, speleothems, and flanged effigy censers depicting the jaguar sun god of the underworld (A. Chase 2004:329; A. Chase and D. Chase 1994b:57); (7) the smashing of flanged effigy censers as part of termination rituals associated with a royal funerary cult (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994b:54, 57; Rice 1999: 38, 43); (8) the caching of small ceramic bowls with human finger bones inside (A. Chase 1994:166–169, 2004:328; D. Chase 1994:124, 129, 2004:340); (9) the predominate use of Belize Red ceramic vessels in ritual

contexts, particularly tripod plates with hollow oven feet with rattles (A. Chase 1994, 2004:331); (10) the use of rounded corners on raised temples (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994a:7); (11) the widespread use of agricultural terracing (A. Chase 2004:328, 332; A. Chase and D. Chase 1998); and, (12) the construction of an ancestor shrine complex comprising of an eastern structure fronted by a slate stela and two uncarved, compact limestone stelae and a western structure with two limestone stelae on its summit (Anderson 1959:211; A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:17; Grube 1994:87).

The last trait is particularly intriguing, as it is also present at Calakmul, where the central plaza has a slate stela in front of the eastern shrine structure, and two additional stelae on the summit of the opposing western structure. The slate stela at Calakmul has a date of A.D. 662 (Stelae 9); its counterpart at Caracol carries an A.D. 702 date (Stelae 21) (see Martin and Grube 2000:95; Reese-Taylor 2003). This shared pattern may be interpreted as an indication of close ties between Calakmul, Caracol, and Minanha (Reese-Taylor 2003). Alternatively, it may simply signify that Minanha's Late Classic royal court adopted an already accepted set of symbolic features as part of its strategy of legitimization. It is worth noting here that fragments from what may have once been a slate monument have also been recovered at Tikal (Coe 1958:804). Unfortunately, the significance of these slate pieces remains unclear, and thus the role that Tikal may have played with respect to the use of such monuments is inconclusive.

The use of rounded corners on Minanha's 38J-2nd temple structure may be interpreted in similar fashion. On one hand, this may simply be another attempt to mimic Caracol styles. There are, however, deeper roots for this practice. At Tikal, for example, the presence of rounded corners in association with Temple V has been interpreted as a conscious effort to connect with past architectural traditions, particularly those of the Early Classic (Valdés and Fahsen 2004:142). Thus, this architectural style was likely perpetuated in collective memory for many centuries, and it occasionally appears to have been called upon in efforts to recreate traditional, and therefore legitimate, settings for Late Classic period political and ritual praxis.

Hybridity at Minanha

The widespread use of slate at Minanha may constitute an example of frontier hybridity. Specifically, slate itself seems to have been particularly significant to the cultural identity of the Minanha royal court and those who were affiliated with it. Slate capstones have been found in burials associated with structures, particularly those located on the eastern side of courtyards, throughout the Minanha community (Schwake 2002); their use does not appear to have been restricted to individuals of any particular socioeconomic or sociopolitical standing. Slate is also a common cache offering at Minanha, and slate capstones have been found in association with at least one vaulted building in the royal residential compound. These data suggest that slate held a significant place in collective memory at Minanha. Specifically, the formalized use of slate in ritual contexts throughout greater Minanha likely served to entrench a sense of shared identity within the various factions in and around the epicenter and would have been vital to the formation of the type of "composite frontier community" referred to by Kopytoff (1999:34).

Slate may have also been integral to collective memory on the broader, regional scale—within the proposed Caracol/Naranjo frontier. Specifically, Minanha's use of slate appears to be both more pronounced and more formalized than is seen at Caracol (cf. D. Chase 2004:342). It is consistent, however, with what has

been documented for Pacbitun, where a slate workshop has been excavated (Healy et al. 1995; see Figure 1) and where slate monuments and capstones also appear to be key symbols of community identity (Healy et al. 1995; Healy et al. 2004a:226; Healy et al. 2004b:230). This shared emphasis on the political and ritual usage of slate may simply mean that the Minanha and Pacbitun economies were intricately bound to the production of slate objects. It is also plausible that, because of its use in a myriad of political and ritual events at both communities, slate may have held a key position within the collective memory of those who shared the frontier experience, and it may therefore reflect a degree of commonality in terms of cultural identity. Of relevance here is that, like Minanha, Pacbitun is also posited by some to have been positioned at the very edge of the Caracol realm because of the presence of early stelae monuments and the center's adherence to certain cultural traits, such as the construction of multiple-entry burial chambers (A. Chase 2004:330; A. Chase and D. Chase 1996; D. Chase 2004:342; Healy et al. 2004b; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004:170). Nevertheless, as Healy et al. (2004a:225) point out, Pacbitun also exhibits many traits that are more indicative of the Belize River valley. This observation only lends support to the frontier interpretation (Iannone 2002, 2003a, 2003b).

Hybridization may also be reflected in Minanha's epicentral plan. It clearly mimics the cosmologically-based civic plan of more potent centers in that it exhibits a strong north-south axis and follows the pattern of placing the royal residential compound, Group J, in the north, in association with the heavens (Ashmore 1991, 1992). In terms of the political inspiration for Minanha's epicentral plan, it appears to emulate the Calakmul-style civic plan (Mosher 2005), as recently defined by Ashmore and Sabloff (2002; see Folan et al. 1995). Minanha also adheres to the "temple-palace" acropoline architectural form that is prominent at both Calakmul and Caracol (Demarest et al. 2004:555). At the same time, Minanha's site plan resembles even more closely that of Caracol's nemesis, Naranjo, and the latter's likely affiliate and/or ally, Xunantunich (Mosher 2005). The hybridity inherent in the Minanha epicentral plan suggests that its rulers sought inspiration in various established and powerful centers in the lowlands. As Ashmore and Sabloff (2002:203) point out, an "important means of enhancing the political aura of a place is by constructing it to resemble locales of established stature: If a place looks like a recognized seat of authority, people behave there accordingly." This rings particularly true for a frontier center, given the importance of "ideal patterns and ideal institutional models" in the creation of composite frontier communities (Kopytoff 1999:34).

Volatility at Minanha

Ultimately, Minanha's Late Classic royal court would have a fleeting existence. Its sudden demise coincided with the destruction of some of the key features associated with Minanha's royal court sometime in the early ninth century. The dissolution of the royal court is best exemplified by the infilling of the royal residential compound (Group J). With the exception of Structure 38J-2nd, the upper 3.70 m of which was reused as part of an impoverished Terminal Classic (A.D. 810–900) group, the penultimate courtyard and all of the vaulted buildings associated with the Late Classic royal residence were buried beneath a deposit (ca. 4.80 m) of clean, dry-stone fill. Prior to the infilling, the courtyard and the associated rooms were swept clean, and a 10–20 cm thick lens of finely sorted sediment was laid down across all the floors and stair surfaces to

protect them. The dry-stone fill was then carefully placed on these sediments so as not to damage the architecture. The large boulders and cobbles that were used in this loose fill were contained within well-built construction pens. Intriguingly, before burying the penultimate courtyard its associated rooms had been largely filled from the inside without collapsing their vaults, until a decision was apparently made to employ the upper part of the 38J-2nd temple in the terminal courtyard, at which time the very upper portions of the vaults were razed. Importantly, similar infilling of royal compounds at the onset of the Terminal Classic period has been documented at La Milpa, Lamanai, and possibly Xunantunich (Graham 2004; Hammond 1999a:13, 1999b; Hammond and Thomas 1999; LeCount et al. 2002:44; see Iannone 2007).

It is significant that so much care was taken to preserve the architecture during the Minanha infilling. With the exception of the partial dismantling of the 39J-2nd upper platform, some minor damage to the corners of 38J-2nd, the destruction of a stucco frieze that was likely associated with the same building, and the breakage and removal of the upper portions of the stelae associated with the Structure 3A eastern shrine (see above), there is no evidence of willful damage. Importantly, the latter two features (i.e., the frieze and the stelae) would have been key historical and ideological elements associated with Minanha's rulers. Equally significant is the fact that no new royal residence was built over the buried one, or anywhere else at Minanha, following the infilling event.

A rather impoverished Terminal Classic (A.D. 810–900) residential group was constructed where the royal residential courtyard once stood. This consisted of the reused portion of the Structure 38J pyramidal structure, the construction of a number of low building platforms with perishable superstructures, and one building with low double-faced masonry walls and benches. Importantly, one of the terraces of the partially buried 38J-2nd temple was used to define the level of the new courtyard surface, allowing the reused portion of the shrine (38J-1st) to maintain its architectural proportions. This indicates that the construction event was well-planned and that it does not represent a larger construction project that was ended abruptly. The fact that the smaller building platforms constructed on the new courtyard surface employed the thick walls of the earlier buildings as footings also implies that little time passed between the infilling of the penultimate courtyard and the construction of the various buildings associated with the terminal courtyard. Finally, the fact that the small patio that had previously served as a servant's area during the existence of the royal court (Group K) was cut off from use as a result of the infilling events suggests that the terminal courtyard was not only smaller and considerably less elaborate than its predecessor, but it was also far less diverse in terms of the range of activities that were carried out within its confines.

Summary. The infilling event clearly informs us that royal rule at Minanha came to an abrupt end early on in the Terminal Classic period. It is important to point out, however, that the demise of the royal court came *prior* to any significant depopulation of the surrounding community. In the end, the infilling event itself remains difficult to interpret, but it does appear to reflect a complex political process involving both antagonistic regional powers and sympathetic local labor (see Table 1).

Negotiation at Minanha

The rapid rise and equally swift demise of the Minanha royal court is intriguing, particularly since extensive reconnaissance has shown

Table 1. Evaluation of the theories surrounding the infilling of Minanha's royal residential courtyard.

Hypothesis	Supporting Evidence	Negating Evidence
The Infilling represents a construction project that was halted abruptly when the royal family fled the center.	1) no replacement for the infilled royal residential courtyard was constructed at Minanha, suggesting that no royal family inhabited the center following the infilling event; 2) there is some <i>limited</i> evidence for the expected termination rituals (e.g., some destruction of 39J-2nd, and destruction of the 38J-2nd stucco frieze).	1) there was no cutting of caches and/or burials into earlier floors, only <i>limited</i> dismantling of earlier architecture, and no burning and/or deposition of broken artifacts generally associated with termination rituals; 2) normal construction procedures were not followed (e.g., they did lay down cushioning sediments, carefully place large fill materials, and build strong construction pens, but vaults were, for the most part, not collapsed); 3) from the outset, the construction project appears to have been aimed at creating a smaller, not a larger courtyard, and one that was also less self-sufficient in terms of its functions (the overall square footage is substantially less, and the servant's area is no longer functional); 4) the end of the infilling was not haphazard, and the new residential courtyard appears to have been constructed with little delay (e.g., earlier walls were used as footings for new building platforms, and the terrace surface of the 38J-2nd temple was used as the new courtyard surface; this allowed the resulting 38J-1st temple to maintain its architectural proportions).
The infilling was a result of warfare.	There is some evidence for purposeful destruction (some dismantling of 39J-2nd, destruction of the 38J-2nd stucco frieze, and the possible breakage of the stelae in front of the Structure 3A eastern shrine in the main plaza).	1) the evidence for purposeful destruction is, for the most part, <i>limited</i> to some of the key symbolic and/or historical elements closely associated with the Minanha rulers (e.g., the 38J-2nd stucco frieze and the stelae in front of the Structure 3A eastern shrine); 2) the infilling was carefully done, and more labour intensive than it needed to be (e.g., the laying down of cushioning sediments, careful placement of the large fill materials, well built construction pens, and filling vaulted rooms from the inside, rather than collapsing them).
The infilling represents a ritual caching event carried out by the ruling family prior to fleeing the center, but in anticipation of returning to reclaim their "throne".	The courtyard does appear to have been "enshrined" through the careful infilling event.	1) some earlier caches seem to have been emptied (suggesting that there was no plan to return); 2) the 38J-2nd frieze, and likely the stelae in front of the 38J-2nd eastern shrine, were destroyed (these would have been key historic elements related to the royal family's pedigree, and it is likely that they would have wanted to preserve these items).
The infilling represents a complex event stimulated by external antagonists, but carried out by local laborers sympathetic to their deposed ruling family.	All the evidence for the existence of a Minanha royal family is obliterated, but the courtyard itself is at least partially enshrined through the careful infilling event.	

that the north Vaca Plateau was home to relatively few large centers. At this juncture, it seems that broader sociopolitical factors may hold the key to Minanha's florescence. Minanha's frontier location also appears to have been significant to its rise in stature. Three potential interpretations are suggested: (1) Minanha was a frontier dependency within the Caracol city-state; (2) Minanha served as the semi-autonomous capital of a buffer state in between the competing Naranjo and Caracol city-states; or, (3) Minanha was the capital of an autonomous city-state.

Minanha as frontier dependency. Stuart (1993:324, 332, 336, 348) characterizes the eighth century as a period of decentralization and power sharing (see also Culbert 1991:325; Fash 1991b; Fash and Stuart 1991:172; Grube 2000:560; Hammond 1991:306;

Iannone 1996:433, 2005; Lowe 1985:37–39; Marcus 1976:65; Martin and Grube 2000:211; Schele 1991a:78, 1991b; Webster 2002:15–16). He also argues that this changing political climate led to an expansion in the powers of subordinate lords and greater concern for solidifying frontier regions. From this perspective, Minanha's emergence can be interpreted as evidence of Caracol's desire to strengthen its frontier with its long-standing enemy, Naranjo. It is also possible to attribute Minanha's subsequent demise to a Naranjo incursion into the Caracol frontiers later in the same century. Thus, from this view, the emulation exhibited by the Minanha royal court is a reflection of Caracol's direct control over a strategic frontier center. It would therefore fit the alternative type of "buffer state" that Schnepel (2005; see above) discusses for East India, wherein a frontier state is allied with one specific polity.

Two lines of evidence tend to invalidate this interpretation. First, Minanha does not exhibit any signs of overt Caracol control. Most significantly, there are no monuments or inscriptions at Minanha that connect it to the Caracol city-state—although it remains possible that such a text may have originally existed on the broken slate monument in front of the Structure 3A eastern shrine. Particularly conspicuous in its absence is a giant *ahaw* altar, a type of monument that at the least signifies close connections to Caracol and that may be even more significant if Grube (1994: 100–101) is correct in his assertion that Caracol awarded giant *ahaw* altars to its allies in appreciation for their help in warfare. If Minanha was one of Caracol's strategic frontier centers, one would expect that it would have played a key role in conflicts with Naranjo. As such, it is expected that a giant *ahaw* altar would be prominently displayed at Minanha. Ultimately, the lack of evidence for such a monument undermines the validity of the Caracol dependency interpretation. Finally, our excavations at Minanha have yet to produce a single sherd from a Caracol-style "facepot." Such vessels appear to be key indicators of Caracol ethnicity and, thus, influence (A. Chase 1994; D. Chase and A. Chase 1998). The absence of such vessels at Minanha therefore severely undermines the dependency model.

When one considers the location of Minanha and the timing of its florescence the Caracol dependency model becomes even less viable. As noted earlier, cross-cultural analyses point to 30 km as being the *maximum* radius of a city-state territory (e.g., Charlton and Nichols 1997:7; A. Chase and D. Chase 1998:18; Hansen 2000:17; emphasis mine). If it were a frontier dependency, Minanha's location roughly 25 km from Caracol suggests that the latter center was the capital of a very large city-state during the eighth century and that it was verging on becoming too large to even be classified as such (e.g., Hansen 2000:17). Epigraphic data indicate, however, that Caracol actually entered into a period of political decline during the eighth century. With the exception of Stela 21, a slate monument dated to A.D. 702, Caracol exhibits no evidence for monument erection activities between A.D. 680–798—a period that corresponds exactly with Minanha's florescence. Given this data, it appears unlikely that a declining Caracol would have established a frontier dependency at the absolute territorial limits for a city-state.

Minanha as a buffer state. The second interpretation, that Minanha was a semi-autonomous buffer state established in the frontiers between the competing Caracol and Naranjo city-states, is a much better fit with the locational data. According to Prescott (1987:48), in the strictest sense, the term "buffer state" refers to a type of state that is "constructed in frontiers when two *strong* neighbors [decide] to reduce the possibility of conflict between themselves" (emphasis mine). Beyond its location, however, there is little data to support the traditional buffer state model. For one, the fact that Minanha emulates the architectural and material culture features associated with Caracol's charter of rulership seems at odds with a buffer state that would have required both Caracol and Naranjo's sanctification. The fact that Minanha's site plan is similar to Naranjo's does temper this assertion somewhat. However, it is also evident that the temporal data do not articulate well with the "buffer state" interpretation. Specifically, there is no evidence to suggest that Caracol and Naranjo were particularly "strong" during the eighth century. As indicated above, Caracol erected only one inscribed monument between A.D. 680–798. (Martin and Grube 2000:95). Similarly, Naranjo produced only one monument (Stela 20—A.D. 746) between A.D. 726–780

(Martin and Grube 2000:78–79). Thus, Minanha's florescence corresponds with a period of contraction and weakness on the part of both Caracol and Naranjo. It therefore seems unlikely that these two city-states would have had to agree on the creation of a buffer state between them to ease political tensions. It is equally telling that when a buffer state may have been required at the end of the eighth century—when both Caracol and Naranjo reemerged as regional powers with territorial aspirations—Minanha's royal residence was in-filled and its royal court dissolved.

Minanha as an autonomous city-state. Evidently, Minanha's developmental sequence correlates inversely with those of Caracol and Naranjo. Any interpretation that attempts to explain Minanha's emergence and subsequent demise must account for this fact. As has been discussed previously, the eighth century has been characterized as a period of decentralization in which subordinate lords accrued greater powers and figured more prominently in political affairs. It has also been shown that the eighth century was a time of relative political weakness for both Caracol and Naranjo. Thus, Minanha's royal court came to prominence during a period of regional balkanization. It seems plausible, therefore, that the power vacuum created by the contraction of Caracol and Naranjo allowed Minanha to emerge as an autonomous city-state in the frontiers between these two polities.

In terms of who was involved in establishing the Minanha royal court, collective memory again provides some clues. Sonja Schwake's excavations in front of the Structure 3A eastern shrine uncovered three separate caches in *exact* horizontal and vertical alignment. The caches span three separate construction phases and were interred over a period of roughly 600 years—covering the key Terminal Preclassic through Late Classic periods. These data indicate that local agents played a central role in the emergence of Minanha's eighth century royal court. The caching pattern also implies continuity of local collective memory and ritual knowledge between the Preclassic and Late Classic communities (Schwake and Iannone 2001).

Although local involvement in the establishment of the royal court is suggested by the caches in front of the eastern shrine, the extent of the construction effort, and the swiftness with which it was apparently completed, and the detailed knowledge of Caracol's ritual and material culture patterns also imply that nonlocal entities played a crucial role in Minanha's eighth century florescence. These "immigrants" must have been an elite group because they were not only familiar with the institution of kingship as it was manifest at Caracol, but they also had the political and economic resources to establish a legitimate setting for an autonomous seat of power.

Following Kopytoff's (1987, 1999) and Schnepel's (2002, 2005) models for frontier development, the aforementioned data point to a possible scenario in which a splinter group of disaffected Caracol nobles seized the opportunity provided by the changing political circumstances of the eighth century to establish their own independent royal court in the frontier between Caracol and Naranjo. Because the new Minanha nobility employed components of an ideal institutional model that was firmly ingrained in the collective memory of the regional population, the fledgling city-state took on the appearance of legitimacy. The degree to which this legitimacy was accepted by the extant local community remains to be examined in detail, but it is clear that the polity was able to attract new settlers to the area and initiate construction of the monumental architectural features and expansive terrace system that were crucial to its success.

Even though Minanha prospered for nearly a century, it was apparently one of the first casualties of the reemergence of some

of the old powers. The return of both Caracol and Naranjo to the political stage, the subsequent rapid demise of the Minanha royal court, and the efforts made to eradicate any signs of its existence, all point to the conclusion that Minanha's claim to legitimacy as a seat of power for an autonomous city-state was rejected by the more established royal dynasties of the region. Minanha's location in the frontiers between Caracol and Naranjo may have also contributed to its demise. Specifically, the epigraphic record tells us that when Caracol and Naranjo reentered the arena of regional politics, they moved very quickly to restore their old alliance and tributary networks. This involved both centers undertaking military campaigns and/or initiating diplomatic missions within the frontiers at places such as Bítal, Ucanal, and presumably Minanha (A. Chase 2004: 330; Martin and Grube 2000).

Summary. Although I have leaned more toward assigning a significant level of autonomy to Minanha during the eighth century, everything that has been discussed concerning internal frontiers suggests that this autonomy would not have been uncontested. In fact, it is highly likely that Minanha may have, at times, had to accept a subordinate role within a broader hegemonic federation and/or tributary network focused on a more powerful polity, such as Caracol, and/or within a sphere of influence headed by an even more powerful polity, such as Calakmul or Tikal (e.g., Prescott 1987:50). Nevertheless, the subordinate roles that Minanha's rulers may have had to periodically assume would have also had the potential to bring them gifts in the form of emblems, titles, and increased authority—gifts that were beneficial precisely because they enhanced their legitimacy as the “jungle kings” of a small realm situated in a rugged and often politically contested frontier zone. The lesson here is that sociopolitical relationships, and thus sociopolitical landscapes, are dynamic in nature. Indeed, it is these complex relationships that are difficult to fully capture using archaeological data alone, but when they are incorporated into our analyses, they make our reconstructions of past sociopolitical interaction interesting (see also Canuto and Bell 2008; Golden 2003; Hare 2004; Smith 2003:130–135, 145, 148).

CONCLUSIONS

A decade ago, Fash (1994:91) noted that, in order to develop a better understanding of the ancient Maya state, “... a vital area for future research [was] to see if archaeological investigations [could] determine the shifting allegiances of the secondary elite and supporting populations that were pulled this way and that as the fortunes of individual kingdoms and their rulers rose and fell.” Of critical importance to this endeavor is both the delineation and detailed archaeological examination of the communities located in the frontiers between polities, many of which have little if any epigraphic information associated with them.

In our investigations of these frontier communities, it is crucial that we accommodate the many factors that contribute to the

dynamics of frontier identity. The role of collective memory is one such factor. As Olick and Robbins (1998:122) stress, however, “... memory is not an unchanging vessel for carrying the past into the present; memory is a process, not a thing, and it works differently at different points in time.” During the rise of Minanha's royal court, collective memory was integral to the creation of a composite frontier community comprising local agents and an apparent intrusive elite element, the latter likely deriving from Caracol. The aligned caches in front of the eastern shrine attest to how local collective memory was incorporated into a new collective memory associated with the establishment of a very different community structure at Minanha.

Collective memory is also clearly present in the ways in which Minanha's newly established royal court called upon widely shared notions of rulership through their programs of ritual commemoration and monumental construction. In doing so, they were able to create a composite frontier community with its own unique identity (e.g., through the use of symbolic currency such as slate) but one that was also constituted in the general ethos of Late Classic rulership—particularly as it was manifest at Caracol and to a lesser degree Naranjo and the great center Calakmul. Thus, by drawing on collective memory, the rulers of the “jungle” kingdom of Minanha were able to legitimize their newfound status as players of consequence within regional politics—if only for a short time.

The demise of Minanha's royal court sometime in the early part of the Terminal Classic period also has some interesting implications for the study of collective memory. On one hand, the burial of the royal residential compound beneath approximately 5 m of rubble removed it visually from the community. However, its former position as the most symbolically charged and politically important settlement node within the Minanha realm meant that it was not so easily erased from the collective memory of the community. Similarly, the labor involved and the care taken to preserve the features associated with the royal residence also suggest that this was in some ways an unforgettable ritualized process and that as a result of the infilling, the royal residential group itself was likely burned into the collective memory of the Minanha community for the long term.

In closing, I wish to affirm once more that ritual processions have long been used to inscribe the locations of polity limits into collective memory. On the regional scale it becomes more difficult to isolate such frontiers, and the evidence for these formal processions is more limited the further back we go in time. However, future research at Minanha and elsewhere should strive to search out those potential natural and cultural features associated with these circuits (e.g., water sources, prominent hills, stone mounds), as these features served as key mnemonic devices in the demarcation of territories on multiple spatial scales. There is a great deal of interesting research that remains to be done with respect to frontier studies in the Maya subarea. It is hoped that this fact was at least partially instilled in our “collective memory” through the ideas presented herein.

RESUMEN

En las últimas décadas se ha logrado avanzar muy poco para localizar las fronteras de los diferentes centros antiguos Mayas. La definición de estas fronteras interiores y de sus comunidades han sufrido el mismo destino: Se conoce poco de sus orígenes y de su naturaleza. Consecuentemente, aún tenemos un entendimiento muy limitado de cómo se desarrollaron las

fronteras y las comunidades fronterizas, así como del papel que desempeñaron en las relaciones inter-políticas y la clase de interacción que se dió entre las comunidades fronterizas y los núcleos de los centros de los antiguos Mayas. Este artículo explora la naturaleza y disposición de las fronteras internas de los antiguos Mayas: con un énfasis en las distintas formas en que

la memoria colectiva de la comunidad Maya influyó en la formación y la disolución de las comunidades fronterizas. El desarrollo del período clásico tardío, en el centro de Minanha, ubicado entre las fronteras de Caracol y Naranjo, ha sido estudiado y analizado para aprender más acerca de este tema.

Aunque algunos no estén de acuerdo, aparentemente existe bastante evidencia etnográfica y etnohistórica que sugiere, que durante el período Maya colonial y contemporáneo los límites territoriales existen y son aceptados como tal. Los pueblos Mayas los han demarcado claramente a través del uso de una variedad de rasgos naturales y artificiales; este sentido de lo territorial se inscribe en una memoria colectiva durante el proceso ritual de sus ceremonias. El marcar los territorios en forma similar se ha usado en otras partes de mesoamérica, es decir, el sentido de territorialidad se da y hay señales claras, tanto naturales como artificiales como por ejemplo: fuentes de agua, colinas prominentes, monumentos de piedra, etc. Dado que nociones de territorio similares y señales, tanto naturales como artificiales, han sido usadas en otras partes de mesoamérica, es probable que estas prácticas y preocupaciones territoriales hayan sido parte de una larga y establecida tradición mesoamericana, y por lo tanto posiblemente ya existían en el subárea Maya antes de la conquista Española.

A través de los años, se han empleado varios mecanismos heurísticos, así como una variedad de correlaciones entre objetos o materiales, para localizar la fronteras de los Mayas antiguos. Queda claro que requerimos de marcos de referencia metodológicos y teóricos más firmes. Necesitamos que estos puntos de referencia sean más firmes para que a través de ellos se puedan ubicar con mayor certeza estas líneas fronterizas. El enfoque conjuntivo al combinar el potencial del GIS, información a través del modelo de gravedad (*gravity model*) y la información epigráfica, parece ser un método que ha dado resultados fructíferos. El desarrollo de un mayor entendimiento de las cualidades de las comunidades fronterizas nos ayudarían para la comprensión y el reconocimiento de las antiguas fronteras Maya. Las tres características que se le asignan a las comunidades fronterizas son la inestabilidad, hibridez, y la emulación. Otra característica es la negociación que se refiere a los conflictos, contradicciones, y complacencia; típicos a las interrelaciones de las zonas rurales interiores.

El estudio presentado en este artículo se enfoca hacia el centro antiguo Maya de Minanha, una pequeña ciudad-estado que surge en el norte de la Meseta de Vaca (Vaca Plateau) a principios del siglo 8. Minanha estaba ubicada estratégicamente entre los centros poderosos del Caracol y Naranjo. Su ubicación, su desarrollo y sus características en general lo convierten en una gran candidato para ser un centro de gobierno fronterizo. Se emplean tres modelos para investigar la posible relación de Minanha con los centros más grandes y más antiguos y establecidos de esta región. Estos métodos son: (1) La Dependencia Fronteriza; (2) La Memoria Intermedia de Datos; y (3) Ciudad-Estado Autónomo. El tercer modelo es el más probable, ya que Minanha surge a principios del siglo 8; un período de cisma regional; cuando Naranjo y Caracol se encuentran en el trance de un deterioro sociopolítico. Se ha sugerido que un pequeño grupo disidente de Caracol

pudo haber establecido la nueva corte real de Minanha. La caída de Minanha coincide con el resurgimiento de Naranjo y Caracol como centros de gobierno, con ambiciones territoriales renovadas, a finales del siglo 8 y a principios del siglo 9. Esta investigación de las comunidades fronterizas concluye que es eminente que tomemos en cuenta los varios factores que contribuyen a las dinámicas de la identidad fronteriza. La memoria colectiva es uno de estos factores determinantes. El estudio de Minanha hace resaltar las diversas formas en que la memoria colectiva fue utilizada durante el ascenso y la caída de este centro fronterizo. Durante el resurgimiento de la corte real de Minanha, la memoria colectiva fue integral para la creación de una comunidad fronteriza heterogénea compuesta de agentes locales y un elemento elitista intruso, el cual, al parecer se derivó de Caracol. Asimismo, la memoria colectiva representa claramente y definitivamente a la forma en que la nueva y re-establecida corte real de Minanha, empleó las ya establecidas nociones del liderazgo; a través de los procesos rituales conmemorativos y de sus construcciones monumentales. Al hacer ésto logran crear una comunidad fronteriza heterogénea con identidad propia. Un ejemplo de ésto se dislumbra a través del uso de la pizarra como divisa monetaria. Esta identidad está constituida en el código general del reino clásico tardío. Esto se manifestó particularmente en Caracol y a un grado menor en el gran centro de Calakmul. Al usar la memoria colectiva, aunque fuese por muy poco tiempo, la pequeña corte real de Minanha, logró legitimizar su nuevo status de protagonista de importancia dentro de la política regional. La desaparición de la corte real a principios del período clásico terminal trae como consecuencia las deducciones y el estudio a través de la memoria colectiva. Por un lado, nos encontramos con que el entierro del conjunto residencial de la corte real bajo cinco metros de escombros, lo retiró de la vista de la comunidad. Sin embargo, la posición anterior de la corte real dentro de Minanha, como lo más simbólico y lo más políticamente importante, no se borra tan fácilmente de la memoria comunitaria. Asimismo, la labor requerida y el cuidado necesario para conservar la residencia real, también sugieren que esta acción es un proceso ritualizado que permanece en la memoria colectiva y que, como resultado, el proceso del entierro del conjunto residencial de la corte real quedaría quemado en la memoria colectiva del centro de Minanha.

En conclusión, me gustaría afirmar una vez más que las procesiones ceremoniales han sido, por mucho tiempo, una base para establecer fronteras y límites dentro de la memoria colectiva. En la escala regional se dificulta el aislar tales fronteras y la evidencia de este formato de procesión es más limitada mientras no adelantamos más en el pasado. Sin embargo, futuras investigaciones en Minanha y otros sitios deberán tener como un propósito primordial el identificar estos rasgos naturales y culturales como los asociados con estos circuitos: las fuentes de agua las colinas prominentes y los monumentos de piedra. Esto es importante, ya que estos elementos funcionan como aparatos mnemónicos clave en la demarcación territorial en las múltiples escalas espaciales o geopolíticas.

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FRAYED AT THE EDGES: COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND HISTORY ON THE BORDERS OF CLASSIC MAYA POLITIES

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Abstract

This article explores social memory and history as they pertain particularly to secondary political centers on the edges of the Classic Maya kingdoms of Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan. Over the course of the Late Classic period (A.D. 600–900) the rulers of Maya polities in the Usumacinta River basin increasingly relied on the subordinate lords who governed these secondary centers to patrol and control the boundaries of their territories. For the rulers of any state, formulating an appropriate and coherent history to guide social memory is a critical political act for maintaining the cohesion of the political community. But as the Classic period progressed, client lords were increasingly permitted a formerly royal prerogative; they were accorded their own inscribed monuments. The monuments, together with associated ritual performances, were an integral part of the construction of history and collective memory in local communities and allowed secondary nobles to restructure social memory for their own interests. This trend, in turn, increased the potential for royal history and authority to be contested throughout the kingdom. Through several case studies this paper examines the ways that subordinate nobles could contest social memory and history sanctioned by primary rulers and the ways in which kings acted to maintain the reins of history and memory.

Over the course of the Classic period, from about A.D. 350 to 900, the rulers of Maya polities in the Usumacinta River Basin sought to expand the range of their authority and the integrity of their territorial control. For the rulers of the kingdoms centered on what are now the archaeological sites of Piedras Negras, Guatemala, and Yaxchilan, Mexico, this expansive power was achieved in no small part through patron-client relationships with subsidiary noble lords who patrolled and controlled the boundaries of their territories (Figure 1). Throughout most of the Classic period, public monuments and the inscriptions they bore were the sole prerogative of royal personages. But by the Late Classic period (ca. A.D. 600–900) the power and authority of client lords had grown such that they were accorded their own inscribed monuments. These monuments together with associated ritual performance must have formed an integral part of the construction of history and collective memory for multiple social segments within the kingdom.

As the complexity of the political system grew, this dissemination of authority to shape official history and transform social memory increased the potential for signs of royal authority to be contested through competing historical narratives. Rather than merely reflecting a polity-wide history, the increasing presence of the subordinate nobility in public performances of memorialization raised the possibility for these nobles to use architecture, texts, and ritual performances to re-create history and shape collective social memory in their own image and for their own interests. In the limited space provided in this forum, I will briefly outline my understanding of social memory as a political tool, and I will illustrate with just a few examples how the governors of secondary political

centers along the boundaries of the Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan kingdoms might have challenged royal authority by reshaping social memory and how paramount rulers may have acted to restrain them.

SOCIAL MEMORY: A DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before I address the data I must clarify my use of several terms. First and foremost, I use the terms social memory and collective memory interchangeably throughout this paper. Maurice Halbwachs (1992 [1925]:43) contends that “[n]o memory is possible outside frameworks used by people in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.” I would alter this slightly and say that individual memory is *possible* on the basis of unique sensory experiences. People are not born with “social” or “collective” memory, but (except in those rare cases when wayward children are raised by wolves) people begin to make sense of those memories and learn to express effectively and communicate an understanding of the world in terms of those memories by interacting socially with other people.

Of course, individuals within the group may retain and recall very different memories. Collective memory, in a critical sense, must be understood as shared individual memory (Hirst and Manier 2008:186), and the transmission of memories among members of the group inherently entails changes in the significance of those memories (Meskell 2003:36). But if we are to make sense of ourselves to others, the memories of things past that structure our present necessarily include and express a sense of the corporate (Connerton 1989:1). Indeed, for collective memory to exist there must be convergence of individual remembrances such that some

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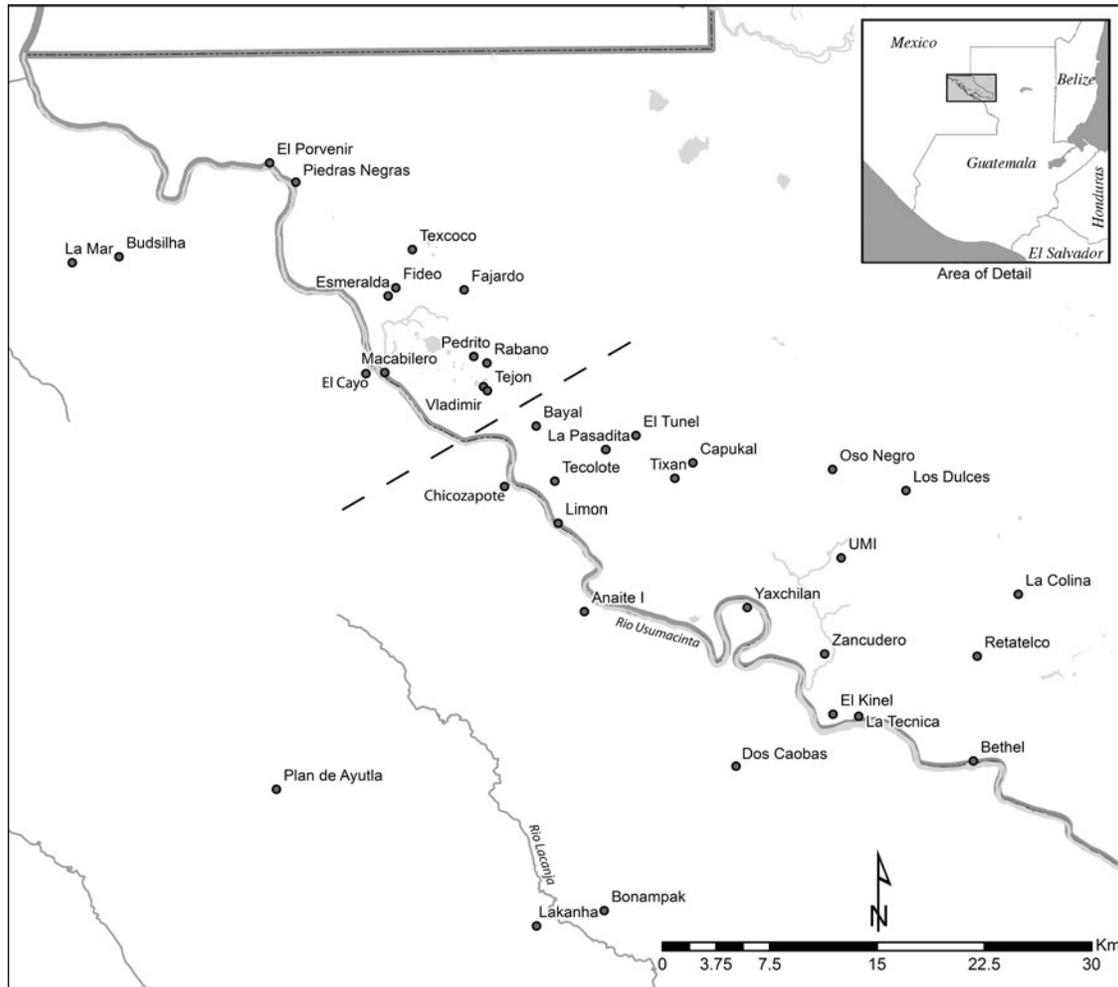


Figure 1. Map of the region showing the regional capitals of Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan as well as subordinate centers mentioned in text. Dashed line shows hypothetical border between the two kingdoms. Site indicated as Plan de Ayutla may be the capital of the Sak Tzi' kingdom (Biró 2005; Martin and Grube 2008:146). Map by Charles Golden.

sort of coherent narrative about the group emerges (Hirst and Manier 2008:193–194).

In contrast to memory, I consider “history” to be the *attempt*, successful or otherwise, to codify and direct collective memory in some durable media, such as text, architecture, or art. History is created, enacted, and shaped for the political purpose of excluding other narratives of memory (Olick and Robbins [1998] offer a useful summary of variable usage of these terms). Here I differ with Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, and others scholars who have treated memory as living and dynamic while considering history essentially dead and static.

For Halbwachs (1980 [1925]:78), “collective memory is not the same as formal history ... [G]eneral history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up”. For Nora (1989), memory is a living dialogue about the past between members of a community, and as such is open to debate, contestation, forgetting, and manipulation. History, on the other hand, is a static and incomplete reconstruction of a past that is not otherwise maintained by a community. “History’s goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place” (Nora 1989:9); it is dead, while memory is alive (Cattell and Climo 2002:6).

Robert Archibald (2002:69) further teases out the perceived implications of history’s static reconstruction of the past: History is conceptually “factual” and thus more correct than memory, which is a malleable perception of the past. This separation of memory from history is interpreted by many scholars to be part of the modern experience. According to Jacob Cattell and Maria Climo (2002:6), following Nora and others, there has been a “crisis of memory” in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The past as remembered has been severed from life as lived, and the past has thus moved over the threshold from memory into history.

I believe instead that such dramatic distinctions between living memory and dead history (as between pre-modern, modern and post-modern) overstate the divide and miss the important point that history is neither static nor closed to debate. Rather, there remains a vast storehouse of public recollections that remains in the “mode of potentiality,” and which may become relevant in any given present (Assmann 1995:130; Kansteiner 2002: 182–183). A changing social or political situation may bring to the surface memories long suppressed or seemingly erased by public histories, even in modern societies (Aguilar 2003; Corney 2003; Zerubavel 2003). History cannot completely erase or

replace memory until dramatic changes occur such that there is a complete social and cultural disconnection from that which came before, or until such time as a particular discourse of memory loses relevance to all members of a population (Blake 2003; Meskell 2003).

Thus, for the modern viewer, the inscriptions on Classic Maya monuments would constitute history in the sense that Nora (1989) and Halbwachs (1980 [1925]) intend. We are too disconnected from the events recorded on these monuments to call them memory. As objects and texts in and of themselves they may become part of the collective memory for many modern groups, including archaeologists, indigenous groups, and nation states, among others, but they will not function as they did in the society for which they were produced.

In trying to understand inscriptions and their roles as acts of memorialization, however, the distinction between memory and history developed by Nora, Halbwachs, and their academic descendants is not applicable to the Classic Maya. If there was, in fact, a “crisis of memory” in the twentieth century (and I am not convinced that there was), the ancient Maya did not pass through it. Furthermore, for the Classic Maya the texts and imagery on monuments, which represent our best access to those data typically glossed as “history,” the distinction between life as remembered (as expressed on those monuments) and life as lived may not have been pertinent. If one accepts Stephen Houston and David Stuart’s (1998; Stuart 1996) interpretation of Maya imagery and text on stone monuments, the individuals and events portrayed are to be understood as beings and doings that are *in process*. That is to say they have not passed on into a stultified history but are rather part of life as it is being lived. They are not static but are in constant play as part of the construction of memory. This indivisibility of person and image, and the socially active participation of apparently static representations are by no means unique to the construction of Classic Maya rulership. Similar processes can be observed, for instance, in Balinese kingdoms, in which “to visualize was to see, to see to imitate, and to imitate to embody” (Geertz 1980:130).

Furthermore, the texts inscribed upon monuments were almost certainly not the fixed narratives that they can seem to the modern reader. Rather, epigraphic evidence suggests that texts were meant to be read and performed before audiences (Houston 1994:30–34; Houston and Taube 2000:263; Hull 2003). Thus, public monuments particularly (and here I mean stelae and altars in relatively open plazas rather than lintels or panels in restricted doorways or other private spaces) represent guided histories of the lords and ladies whom they honor. But the performances associated with their texts left open the likelihood for modification during poetic recitations and for alteration resulting from audience involvement (Hull 2003:331–337, 375), which I will elaborate on in my discussion of the data from the Usumacinta region.

MEMORY AS MULTIPLE

Classic Maya monuments were part and parcel of the construction of social memory for at least some people in that society, but for which people? The significance of memory is heavily structured by the integration of the individual into not one but a wide variety of social groups. Collective memory is not coterminous with identity, but it is essential to the construction of identity. Moreover, when collective memory inevitably enters the realm of political discourse with regard to other individuals or groups

defined as outsiders, individual remembrances will be subsumed within a collective memory that appears unified and coherent (Halbwachs 1992 [1925]:52–53). Internal differences and dissent must certainly still exist but will typically be apparent only to those inside the group.

As a political discourse collective memory is nested and interwoven. We all live in multiple social groups, each of which helps us to interpret our experience of memories of things past, participation in things present, and the imagination of things to come (Assmann 1995:127; Halbwachs 1992 [1925]). Memories in this sense are selective reconstructions of past events that serve a present need, a notion echoed in ethnohistoric and ethnographic studies of Maya communities (Bricker 1981:180; Christenson 2001:23, 68; Gossen 1974a:246–247; Lowenthal 1985:210; Tedlock 1985:15–16; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003:3).

Collective memory is always multiple and incorporates various levels of collectivity that become socially salient when pressure is exerted from the outside. Thus, for a hypothetical twenty-first century reader in the United States, collective memories as a member of a nuclear family (for example, “Our family has lived in this town for fifty years”) can be merged into the larger patterns of family history at extended family reunions (for example, “Our family came to this country on the Mayflower”). Family memories may, in turn, interweave with regional memories, (for example, “We’ve been waiting for the Cubs to win the World Series for a hundred years”), and with the state political memory when threats emerge or at appropriate political rallies (for example, “Our forefathers founded this country”).

Maya colonial documents, for their part, show clear evidence of overlapping narrative genres resulting from just such interpenetrating collective memories. In but one example from the “Title of Calkini,” published by Restall (1998:82–103), the authors of a series of community documents written over the course of the sixteenth century and recopied with further additions through the nineteenth century, shift variously throughout from personal family histories to broader community genealogies and events as warranted by the needs of the writers at the times in which the various sections were written. The establishment of Spanish authority, for instance, is at times a central theme with deeply personal memories and evidently heartfelt emotion (Restall 1998:86–92), while in sections written just a couple of decades later this same intrusion is simply a small piece of community memory, glossed as “when the foreigners arrived” (Restall 1998:101). Even within the same sections, presumably written by the same authors for at least short stretches, these narrative shifts are evident, revealing the nested narratives available to the writers of the title. Essentially, the document served as a mnemonic device for the community’s collective memory, but at different points in time and under different political circumstances, different aspects of that memory are accentuated and foregrounded.

Inscriptions from the Classic period similarly traffic in nested narratives of memory and history. Cosmological time in the form of the Long Count or other temporal cycles is juxtaposed with personal, individual events, dynastic lineages, events that lie within the living memory of the local community as well as occurrences located millions of years in the past (Schele and Mathews 1998: 106–107; Martin and Grube 2008:221), while past and future events are rhetorically and perceptually made present (Houston 1997). Yet, the temporalities and events memorialized on any given Classic period monument or set of monuments cannot possibly represent the full range of potential collective memories

(Assmann 1995:130). Rather, these are the actualized memories that Classic Maya rulers and their scribes felt to be politically salient at the moment of the monument's creation.

Every segment in the hierarchy of collective memory incorporates multiple collective memories from the level below, and individuals occupy positions in multiple segments. Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (1996) provide a glimpse of the complexity that people encounter locating individual self in society through narratives such as those that describe and create social memory. The coexistence of these multiple remembrances (national, genealogical, personal) and their potentially conflicting effects on social life do not necessarily negate the social and political significance of any one of those historical discourses (Appadurai 1981; Davis 1989). That time, a concept/practice central to memory and history, is not reckoned in the same way across segments (Dietler and Herbich 1993) may provide much of the necessary flux to provide for the coexistence of seemingly conflicting narratives.

To realize a political entity (state, chiefdom, city, or even the household) as having a salient group identity, political leaders must inscribe and codify the social memory of that entity in relatively durable media, such as architecture, writing, or ritual performances. But, instead of seeking to embrace the multiplicity of memories, political leaders seek to direct or dominate social memory and impose a single historical discourse that favors the political entity over its internal segments. Politics seek to create official histories that record for posterity one group's version of social memory to the exclusion of others and threaten in doing so to eliminate from living memory alternate collective memories.

If political leaders are successful, social memories of people and events not codified in architecture, script, ritual, or other historical media may be quickly forgotten, relatively speaking, with some evidence suggesting between one hundred and two hundred years as an upper limit for oral histories (Bradley 2003:221). But it is not only those in positions of paramount leadership who seek control of their segment of collective memory. Household or lineage heads may also seek to exercise a certain control over the social memories that differ significantly from the actions of paramount political leaders only in matters of scale rather than kind (Davis 1989).

Political leaders may not rely on "living" memory to structure their versions of collective memory, particularly if they are seeking to replace an existing political structure with a new organization. Leaders may literally dig up evidence of events long forgotten that may have had little significance in the social memory of the past but are used to restructure or eliminate social memory in the present (Connerton 1989:14–15; Meskell 2003:50). But such re-creations cannot be completely new or they will not make sense to the group; they will not appear rational (Connerton 1989:6; Habermas 1984). Indeed, research in psychology suggests that attempts at memorialization that do not fit into preexisting memory structures have little impact in the long term. Schema theory holds that remembrance is the result of interaction between new input and "general knowledge structures or expectancies that are developed through experience" (Koriat et al. 2000:493–496).

Thus, anything new must walk a fine line between connections and disconnections with the past, with leaders who seek to overturn the old regime always risking irrelevance or the dissolution of the new political system (Parmentier 1985:186). The creation of a revolutionary political system requires the "invention of tradition" to replace those touchstones of the old regime and is unlikely to be a smooth process (Connerton 1989:7–13; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

If, then, there is a hegemonic discourse surrounding collective memories associated with political groupings and political leaders, we necessarily expect there to be a counterhegemonic discourse that seeks to maintain alternative social memories (Olick and Robbins 1998:126–128; see also Foucault 1977). Because collective memory is segmentary, when viewed at the level of the state, for instance, history can appear unitary, and such a unified political history is valid. From inside the state, however, there should be multiple and contrasting versions of particular historical narratives or narratives that openly differ from the state. Because ritual, architecture, writing, and other activities associated with social memory leave durable evidence of the processes of memorialization (Rowlands 1993:144), archaeologists have the potential to recover bits and pieces of both hegemonic and counterhegemonic memory-making activities (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003:3).

CONTESTED MEMORY IN THE CLASSIC MAYA PERIOD

For the Classic Maya we have a robust body of data for reconstructing social memory in several social segments, particularly among the titled elites. The Classic period polities of the western Maya Lowlands were organized around the institution of kingship with the paramount ruler of larger dynastic centers, the *k'uhul ajaw* ("holy lord"), seeking to establish an appropriately royal place in the collective memory of the polity. To do so required the formulation of a dominant historical narrative that subsumed or eliminated discordant elements that might detract from the ruler's legitimacy. We have abundant archaeological and epigraphic evidence that many rulers sought to erase the collective memory of military defeats, dynastic breaks, and questionable lineages that, if memorialized, would undermine royal authority. Prominent examples are known from Palenque (Martin and Grube 2008:158–162; Schele and Mathews 1998:95), Piedras Negras (Golden 2002), and Quirigua (Fash and Stuart 1991; Martin and Grube 2008:219; Sharer 1990:107), among many others.

Maya calendars, writing systems, architecture, ritual performances, and the histories they defined, together with the media on which they were inscribed were instrumental to Maya kings and queens in the creation and elimination of shared political memories (Connerton 1989; Golden 2002:68–74; Joyce 1998:157–60, 2003:105–108; Keane 1997:108;Looper 1997; Rowlands 1993:144; Stuart 1998). Monuments helped to create memories of events that many members of the populace had not witnessed (Golden 2002:368; Houston et al. 2000:104–105; Joyce 1998:109), and these monuments were particularly potent in doing so because the image and self of the ruler were conceived to be one and the same—the ruler in perpetual performance of the rituals depicted (Houston and Stuart 1998; Stuart 1996).

Although the members of the subordinate nobility who governed the secondary centers throughout the polity were in significant measure dependent on the *k'uhul ajaw* for their status and authority (Houston and Inomata 2009:150–162; Jackson 2005; Jackson and Stuart 2001; Sharer and Golden 2004:36; Stuart and Houston 2001), these nobles nonetheless sought to steer a course that aided their own claims to political legitimacy on the local level, claims that did not always mesh easily with those of the primary ruler. To do so would necessarily have involved the manipulation of social memory such that these subordinates were recognized to be people of long-standing and legitimate authority (which they may or may not have been), at least on the local level. The maintenance,

manipulation, and creation of locally salient collective memories as political discourse mean that these narratives may have differed from or contradicted those presented by the paramount ruler.

I want to examine just a few cases along the borders of kingdoms in the Usumacinta River basin, and in particular in the polities ruled from Piedras Negras, Guatemala, and Yaxchilan, Mexico where we can observe multiple narratives of collective memory. Complex polities are challenged at their edges to link populations and territory into the political system in ways that are markedly different from the integrative processes of political centers (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 4, 63–86; Martinez 1994a:8–14, 1994b:10–25). Border zones, therefore, are likely areas in which to find the material correlates of narratives of social memory that contest those found at political centers. Such contestations threaten to fragment the polity-level discourse of memory and render it inapplicable to lower-level political segments.

In the polity ruled from Piedras Negras, Guatemala, I believe we have several examples of contested social memory expressed in text and imagery on monuments at outlying secondary centers. Stela 12 from Piedras Negras depicts the last known ruler of that site presiding over his subordinate nobles and captives taken in combat with the neighboring kingdom of Pomona, Mexico (Figure 2). The implication of the text and imagery is that the ruler of Piedras Negras has won a victory in battle over his foes, and the text on the monument phrases this victory as an act of retribution for the defeat of Piedras Negras by Pomona some 250 years earlier (Golden 2002:358; Houston and Inomata 2009:181–182; Houston et al. 2000:101; Schele and Grube 1994). The focus of commemoration on this monument is the dynasty of Piedras Negras and its ability to rebound from a previous defeat to vanquish its foes. Text and imagery focus on the might and military capacity of the ruler, and one can imagine that the dedicatory rituals associated with the placement of the stela were designed to reinforce this message. For the kingdom of Piedras Negras, then, the memory that was preserved was one of unity—king and nobles together succeed despite the threat of a long-standing enemy.

Interestingly, though, one of the victorious nobles on Stela 12 records the capture of two of the same individuals on a stela at his own political center of La Mar, located to the southwest, and ostensibly part of the Piedras Negras polity (Figure 3; Anaya Hernandez 2001:79; Martin and Grube 2008:153). This claim on the edge of the polity does not directly contradict the victory over Pomona, of course, and the events on the La Mar stela can be smoothly integrated in the history of Piedras Negras dynasty.

Yet, the La Mar stela also contests the memory of those events. For the community in and around La Mar, who never may have witnessed the battle, its aftermath, or the monument at Piedras Negras, the La Mar stela and its perpetual performance became the touchstone of collective history. The victory and the taking of captives was associated with La Mar and its ruler, not that of Piedras Negras.

Significant here, as mentioned above, is the La Mar stela's dual performative aspect; the perpetual performance of the imagery and the verbal performance of its text (Houston and Stuart 1998; Stuart 1996). Stelae and altars, unlike some other inscribed monuments (such as lintels), tend to be placed in open, public venues and were intended for an audience that probably included a significant portion of the local populace. The texts on these monuments were presented as poetics by ritually charged actors who may have been the ruler depicted or was perhaps a surrogate competent to present a literate style of history (Gossen 1974b:398–399; Hull



Figure 2. Piedras Negras Stela 12. Captives from Pomona, Mexico, are arrayed before Piedras Negras Ruler 7, seated at the top of the monument. The standing figure on the left is the ruler of La Mar. Bearded captive at bottom, second from right, is also depicted on La Mar Stela 3 (drawing by David Stuart, from *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions 9*[1]; Piedras Negras, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College).

2003:375–376). Such presentations would not have excluded audience participation but would rather have been affected and, in part, directed by a reactive audience within the constraints imposed by the text and formality of the performance (Hull 2003:369).

Furthermore, shared individual memories of the performance would have reinforced social memory of the capture of the Pomona captives by La Mar's ruler, but not that of Piedras



Figure 3. La Mar Stela 3, depicting that site's ruler and recording his capture of two of the same individuals depicted on Piedras Negras Stela 12. Both captives are mentioned in the text, while one captive is depicted (drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org).

Negras, through its emotional impact. The copresence of performer and audience, the shared experience of the ritual, the role of the audience in the performance, and the “very fact that ritual forms a legitimate occasion for emotional display” help commemorative events to form, structure, and maintain collective memory (Rimé and Christophe 1997:117). Moreover, such group activities are recalled better, with greater detail and for a greater duration, than individual recollections of events and experiences. Such group remembrances, however, actually seem to inhibit and direct individual memories along a narrower path than individuals maintain in nongroup settings (Weldon and Bellinger 1997), leading to the convergence required for collective memories to take root (Hirst and Manier 2008:193–194).

Thus, to reiterate, the La Mar monument and its associated performance on the edge of the kingdom did not directly contradict the story told by Stela 12 at Piedras Negras. It did, however, allow for reinterpretation of memories associated with the victory over Pomona, and for the community participating as the audience for La Mar Stela 3 it encouraged the association of that victory with the lord of La Mar and not with the paramount king at Piedras Negras. This represents the potential for a historical breach with significant political implications.

There is evidence that the rulers of Classic period polities were cognizant of this potential for their subordinates and the communities surrounding these subordinates to construct alternative histories and to perform conflicting acts of memorialization. Closer to Piedras Negras, toward the kingdom's southern border with its great rival Yaxchilan, is the secondary center of El Cayo, Chiapas. El Cayo was ruled by a series of perhaps five governors who bore the title *sajal*, a rank of nonroyal nobility. These governors at El Cayo, however, are virtually unique in the time depth of their *sajal* “dynasty” and in their political ties to multiple superordinate rulers and centers (Chinchilla and Houston 1993; Houston 2003; Houston and Inomata 2009:175; Mathews 1998). Indeed, the governors of El Cayo were tied into royal families through the matriline on at least two occasions. We do not know the origin of one of these women, but the second may have been a member of the powerful Calakmul dynasty. Moreover, although for much of the Late Classic period El Cayo was part of the polity ruled from Piedras Negras, at least some of its *sajal* acceded through the intervention of a third party, the ruler of Sak Tz'i', an on-again-off-again ally of Piedras Negras (Anaya Hernandez 2001:77; Houston et al. 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:151).

The complexity of El Cayo's political relationships is reflected in the messages conveyed by the monuments. The governors of El Cayo appear alone on their monuments, without their overlords (Figure 4). To those who saw the monuments but could not read the texts, the message is straightforward—the important ritual events memorialized on the monuments were events associated with the rulers of El Cayo and El Cayo alone.

Nonetheless, El Cayo Altar 4 implicitly acknowledges the dominance of the ruler of Piedras Negras with regard to the creation of social memory at El Cayo. The sculptors of this and other monuments from El Cayo were nobles from Piedras Negras, presumably sent by the ruler of the primate site (Chinchilla and Houston 1993: 58; Houston et al. 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:153), and authorized to produce a restricted history that did not impinge upon the narratives developed at the polity level.

The texts, acting as a “guarantor of authenticity” (Hull 2003: 336) lead performer and audience along a prescribed path that allowed for innovation but not dramatic deviation, and monuments from El Cayo, unlike La Mar Stela 3, do not recapitulate historical events otherwise recorded at Piedras Negras.

Thus, the text, imagery, and associated performance of Altar 4 (and other monuments from El Cayo) offered a restricted history that did not impinge upon the narratives developed at the polity level. Participants in the performance of narratives associated with the El Cayo altar would have had all the same potential for reinvention and innovation of social memory as the performers of La Mar Stela 3. But transformations of the collective history associated with the El Cayo altar did not directly transform any narratives from Piedras Negras known to modern scholars.

Moving south from El Cayo, I want to turn to the border of the Yaxchilan kingdom. By the eighth century A.D. the rulers of Yaxchilan had begun to establish a well protected, fortified border with Piedras Negras (Golden 2003; Golden and Scherer 2006; Golden et al. 2005, 2008; Scherer and Golden 2009). Sites such as La Pasadita and Tecolote were the seats of *sajal* appointed by the *k'uhul ajaw* of Yaxchilan to control that boundary in the name of the central authority (Figure 5). Unlike the governors of El Cayo, we have no evidence of multigenerational *sajal* dynasties for the Yaxchilan polity, and our current evidence suggests that the rulers of Yaxchilan exercised a more direct and fundamental control

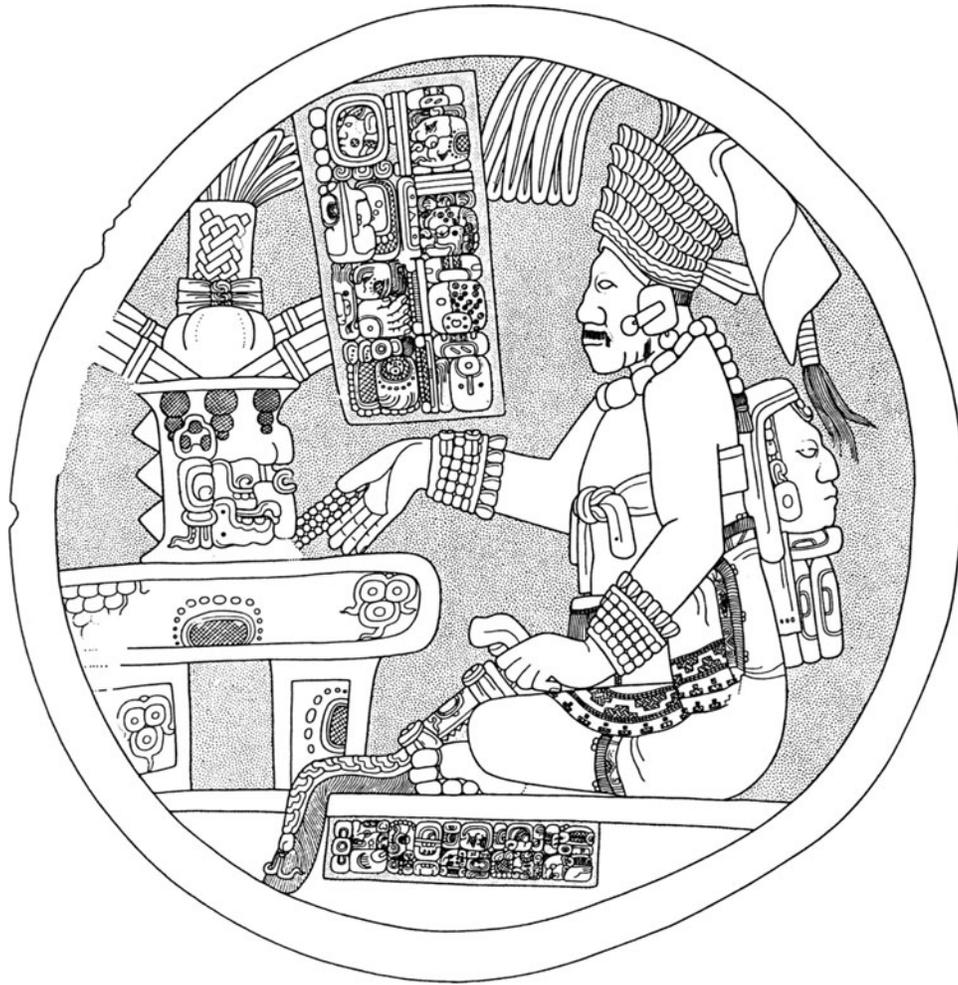


Figure 4. El Cayo Altar 4, depicting the *sajal* of El Cayo seated before an altar. The text makes no direct reference to Piedras Negras, but the sculptor's signature below the figure indicates that the artist was a Piedras Negras lord (drawing by and used with the permission of Peter Mathews).

over the role and status of their subordinates than did the rulers of Piedras Negras.

As part and parcel of this control, the *sajal* in the Yaxchilan kingdom (most known from looted monuments) were typically depicted in performance with the ruler of Yaxchilan, and at El Cayo some of these monuments were carved by the same sculptors who produced monuments at the capital. Further, these monuments are uniformly lintels, not stelae or altars. As lintels, they would have been set into narrow doorways of palatial structures set back off of public plazas where their audiences were presumably limited to a much smaller subset of the population than those with access the lintels and altars set into the broad patios of Yaxchilan itself.

Here, then, we have control over collective memory and history on multiple levels. First, access to these monuments is restricted to a limited audience—the collective for whom these monuments served as a mnemonic for memory was presumably smaller than that of the monuments described above from La Mar and El Cayo. Second, the presence of the ruler meant that for any given performance associated with the monument, the ruler was always present (Houston and Stuart 1998; Stuart 1996), always watching and sanctioning

the transformations of memory involved with such performances. Third, almost none of the events recorded on these monuments from secondary centers were recorded at Yaxchilan itself, and thus, as with El Cayo Altar 4, the potential for rewriting memory of events associated with the polity center did not exist. In the one known case where the same event is recorded at La Pasadita and Yaxchilan, the subject is the capture of a Piedras Negras prince, recorded on La Pasadita Lintel 2 and Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Staircase 1 (Alexander Safronov cited in Martin and Grube 2008:149; Nahm 1997:68). The presence of the ruler of Yaxchilan on Lintel 2, however, limits the possibilities for the *sajal* of La Pasadita to contest or diverge from the royal narrative in making collective history as the rulers of La Mar had done.

Archaeological investigations in the Yaxchilan kingdom also allow us to speak of architecture's role in the construction of memory in a way that we cannot yet do at La Mar and El Cayo, where less research has been carried out. Recent fieldwork at the neighboring border sites of Tecolote and La Pasadita reveal a startling similarity in the style of monumental architecture, all of which was built in a relatively short span during the eighth century A.D. (Golden et al. 2005, 2008; Scherer and Golden

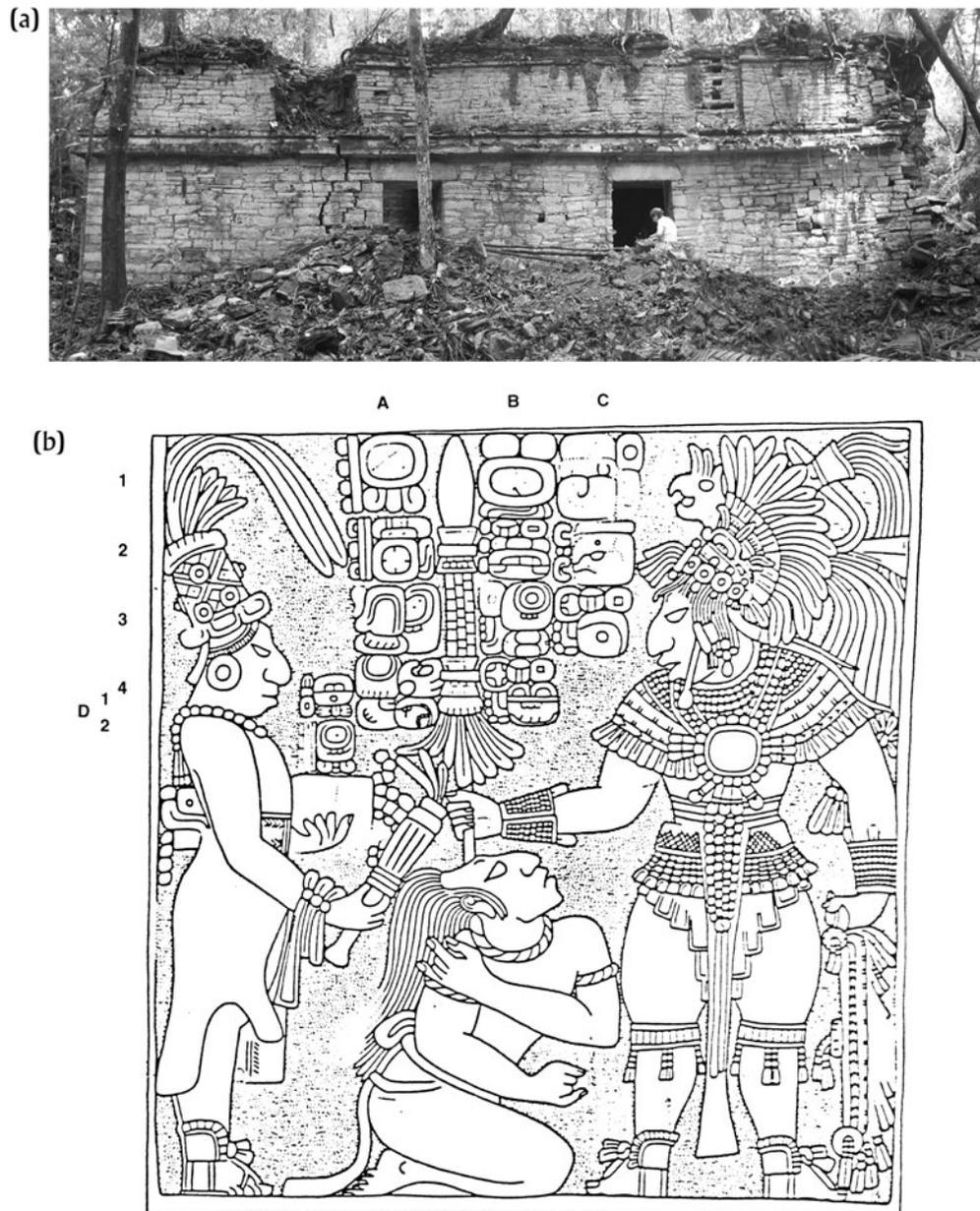


Figure 5. Standing building at Tecolote, Guatemala (above; photo by Arlen Higgenbotham). Below is La Pasadita Lintel 2 (Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, drawing by Ian Graham, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College). From left to right: Tiloom, *sajal* of La Pasadita; captive from Piedras Negras (kneeling); Bird Jaguar IV, ruler of Yaxchilan.

2009). On both sites, archaeologists found standing, vaulted buildings with polychrome murals (though the building at La Pasadita has collapsed since its initial documentation by Ian Graham [Golden et al. 1999]). These buildings are virtually identical in size, the number and placement of entrances, and in the style of the masonry employed. In fact, but for the late addition of a wall in one room and the installation of carved lintels above the doors at La Pasadita, these structures appear to be mirror views of one another. Moreover, a primary axis for site planning at Tecolote and La Pasadita is 120 degrees, as it is at Yaxchilan.

Inside, too, the palace buildings that constitute the architectural foci of Tecolote and La Pasadita give the impression of centralized

artistic vision. At Tecolote, the style of calligraphic script in an extensive mural text hints that some of the painters who worked on the famous murals of Bonampak (themselves probably sent from Yaxchilan) also worked at Tecolote (Stephen Houston and David Stuart, personal communication 2004). At La Pasadita, the near identity in style and color palettes of murals at La Pasadita and Yaxchilan further highlights the epigraphically documented ties between these two sites (Golden et al. 2008:63; Kamal et al. 1999:1393).

Although much remains to be done to fully document the architectural programs of both sites, the initial impression is one of an architectural template; it may even be that a team of “architects”

or masons was dispatched from the capital to these border sites (Golden et al. 2008:267). Given the importance of architectural layouts in the performance of rituals, the suggestion is that the *sajal* and their entourages at border sites such as Tecolote and La Pasadita were constrained to perform rituals associated with monuments and the formation of collective memory within spaces dictated from the center. In so doing, a modicum of control was maintained by Yaxchilan's rulers over the events memorialized at the frontiers of authority in the kingdom.

Finally, in a last example from an adjacent polity a different sort of fraying of collective memory and history can be seen on a small stela, now in a private collection, on which a *sajal* is depicted in profile (Figure 6). We do not know the site from which this monument was looted, but the text indicates that this *sajal* acceded to his office under the auspices of the ruler of Sak Tz'i'. With a dedication date of A.D. 864, however, it is the last known mention of Sak Tz'i'; we have no contemporary monuments from Sak Tz'i' itself (Anaya Hernández 2001:81; Martin and Grube 2008:146; Mayer 1980: 50–51; Miller and Martin 2004:190–191). This could be a sampling error, but it may also be that the Sak Tz'i' kingdom had essentially ceased to function as an effective political entity at this time, as had virtually all of the regional powers except Tonina. Moreover, the style of the imagery is remarkably innovative or “foreign,” and in some ways more closely resembles the monuments of the distant



Figure 6. Stela depicting a *sajal* from an as yet unidentified site (drawing by and used with the permission of Simon Martin).

and newly resurgent Seibal than those of earlier Usumacinta region monuments.

Interestingly, the imagery and the performance of the text provides for the audience a grounding of legitimacy based in long-remembered and replicated patterns of accession to office under the auspices of a superordinate ruler who may no longer have existed. The imagery, in contrast, was a break with the past; its conscious newness was framed by traditional monumental content and performance (a stela with image and text) that made the message of authority rational and acceptable. It may, in fact, be that this petty ruler sought to maintain the memory of a defunct superior authority in order to legitimate his own power, while at the same time establishing new patterns of legitimacy that did not rely on older forms.

Such patterns of manipulating social memory on the part of subordinate nobles have been noted on the peripheries of other societies as well. The Nayaka states of India, for instance, were led by military leaders who grounded their legitimacy by acknowledging the authority of Vijayanagara, while at the same time they resisted that authority (Sinopoli 2003:17–33). Compared to Vijayanagara, Nayaka kingdoms were fragile and small, but “their rhetoric was vast, entailing, in many cases, claims to the mantle of Vijayanagara’s legitimacy” (Sinopoli 2003:29). Such rhetoric also clearly plays a part in the creation of medieval titles such as Holy Roman Emperor, which laid claim, with varying levels of success, to restructured and re-created memories of Rome and its continental authority. The same may also characterize many of the large, stable Maya polities during the Late Classic period, whose rulers memorialized in text and sculpture their connections with the dying or dead polity of Teotihuacan (see Golden [2002: 381–416] for an overview of such Teotihuacan-related activities at Tikal, Copan, and Piedras Negras).

CONCLUSIONS

Thanks to the advances that epigraphers and archaeologists have made in recent decades, the study of the Classic Maya has reached the point at which we have access to a more complex and complete view of political history and the art of manipulating social memory as a political tool. Even as we try to piece together a coherent history for any given polity, we must remain aware that social memory at the polity level is a complex negotiation of multiple segments of social memory at secondary centers and other political communities scattered across the landscape of the kingdom. We cannot fully understand the processes of memorialization at primate centers unless we can better piece together the various segments that such processes were acting upon and reacting to.

Furthermore, because processes of memorialization operated at all levels of society, whether in the daily rituals of a rural household or in the dedication of a new stela and the performance of its narrative text, we can begin to develop a better picture of the social linkages of memory connecting ruler and subject throughout the kingdom that, in the absence of modern mass media, helped to create the imagined community that was the Classic Maya polity. As polities grew larger, however, and the political hierarchy more complex, over the course of the Classic period it would have become more difficult for rulers to rely on a coherent collective memory to unite the community and bolster their authority. We should examine monuments closely not just for the pieces of a coherent history, but also for the attempts to restructure that history to challenge royal authority and for the efforts of kings to maintain their control over the fraying edges of their kingdoms.

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora los procesos de la historia y la memoria social referentes especialmente a los centros políticos secundarios ubicados en los límites de los reinos mayas de Piedras Negras y Yaxchilan durante el período clásico. Durante el transcurso del clásico tardío (600–900 d.C.) los gobernantes de las entidades políticas en la cuenca del río Usumacinta delegaron cada vez más a los señores subordinados que gobernaban estos centros secundarios para patrullar y controlar los límites de sus territorios. Para los gobernantes de cualquier estado, formular una historia coherente que dirija la memoria social es un acto político que es crítico para mantener la unidad de la comunidad política. Sin embargo, con el avance del período clásico, los reyes permitieron a sus clientes una prerrogativa anteriormente exclusiva a la realeza; fueron otorgados sus propios monumentos inscritos. Los monumentos, juntos con los actos rituales asociados, formaron una parte integral de la

construcción de la historia y de la memoria colectiva en las comunidades locales, e hizo posible que los nobles secundarios tuvieron el poder de reestructurar la memoria social colectiva para sus propios intereses. Esto aumentó el potencial para impugnar la historia y la autoridad real a través del reino. Este trabajo trata principalmente los monumentos de los sitios La Mar y El Cayo (los cuales formaron parte del reino de Piedras Negras) y La Pasadita y Tecolote (del reino de Yaxchilan). Incluye también un ejemplo de un monumento saqueado de un sitio desconocido que perteneció aparentemente al reino de Sak T'zi', una entidad política vecina a Piedras Negras y Yaxchilan. Cada uno de estos ejemplos muestra un proceso diferente que ofreció a los nobles subordinados el poder de disputar la memoria social y la historia sancionadas por los reyes. Además, muestran las maneras en que los reyes actuaban para mantener las riendas de la historia y de la memoria.

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SOCIAL MEMORY AND SACRED SITES IN THE WESTERN MAYA HIGHLANDS: EXAMPLES FROM JACALTENANGO, GUATEMALA

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Abstract

This paper utilizes anthropological and sociological approaches to social memory to analyze the position and relevance of sacred sites among the Jakalteq Maya of the western highlands of Guatemala. Based on archaeological investigations and oral history, the connection between the past and present is analyzed in terms of collective memory, underscoring the importance of specific places and landscape in remembering as well as in reinforcing Jakalteq identity and history. Three distinct sacred sites are discussed, including their archaeological evidence; position (or lack of) in histories; disposition/creation as sacred site; and ties to the community's social memory. Sacred sites and social memory are viewed as a key component of indigenous activism and identity politics as well as an integral aspect to understanding the social context of archaeology in the Guatemalan Maya Highlands.

Social memory has become an increasingly relevant topic within anthropology, history, and archaeology, as the scientific and humanistic aspects of these disciplines are scrutinized, parsed, and critiqued. Archaeologists in particular have been drawn toward social memory as a means of reconceptualizing the past in collective, incorporative terms that can potentially balance local, community-based processes and broader meta-narratives, such as scientific objectivity. In Maya archaeology, the importance of understanding social context and archaeological relevance has never been greater, as indigenous activism, postcolonial thought, and identity politics challenge a model of archaeology as a Western-dominated, insulated practice.

The utilization of social memory as an interpretive tool may provide one means of bringing together seemingly disparate practices for understanding the past. As defined by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992), social memory is a collection of remembrances shared by a community. This deceptively simple definition begs a number of key issues, which have been taken up by Halbwachs himself and subsequent researchers (see Olick and Robbins 1998), including how memories are created, collected (or discarded), and shared (Connerton 1989; Shackel 2001); the role of history vis-à-vis memory (Bourguet et al. 1990; Burke 1989; Lowenthal 1997; Nora 1989); and the role of culture and community (Birth 2006; Butler 1990; Cattell and Climo 2002; Rowlands 1993; Shackel 2001). Recently archaeologists have begun attempts at applying social memory approaches, as diverse as they are, to interpreting the archaeological past (e.g., Van Dyke and Alcock 2003) in an attempt both better to understand the past and to historicize the study of social memory; a corrective to what Olick and Robbins (1998:134) called the “ahistorical” underpinnings of sociological

studies of the topic. This paper examines sacred sites of the Jakalteq Maya of western Guatemala as examples of the connection between the materiality of archaeology and social memory in a community.

The dichotomous relationship between memory as a culturally contingent, communal, and subjective process and history as an impartial, academic, fact-based analysis has been subjected to a rigorous critique (Lowenthal 1997). While this critique is partially due to the diverse disciplines that have appropriated the topic and the resulting variety of uses and interpretations (Olick and Robbins 1998:105), the dialog attests to the general relevance of social memory to all societies and to the increasing blurriness of boundaries among disciplines as well as categories of social analysis. While the memory-history dichotomy continues to fuel research, such as questioning the persistence of memory beyond an individual's life or contrasting objectivity (history) with subjectivity (memory), researchers have increasingly emphasized questions regarding the constitution of society generated from different views of the past. In this way, the production of history is seen as equally constructed and contingent as social memory, with history often becoming an official, sanctioned version of the past (see Geary 1994), with different versions being deployed for various purposes within a given context.

Seminal works in social memory such as Halbwachs (1992) and Connerton (1989) do not explicitly address archaeology, but they do provide themes that are relevant and can be applied to archaeological issues, as papers in this special section demonstrate. Maurice Halbwachs (1992) suggested a number of key characteristics to distinguish collective memory. First, he argued that it operates in the “mental and material spaces of the group;” collective memory is both social and tied to materiality. While not developed by Halbwachs, memory's social aspect relies on culture, implying that the cultural differences of groups generate different collective

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memories. The shared nature of culture, particularly as a process, necessarily incorporates a degree of instability and variability, and versions of the past are likewise experienced, interpreted, and understood in different ways, both by individuals and groups. As Paul Shackel (2001:655) points out, individuals seek validation of their memories with other people; moving from individual to social, they agree to remember (or forget) collectively.

Regarding materiality, Halbwachs suggests that collective memory is closely tied to specific places or locations. While materiality applies fairly broadly to categories such as burial practices (Gillespie 2002; Joyce 2001), Halbwachs specifically mentioned locations. While this idea is not developed by Halbwachs, he anticipated anthropological and archaeological research on the role of place (Basso 1996; Feld and Basso 1996) and landscapes (Ashmore and Knapp 1999). Halbwachs' observations and subsequent developments reinforce the close ties between collective memory and specific, definable places. Connerton (1989) built upon Halbwachs' observations to suggest social memory was performance-based and proposed that various types of rituals were enacted at specific places, providing continuity with the past. For archaeology, the importance of the relationship between place and social memory cannot be overstated, as it provides a vital link between versions of the past and the material record. And, as shown below for the Maya in particular, specific places—known as sacred sites (Ivic de Monterroso 2004)—are integral to understanding social memory and culture.

SACRED SITES, SOCIAL MEMORY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology, as a discipline involved in the development of a version of the past, has a vested interest in the study of the processes of remembrance and social memory—for both interpretation and as a sociocultural influence on the practice of the discipline in the present. Landscape approaches have provided one point of entrance for analyzing the materiality of social memory. As Knapp and Ashmore (1999:13) state, “landscape is often regarded as the materialization of memory, fixing social and individual histories in space,” as places become repositories for collective memory. This memory encoding of landscape is common in many cultures (Buikstra and Charles 1999; Snead and Preucel 1999) and often revolves around the memorial encoding of places. Van Dyke and Alcock (2003:5) have suggested that “place” is one line of evidence for examining social memory archaeologically. Places—specific locales imbued with historical meaning—are sites of memory.

Communities often organize social remembrance around sites of memory (Connerton 1989). Research on both social memory and sites leads to a possible framework for its investigation in archaeology, which I believe is distinguished by three elements: (1) symbolism—cultural significance to the members of the community; (2) materiality—actions associated with particular, known places; and (3) temporality—an association with the past. Sites of memory define, delimit, and categorize the memories of individuals, integrating them into the collective memory (Shackel 2001:655). Sites of memory are locales of practices—often ritual action—that reinforce the cohesion of the community through either collective activity or individual actions that draw upon shared understandings. They also encode culturally-specific understandings of the past, knowledge of which is required to identify with and participate in the community, establishing memories—both those that should be remembered as well as those to be forgotten. As Van Dyke and

Alcock (2003:3) suggest, social memory acts to obliterate as well as connect to the past, “as pasts may be subsumed and dominated, conquered and dismantled.” Ultimately, the collective memory is shaped by and also shapes the practices and meanings at a site of memory.

Additionally, social memory as enacted through sites of memory reinforces and constructs a common past for the development of boundaries of identity formation. Social memory can act to create and reinforce ethnic identity by providing a sense of time depth and a shared past often required of ethnic identification (Eriksen 2002). The production of collective memory and the sites at which production occurs define collective identity, binding together places, actions in the present, and understandings of the past into a meaningful boundary marker of identity (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:14–16).

These aspects of sites of memory—symbolism, materiality, and temporality—are incorporated in the sacred sites of the Maya of Highland Guatemala. Most ethnographers of the Maya recognize the close relationship between Maya cultural meanings and specific places.¹ Sacred sites, particularly in the highlands (Fruhsorge 2007; Ivic de Monterroso 2004), are often associated with mountains, caves, and rivers (e.g., Vogt 1969) that probably have great time depth of sacredness in Maya thought (Brady and Ashmore 1999). The definition of the community that holds these sites of memory to be sacred is an open question, given the complexity of defining “Maya” (Bastos and Camus 2003; Gabbert 2001) or related ethnic (Wilson 1995) or closed corporate (Wolf 1957) communities.

Sites of memory in the Maya Highlands in particular must be understood as locales where ritual practices occur; they become sacred sites through ceremonial activities. Through landscapes, histories are tied to specific, fixed, and material places (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:13), creating permanence in sites of memory that is accessed through practices in order to construct and reinforce histories. A sacred place without ritual activity ceases to be remembered and loses its importance as a repository of memory; it is forgotten. Additionally, practices by individuals integrate that person into a broader social narrative and memory. Individual actions tie contingent, personal recollections to the shared cultural understanding of what a sacred site represents, molding that memory in the process. As Kay Warren (1992:194–195) states of religious processions among the highland Maya, “remembering [is] a specialized activity in a system in which religious participation in processions and rituals [is] of primary importance for most individuals ... what matter[s] [is] that different [individual] wills manage to converge to celebrate the commonality of place that define[s] their community.”

JAKALTEK SITES OF MEMORY

These aspects of social memory—symbolism, materiality, and temporality—can be illustrated through an examination of three sacred sites among the Jakalteq Maya of the western highlands of Guatemala (Figure 1). Centered around the modern town of

¹ The examination of the relationship among culture, space, and place has a long history in Maya ethnography. It includes structural relationships in communities (Brintnall 1979), symbolic aspects of landscape and human-land relationships (LaFarge 1947; Oakes 1951; Watanabe 1992), spatial relationships between communities and global processes (Fischer 2001; Nash 2001), sociopolitical spatial relationship (Roys 1957), and territoriality and identity (Tax 1937; Wilson 1995; Wolf 1957), among others.



Figure 1. Map of Guatemala Highlands, indicating locations mentioned in the text.

Jacaltenango in the Cuchumatán Mountains of the Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala,² the Jakalteq Maya are also known as the Huista and speak Popti' (or Jakalteq). The Jakalteq have been the objects of study by Western researchers of culture (Casaverde 1976; LaFarge and Byers 1931, 1997) and history (Borgstede and Romero 2003, 2004; Collins 1980) as well as Jakalteq Maya researchers (Asociación Jacalteca 1990; Montejo 2005; Montejo Diaz 1998a, 1998b). Recent research on the archaeology of the Huista region (Borgstede 2004) has shown that there is, not surprisingly, a close relationship between the Jakalteq community's understanding of the past and the archaeological heritage of the region. The correlation is best represented by the use and remembrance of sacred sites, the majority of which are also archaeological sites.³

Sacred sites are common throughout the Jakalteq region and are most often marked by the erection of one or more crosses. The cross, as a sacred symbol of Catholicism with syncretic elements of pre-Columbian ideology, has developed into a symbol of sacredness with meaning beyond merely Christ's crucifixion (LaFarge and Byers 1997:190). Crosses are ubiquitous throughout the Jakalteq landscape, marking both secular space, when functioning to mark territorial boundaries or *mojones*, and sacred space, when marking sacred sites as well as pilgrimage routes. As Casaverde (1976:86) states:

Crosses are *tz'unu* "planted" in strategic places ... which are believed to protect the settlement [of Jacaltenango]. [These crosses] symbolize the unity and identity of the Jacaltenango [community] members. ... Similarly, crosses are "planted" on specific places along trails. ... Alcaldes rezadores of the [Jakalteq community] perform rituals to these crosses on behalf

² The Huista region includes the modern municipios of Jacaltenango, Concepción Huista, San Antonio Huista, Santa Ana Huista, as well as parts of Nentón, the towns of San Andrés Huista and San Marcos Huista, and in Guadalupe Victoria, Chiapas, Mexico (Asociación Jacalteca 1990).

³ Archaeological sites are defined as locales of evidence of pre-Columbian occupation and/or use in various forms such as architecture (mounds, walls, etc.), art (rock paintings, carvings, etc.), activity areas (e.g., lithic debitage, ceramics), or other activities (e.g., ritual cave use).

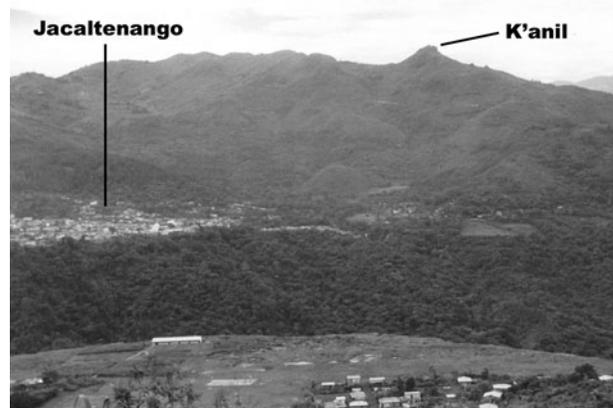


Figure 2. View of K'anil, located on mountaintop, and Jacaltenango, facing south (photo by author).

of [community] members ... Crosses serve as markers of sacred places. Thus all the sacred places are marked by wooden crosses that serve as shrines, in front of which rituals and prayers are performed.

Because Jakalteq sacred sites are usually archaeological sites, social memory maintains the cultural and historical importance of a locale, or at least actively to remember places. Sacred sites also have local, community-based relevance. That is, they are understood to mean something in local lives, pasts, or memories; they are situated where they are for a particular, socially rationalized, and explicable reason. Casaverde (1976:78a) provides a partial map of Jakalteq sacred places, but here I will discuss three that underscore elements of social memory and archaeology in Jakalteq culture. Not coincidentally, these sites reflect a Jakalteq tradition of marking sacred space on mountains, along river valleys, and in caves, locations often associated with ancient (e.g., Brady and Ashmore 1999) and modern Maya (e.g., Vogt 1969).

The first site, K'anil, is located on a mountaintop in the center of the Huista territory and is arguably the most important sacred site in the Jakalteq region (Figure 2). The archaeological site consists of a series of low and medium-sized (3–5 m in height) platform mounds constructed of cut stone and river cobbles, spread along the relatively flat apex of the mountain, dating to the Postclassic period (A.D. 1000–1500). The site overlooks two river valleys, the Río Azul and the Río Huista, that are occupied by the Huista. It is associated with (and named after) a principal protagonist in Jakalteq history (Casaverde 1976:32; Montejo 1984), who is also a Yearbearer in the Jakalteq calendar (LaFarge and Byers 1997:198). The understanding of the site, as of the deity itself, is variable, with multiple meanings. Casaverde (1976:33), for example, lists four different meanings for K'anil (founding ancestor, protector god, war god, and Yearbearer). While Montejo (1984) provides another robust characterization of K'anil, Jakalteq oral histories provide other versions for K'anil as well. While the narratives themselves are important in Jakalteq culture, with regard to social memory, the salient point is that they tie K'anil to the mountain on which the archaeological/sacred site is located.

The variable meanings of the sacred site are reflected in the different acts and rituals carried out at the site. Both individuals and groups perform at K'anil, with varying motives and understandings of the site's role. Individual acts are often one of two types: petitions or respects. Petitions refer to individuals requesting

particular outcomes, such as crop fertility, healthy childbirth, or successful marriage, drawing on the guise of K'anil as community protector. Petitions can be made by community members or mitigated through an *alcalde rezador*. Respects refer to prayers and rituals associated with other, nonpetition acts, particularly the remembrance of ancestors, both specific (grandfathers, mothers, other lineal relatives) and general (non-named community ancestors, or *nuestros antepasados*). Social acts often revolve around the activities of *cofradías*, or religious groups organized under the rubric of the Catholic Church. These acts are often syncretic, combining indigenous and Catholic symbols, practices, and meanings. These social groups are integrated into a broader civic-religious hierarchy (for other highland Maya examples, see Cancian 1965; Tax 1937) operating in Jacaltenango and their meaning and function are dependent upon the operation of the hierarchy as a whole. As with individual acts, the social groups also carry out petitions and respects but are dedicated to the specific roles of the *cofradía* within the system. Importantly, all of these acts reference the role of K'anil in Jakalteq history, primarily as protector of the pueblo. This protector guise is based on the memory of K'anil's role in the town's founding.

An understanding of the importance of both the sacred site and its dedicated protagonist are required for inclusion in a Jakalteq identity. That is, the meaning associated with the site is a rather clear boundary marker for distinguishing authentic "Jakaltekos" from noncommunity members. This is in contrast to another sacred site, Yul Ha' (discussed below), which is of significance outside the Jakalteq community to members of the neighboring towns of San Miguel Acatán and Todos Santos Cuchumatán. Narratives attached to K'anil the protagonist and K'anil the sacred site, which are nearly indistinguishable, are understood less as history (in the Western, academic, objective sense) and more as a reinforcement of Jakalteq identity and cultural continuity between past and present. The fact that the sacred site of K'anil is an archaeological site dating to the Postclassic period reinforces this continuity and suggests collective memory with substantial time depth; the continued use and importance of the site over time shows that the community has collectively remembered the site, claiming it territorially and ideologically in the past and present.

Of equal importance are the acts that are carried out at the site, which connect the present of the modern Maya with the past and revered ancestors. While reverence for ancestors has long been recognized as an important aspect of Maya culture in both the past (McAnany 1995) and the present (Brintnall 1979; Nash 1970), its role in connecting one with the other is understudied (but see Wilk 1985). It is at sacred sites such as K'anil that this process occurs in everyday practice in the Jakalteq world, stressing cultural continuity and social memory through both known, named ancestors and general, nonspecific ancestors.⁴ As Van Dyke and Alcock (2003:3) state, "The construction of social memory can involve direct connections to ancestors in a remembered past, or it can involve more general links to a vague mythological antiquity, often based on the reinterpretation of monuments or landscapes."

⁴ Casaverde (1976:23–24) named the Jakalteq descent system "omnilineal" based on (a) a belief in common Jakalteq ancestry from a founding couple and (b) limited interest in kinship relation earlier than great-grandparents. He states, "The span of actual genealogical reckoning is shallow, seldom more than three or four generations. A person can easily name his (or her) two parents and four grandparents, but few people remember all their eight great-grandparents. More importantly, they are not interested in doing so."

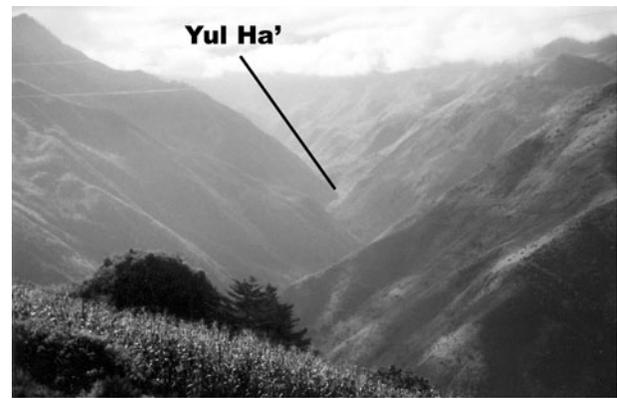


Figure 3. View of Yul Ha', located at base of a river valley, facing east (photo by author).

The second site—Yul Ha'—is located at the base of a river valley (Figure 3) and holds the burial places of the male and female founding couple of the Jakalteq ethnic group. These two figures are purportedly buried in mounds about 300m apart alongside an important river through Jakalteq territory near the river's source. The two figures are considered the founders of the Jakalteq pueblo as well as the founders of the *raza*, or ethnic group, of San Miguel Acatán (the Acatec Maya, close neighbors of the Jakalteq Maya). The locale is a sacred site for the Jakalteks and is often visited by people of San Miguel Acatán and Todos Santos Cuchumatán. The narrative associated with Yul Ha' revolves around a first couple who traveled from the (vaguely defined) North to settle at the site after undergoing a number of stops and trials. They then founded, by various means, the towns of Jacaltenango and San Miguel Acatán in their current locations. A version of the narrative is known to all Jakalteq community members, and it has much in common with the founding story recorded in the Popol Vuh of the K'ich'e Maya. In addition to association with the founding couple, Yul Ha' is an archaeological site, dating to the early Postclassic period (A.D. 1000–1250).

This sacred site is closely associated with a particular past of the Jakalteks and one of the most important sites of memory in the region. It is tied to ancestors—the founding couple—and is gendered—the founding father and mother are buried in separate, known locations at the site. Rituals performed at the site are both individual and social, in a manner similar to those at K'anil. Also similar to K'anil, access to the site is restricted, not by institutional means (fences, tolls, permits, and so on), but by topography. Until recently, both sites could only be reached via long and difficult treks, up a mountain in the case of K'anil and deep into a valley in the case of Yul Ha'. Inaccessibility reinforced the importance of the ritual act of reaching the place, and the pilgrimage to the site became an important component of the site's sacredness.

Yul Ha', as with K'anil, perpetuates itself through its association with the ancestors and their importance in social memory. Yul Ha' is associated with a more specific past, or events in the past—that of the founding of the town of Jacaltenango. The past is accessed through the act of remembering the individuals involved in the founding, the first mother and first father. This past is less "messy"; there is a more generally accepted and recounted version of the narrative. The ability to be able to point to a knowable past, as well as to locales where key events took place, is viewed

as vital to the legitimization of the past itself as well as the cohesion of the group relying on that past. For the Jakalteks, who are taught versions of Spanish and European history in school, there is a certain amount of cultural validation in the ability to index a uniquely Jakaltek past and where events occurred (Silvestre [2000] and Borgstede and Silvestre [2002] examined Jakaltek history and education). The reinforcement of this history is an important reason for a focus on political action in the present to reclaim sacred sites across the highlands by various Maya groups.

A third sacred site is a cave that was recently rediscovered and sacralized by the Jakaltek community. There is an abundance of caves in the Jakaltek region, many of which have evidence of pre-Columbian occupation and use. While constructing a road, workmen discovered a cave that contained a number of pre-Columbian artifacts, including ceramic bowls and jars, greenstone celts, and musical instruments (flutes and drums), as well as human remains. After some of the objects were removed, community members sealed the entrance and constructed a shrine at the site. The shrine consists of an open-air pavilion, a cement patio, and two crosses. This effort sacralized the site which is now incorporated into the corpus of sacred sites in the region.

The cave underscores two important points concerning sites of memory among the Jakalteks. First, evidence of past, pre-Columbian use is usually sufficient for beginning the process of sacralization of a place. That is, most archaeological sites, by virtue of containing evidence of the past, are candidates for sacred places. An open issue, however, is the decision-making process by which one archaeological site is chosen as a sacred site over another, equally viable candidate. In the Jakaltek region, the majority of sacred sites are archaeological sites, but not all archaeological sites are sacred sites. In the case of the cave site, part of its sacredness is based on archaeological evidence; it referenced, through material objects, the Jakaltek past and the ancestors inhabiting that past. The presence of human remains, importantly, reinforces the connection of the site to community ancestors. Combined with this, however, was the context of community awareness, publicity, location, and other factors that generated an ideal situation for the sacralization of this particular place at this particular time.

The elevation of the cave as a sacred site highlights the active and ongoing nature of sites of memory. There is a process, whether explicitly stated or not, of sacralization of locales that plays out through various community acts: discovery, raising of awareness, conviction of importance, material reinforcement (construction of buildings, erection of crosses, etc.). Many different locations have the potential to become sacred sites, provided that they fulfill certain community-determined criteria. In Jacaltenango, one important criterion, although not the only one or necessarily the most important, is archaeological evidence. It stresses the connection between the modern community and its roots in the past. The fact that an archaeological site, even a recently discovered one, can be sacralized and obtain a place in the social memory of the community has important implications, including for ethical archaeological practice in the Maya Highlands.

Each of the three Jakaltek sacred sites displays the characteristics of sites of memory. Each place, in its variations, highlights different aspects of sites of memory. K'anil encapsulates variable narratives, but all connect past with present. Yul Ha' exemplifies a more fixed history and one that involves the development of, and appreciation for, a widely accepted or shared Jakaltek history. And the cave site provides an example of process in sacred site construction and

development, reinforcing the nonstatic, nonessentialist nature of sites of memory and Jakaltek culture.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this examination is not to provide a highland Maya analogy for interpreting sites of the Classic period. Too often the modern Maya are seen by archaeologists as sources of uncritical, ahistorical analogies for interpretation or hypothesis testing, which reinforces cultural essentialism at the expense of understanding the complex historical and cultural trajectories that connect ancient and modern Maya (Borgstede and Yaeger 2008). Rather, the intent is to examine the relationship between social memory, sacred sites, and archaeological resources in the present. One aspect of the significance of the relationships lies in its implications for the practice of archaeology in Guatemala. The social context of archaeological practice among the Maya is gradually shifting, due to pan-Maya organizing (Arias 2006; Bastos and Camus 2003, 2004; Cojtí Cuxil 1995; Macleod 2006; Montejo 2005; Warren 1998), the relationship between archaeologists and local communities (Ardren 2002; Del Cid and Demarest 2004; Pyburn 2004; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004), international and national forces (Magnoni et al. 2007; Cojtí Ren 2006), and other factors. Sacred sites, which are fundamentally tied to social memory, retain a prominent position in modern Maya cosmology (Bastos and Camus 2003) and will continue to impact decisions regarding archaeological sites in Guatemala.

As the example of the cave suggests, sacred sites can be created in the present, raising the question of sacredness in ongoing archaeological research in the highlands and elsewhere. In the Jakaltek example, the cave site was uncovered accidentally, but systematic archaeological investigations and continuing community development and population growth throughout the Maya Highlands are sure to uncover more places with archaeological remains in a wide range of categories (including caves and human remains). Because these places have the potential to become sacralized, dialogue and collaboration among stakeholding groups is imperative. As sites of memory are negotiated in the present, it is important to realize that the process is neither random nor entirely constructed; it follows identifiable lines, drawing upon cultural conceptions, norms, and histories already extant, occasionally even drawing on other sites of memory. In the Jakaltek example, K'anil and Yul Ha' are related through a common past. In addition, Jakaltek sacred sites cannot be essentialized into "timeless" locales of memory where narratives do not change, even as they draw upon both the past and the present. Researchers must understand social memory as a constructive process that is enacted at specific locales for specific purposes. Sacred sites, as with other aspects of Maya culture, are a cross between structure and process, agency and institution, which by association calls for a balanced, nuanced approach in archaeological investigations (Hegmon 2003).

In addition, the value of archaeological resources as sites of memory resonates with many Maya groups' desire for community-based histories, often built in a Western mode. As pointed out above, social memories encoded in sacred sites are often the only surviving versions of the past available to a community. Van Dyke and Alcock (2003:3) state that "Although in archaeological contexts it is easiest to see the top-down machinations of elite groups using memory to [further their own] ends, memory is also employed in the service of resistance[.]" that is, to validate alternative, community-based histories. Maya public intellectuals have argued for protecting these

histories (Bastos and Camus 2003; Cojtí Cuxil 1995; Montejo 2005) and the sites used to remember them. By valorizing and protecting these versions of the past, pan-Maya leaders hope to reinforce claims on political and economic power in the present. Sacred sites, along with Maya languages, have become a common symbol of Maya activism in Guatemala. The role of archaeology in this discussion is evolving and potentially contentious (Cojti Ren 2006; Ivic de Monterroso 2004). Ultimately, history is a key aspect in identity formation and the retention of a distinctly Maya history is an important component of the validation and legitimization of Maya culture in the modern Guatemalan state.

Halbwachs (1992) and other scholars of social memory (e.g., Connerton 1989) pointed out that while different groups share different memories, those memories both shape and are shaped by actions in the present. This recursivity has implications for the practice of archaeology, particularly when, for example, Western archaeologists are viewed as a distinct community with a social memory of its own. Such a community draws upon a different social memory to

interpret actions in the present. The archaeological and descendant Maya communities, neither monolithic nor atomistic, will draw upon their distinct social memories to interpret and understand both the past and places associated with the past. And while the understandings are different, mutual interests suggest a point of departure for dialogue.

These limited examples highlight the close relationship between archaeological practice and the social contexts in which it is carried out. Maya sacred sites, as sites of memory and repositories of culturally-specific versions of the past, have an important role to play in the political, economic, and cultural movements now transpiring in Guatemala. That role is not secondary; in fact, sacred sites are a critical aspect of the pan-Maya agenda. When framed as archaeological sites and the validity that goes with that ascription, the relationship between archaeological definitions and understandings and culturally Maya ones becomes increasingly salient. It is within this context that archaeology will operate within the Maya Highlands for years to come.

RESUMEN

Este artículo aplica técnicas antropológicas y sociológicas a la memoria social para analizar la importancia y ubicación de lugares sagrados de los mayas jakaltekos de las tierras altas occidentales de Guatemala. Después de un resumen breve de la teoría asociada con memoria social, se discute el papel de memoria social en comunidades y se sugiere que los lugares sagrados son lugares de memoria en comunidades de las tierras altas Mayas. Lugares de memoria proveen la evidencia física o material de historias alternativas además de conectar el pasado y el presente con conexiones culturales y sociales.

Basado en investigaciones arqueológicas y la historia oral, la conexión entre el pasado y el presente se analiza para la comunidad maya jakalteka (Jacaltenango) en las tierras altas occidentales de Guatemala. Tres lugares sagrados distintos son discutidos, incluyendo la evidencia arqueológica,

importancia en historias (orales y etnohistóricas), creación y situación como lugar sagrado, y enlaces a la memoria social de la comunidad. El primer lugar está ubicado encima de una montaña, contiene evidencia arqueológica del periodo postclásico, y se incorpora en la identidad comunitaria. El segundo lugar, también un sitio arqueológico, se ubica en el valle de un río y tiene importancia con otras comunidades mayas además de la comunidad jakalteka. El tercer lugar es una cueva recién descubierta que muestra la posibilidad de la creación de lugares sagrados nuevos. En conclusión, lugares sagrados y memoria social se ven como partes integrales del activismo indígena y la política de identidad como también son parte del entendimiento del contexto social de la práctica de arqueología en las tierras altas mayas de Guatemala.

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THE MYSTERIOUS AND THE INVISIBLE: WRITING HISTORY IN AND OF COLONIAL YUCATAN

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Abstract

This brief essay argues that studying the non-Spanish inhabitants of Yucatan's past requires bridging the social distance generated by differences of time and culture and that the specific nature of that distance must first be understood. With respect to the Mayas, their mystique in the modern popular and academic imaginations is as much the creation of Maya elites in ancient and colonial times as it is the product of archaeologists and historians. To demystify the Maya, we must engage mundane as well as exotic sources and be aware of the obfuscating influence of those who interpreted Maya culture before us. A complete picture of colonial Yucatan and of the colonial Mayas must include Afro-Yucatecans, or Africans and their descendents in the peninsula. Rendered invisible by historical processes and lack of scholarly attention, Afro-Yucatecans must be fully examined if we are to fully grasp the Yucatec experience, including the Yucatec Maya experience.

A FAMOUS PAST

Peter Hervik describes the Yucatec Maya as “a native group with a famous past” in the opening line of his book on “social categories and lived identity in Yucatan” (1999:xix). His study explores the apparent identity disconnection between two concepts and categories of Maya, a disconnection pursued deeper into the historical record in a recent book by Wolfgang Gabbert (2004). These and other anthropologists have observed that today's “native groups” often call themselves *mestizos* and that many “think of the Maya as their long dead ancestors.” That connection serves to keep those ancestors alive in some sense, just as they are kept alive in the Maya world created by academia and tourism. This is more than just a case of modern Mayas “living with the ancestors,” to borrow Patricia McNany's (1995) phrase. As presented to the public, these ancient Mayas are not only buried inside the pyramid (or under the living room floor), but like the legendary El Cid (nailed to his horse to rally his followers and overawe the enemy), Maya lords are paraded posthumously through ancient sites to rally the tourists and overawe readers of *National Geographic*.

It may be just a matter of time before the reconstruction of the past at sites like Chichen Itza includes full-scale reenactments of the kind popular at Civil War battlegrounds. When this happens, scholars will not be able to resist debating issues of “accuracy” and “authenticity” but most likely in private; publicly, anthropologists and archaeologists will surely acknowledge that such reenactments reflect the importance of “diverse interests in the past” and the fact that scholars do not enjoy a monopoly on interpreting the past (I borrow here from the MATRIX project's principles for curriculum reform; see www.indiana.edu/~arch/saa/matrix/homepage.html).

Similarly, historians recognize that colonial documents are not our property; they are part of the national patrimony. But historians do not often debate what “national patrimony” means. We may sympathize with the idea (even the principle) that today's Mayas in some way own the manuscripts written by their ancestors, but how is that ancestral link defined, and who therefore “owns” documents about Spaniards and Afro-Yucatecans (or should that be “Spaniards” and “Afro-Yucatecans”)? And what of the fact that the further documents traveled from towns and villages in Yucatan, the better they survived? (Merida is good, Mexico City better, Seville and Madrid better still; and just as good is a university library in a northern climate—see Figures 1, 2, and 3.) Public archives created by modern nations have allowed scholars, including (perhaps especially) foreign ones, to appropriate and interpret the pre-national past, often for the simple pleasure of posing riddles, constructing solutions, and making a living from doing so. When David Webster writes that “we have collectively appropriated” the Maya “for our larger cultural uses,” his “we” is not royal but confessional. “We expect things Maya to be beautiful, exotic, and dramatic,” he continues, “and especially mysterious” (Webster 2002:29).

If the Mayas are, rather predictably, “the mysterious” of this essay's title, then who are “the invisible”? You may have assumed, quite reasonably, that the term is a reference to some other aspect of Maya history or historiography. In fact, it is a reference to that group of people who remain the least studied and most ignored in Yucatan's history—Africans and their colonial-era descendents. Indeed, this is true not just of Yucatan but of the larger region of Mexico and Central America; some quarter of a million Africans were brought as slaves into that larger region in the century and a half after the voyages of Columbus, making New Spain as big a stimulus to the early trans-Atlantic slave trade as Brazil, and creating a sector of colonial society in the viceroyalty of New Spain more demographically significant than that of the

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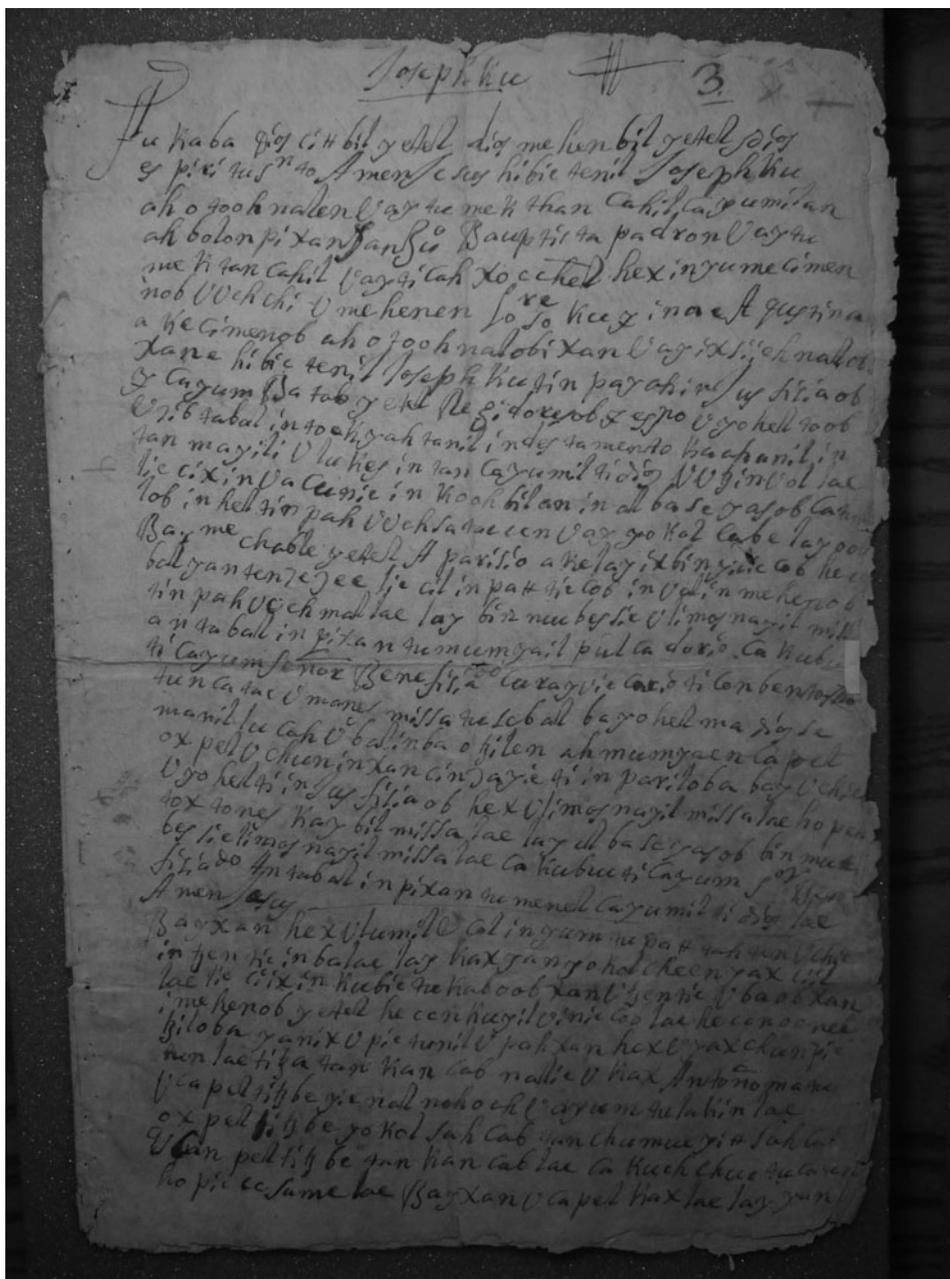


Figure 1. Folio 1r of the will of Joseph Ku, dictated in 1712 and written down by the notary of the cah of Xocché'l. An example of an archive-preserved, mundane document in Yucatec Maya. Reproduced by permission of the Princeton University Library, Special Collections [Mesoamerican MSS #5].

Spanish settlers (Vinson and Restall 2009). In Yucatan, between the mid-sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the number of people of African descent (from black slaves to free mulattoes) was comparable to the number of Spaniards in the colony; both, of course, were greatly outnumbered by Mayas (at a Spanish-African-Maya ratio of roughly 1:1:500 at the time of the Spanish invasion, evolved by ca.1800 to a ratio of Spaniards to Africans-and-mulattoes to Mayas-and-mestizos of 1:1:6) (Restall 2009:26–33). Africans, in other words, cannot be dismissed simply on the grounds that there were not many of them.

In his *Breve historia de Yucatán*, the eminent Yucatec historian Sergio Quezada (2001) divides the peninsula's history into thirteen

chapters, containing 97 subheaded sections. The book's genre is that of a textbook, without footnotes or direct historiographical references outside the brief "bibliografía comentada" at the end; but in effect it is an expert summary of the state of Yucatec studies at the end of the twentieth century. As a reflection of that multidisciplinary historiography, Quezada's treatment of Mayas and Africans is of some significance. Mayas appear in his book in four guises: first, as the ancient Maya, a distant people accessed through archaeology and subject to an organic pattern of rise and fall; second, as the colonial Maya, a subordinated people accessed through historical records and characterized primarily by their role as laborers and taxpayers; third, as the *cruzob*, the rebel Maya

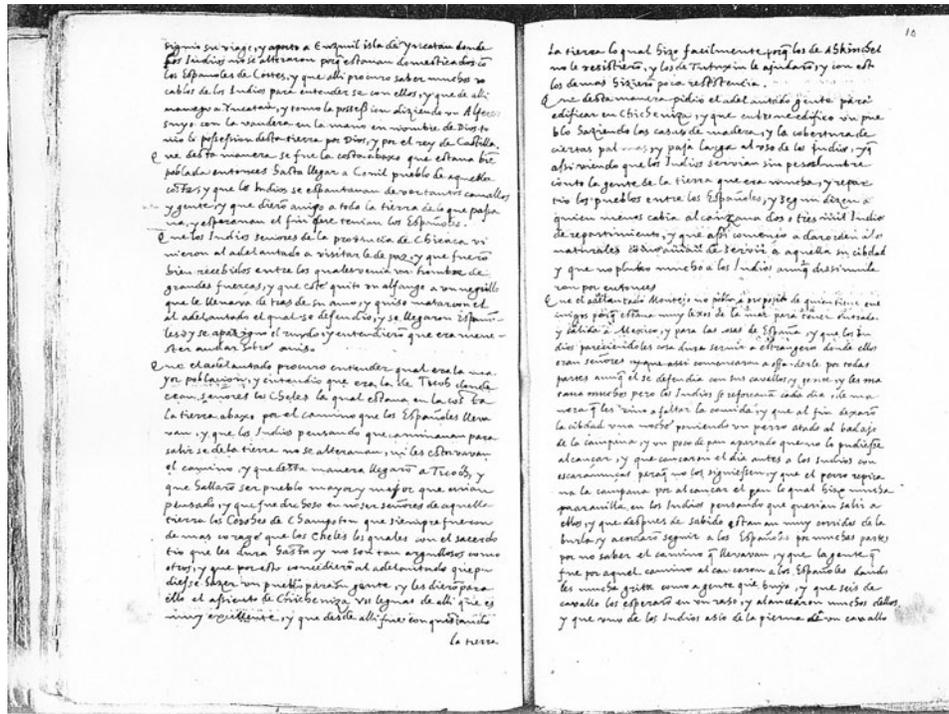


Figure 2. Folios 9v–10r of Landa’s *Relación*, which is not a book written by Landa in 1566, as often claimed, but an eighteenth-century copy of excerpts from a long-lost larger work; some passages, like the one shown here, are a copyist’s summary of sections of the larger work. The upper paragraph on folio 9v is a rare reference to the earliest medium of interaction between Mayas and Africans—that of military encounters between Maya warriors and black conquistadors. Reproduced by permission of the Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid (MS 9-5153).

resisting both the new national project and the legacy of colonial exploitation that preceded it; and fourth, as the modern Maya, a fragmented peoples whose various pieces—*maquiladora* workers, *ch’a chak* ceremonialists, *zona turística* guides—no longer seem to belong to the same puzzle. Quezada avoids terms like “puzzle” or “mystique,” but he cannot escape the fact that Maya history has been structured around puzzles and mysteries. Of the book’s 97 sections, about a quarter refer to Mayas directly or indirectly in their section headings, and Mayas and *mestizos* (in the modern Yucatec sense) are discussed in many additional sections. In contrast, not a single section heading refers in any way to Afro-Yucatecans, and there are but a few cursory mentions of African slavery in the book’s colonial chapters (Quezada 2001).

I will only briefly refer later to what happened in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that made the Maya mysterious and kept Afro-Yucatecans invisible. There is too much written on the former subject to be easily summarized, especially as discussion of it tends to produce controversy more than consensus. I was flummoxed, for example, when my argument that colonial-era Mayas did not think of themselves as “Maya” was attacked at a conference as showing “lack of respect” for Maya people. I had not intended to strip Mayas of their historic identity, merely to explain how three centuries of written sources in Yucatec Maya proved that colonial-era Mayas did not claim a “Maya” identity. Rather they identified themselves in terms of affiliations of patronym group (*ch’ibal*) and municipal community (*cah*). Because my argument was based on mundane Maya-language sources (e.g., Figure 1), I naïvely thought that made it unprovocative. Students of the Colonial period seldom encounter controversy, but perhaps writing

about colonial history becomes potentially contentious when a simple link between the Classic period and the present is threatened.¹

Modern identity politics are not the only category of problems presented by trying not to call colonial-era Mayas “Mayas.” The more historians examine colonial Yucatan, the more we become aware of the weakness of our well-used fundamental categories of identity—“Maya,” “Spaniard,” even “colonial”—while at the same time being obliged to invent new ones—such as “Afro-Yucatecan.” The miscegenative nature of colonial society—the category-blurring nature of sexual, social, cultural, economic, and political relations among putatively separate socio-racial groups—has forced historians to hold up terms of identity in one hand while chipping away at them with the other.

As we stare across the distance between us and those who lived in the colonial past, all these various filters—Maya mystery, Afro-Yucatecan invisibility, the plasticity of colonial-era terms of identity, contemporary identity politics, the challenges of the archives—serve to obscure one simple long-lost fact. That fact is that we cannot truly understand either Mayas or Afro-Yucatecans without understanding both—their origins, separate histories, interactions, and, ultimately, their common history.

THE LANDA LEGACY

Probably the most obvious colonial culprit, the founder of unsatisfactory modern notions about the Maya, is Fray Diego de Landa. But Landa is an obvious culprit not because of what he wrote or whom he influenced in the Colonial period, but because of how the Landa known to anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians

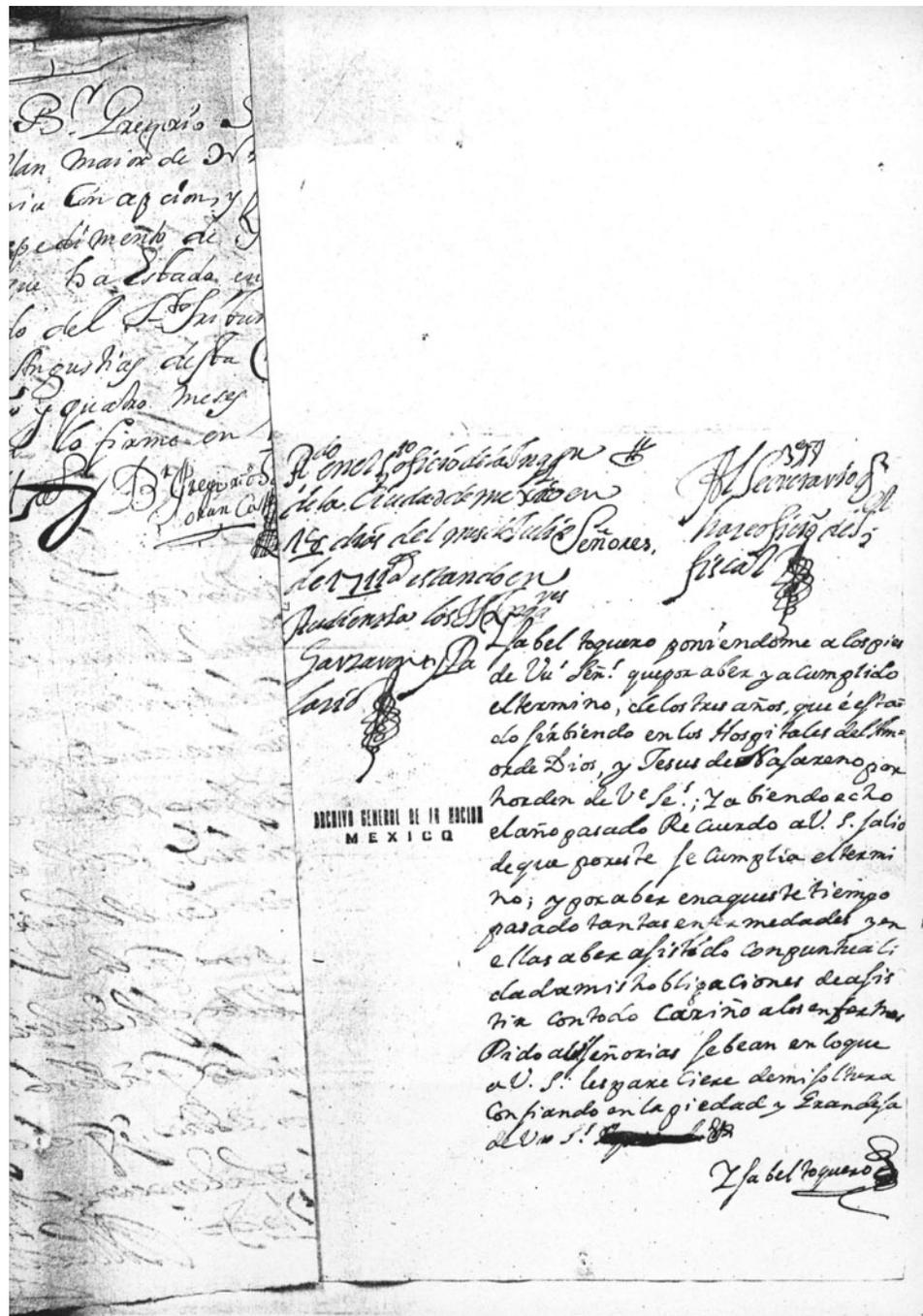


Figure 3. Folio 397r of the Inquisition's bigamy investigation into Isabel Toquero, in *Inquisición* 519 in the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City. Toquero was an Afro-Yucatecan woman born in the cah of Dzonotake in 1675, arrested in Merida in 1703 under accusation of bigamy, and subsequently convicted and imprisoned in Mexico City. Inquisition files are among the richest source materials on Afro-Yucatecan lives. The folio above is a request for release written by Toquero herself (her story is told in Restall 2009:200–204, 234–246). Reproduced by permission of the AGN.

was constructed in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hervik, for example, blames *National Geographic* (first) and Landa (second) for the “external construction” of “the Maya” (his scare quotes), but for Hervik the problem lies as much in the modern use of Landa’s writings as it does in the historical deeds of Landa himself. Landa’s “socially distant view” has done most of its damage by being combined, after the discovery of his

Relación in the 1860s, with “a different socially distant view that places the Maya within a global evolutionary framework” (Hervik 1999:60). Hervik is right to separate what Landa wrote from how his *Relación* has been used, but he *understates* that separation. Like so many scholars before him—from France Scholes and Ralph Roys in the 1930s to Inga Clendinnen in the 1980s—he is misled by published editions of the *Relación* into viewing it as a

book written by Landa. In this view, Landa wrote his book in 1566, partly to defend his anti-idoltry campaign of 1562, partly to express his ethnographic fascination with the Maya. This is not to blame any of them, from Roys to Hervik; if fingers were to be pointed, they should be aimed at Alfred Tozzer, whose own ethnographic fascination with the Maya blinds the reader to what Landa actually wrote and might have meant by it (Tozzer 1941).

In fact, the friar wrote no such book in 1566 or any single year. Rather, he compiled over several decades a compendium or *Recopilación* of sources on Yucatec history; some of the sources were written by him, some by others. This *Recopilación* was read and cited in the seventeenth century but then disappeared for good; in the eighteenth century, various notaries or friars on separate occasions copied passages from whatever copy or pieces of the *Recopilación* had survived to that point. Those passages, what we call the *Relación*, do not come close to having the textual integrity of “a book written by Landa” (Restall and Chuchiak 2002) (see Figure 2).

This does not negate Hervik’s point about “social distance” in the *Relación*, but it changes the nature of that distance and how we might use it to understand how Yucatec history has been produced. Scholars who have used and abused Landa (myself included) have emphasized the conundrum of Landa as both torturer and doting ethnographer of the Maya; the friar and his “book” have been built and billed as a mystery (Hervik 1999:78–81, Clendinnen 2003:61–128; Restall 1998:144–146, 151–168; Restall, Chuchiak, and Solari forthcoming 2012).

But the more Landa is placed within a widening series of historical contexts, the less mysterious and the more mundane he becomes. Two examples must suffice. First, he was not the only Franciscan to torture Mayas and burn codices in Yucatan; his campaign of 1562 was larger than those that followed, but Spanish priests in Yucatan periodically bullied, bribed, and in various ways coerced Mayas into turning over books and “idols” for destruction for almost two hundred years after Landa’s famous *auto-da-fé* (Chuchiak 2000). Nor, of course, was Yucatan the only Spanish American site of anti-idoltry campaigns (see, for example, chapters in Griffiths and Fernando Cervantes 1999).

Second, Landa was hardly unique in the tough-love ambiguity of his attitude toward the Mayas or, put more broadly, toward native subjects of colonialism. We can find the same attitude among Landa’s successors in Yucatan; Bishop Juan Gómez de Parada, for example, in his 570-page diocesan synod of 1722, portrayed *los miserables Yndios* (“the wretched Indians”), as he consistently referred to the Mayas, as a noble but child-like people both worthy of and in need of protection from the Spanish and Afro-Yucatecan colonists (Centro de Apoyo a la Investigación Histórica de Yucatán, Mérida, Colonial MSS #45). We can also find the same attitude in numerous other colonial situations; the most efficient way of making this point may be to compare Landa not to later colonial writers (as he has tended to be pulled toward the present and made inappropriately modern)² but to a European who wrote of colonial subjects fifteen centuries before Landa did. In his *Agricola* and *Germania*, the Roman historian Tacitus displayed a remarkably similar ambiguity toward both the process of conquest and colonization, and the nature of the people being thus subjected (Tacitus 1970).

While Tacitus was problematizing the barbarism of ancient Britons, Maya scribes were carving out—literally—an historical tradition of lordly legitimacy that, by the time Landa arrived in Yucatan, had developed into an attitude toward the past that was

rife with ambiguity, mystery, and social distance. In other words, the Maya themselves are as much responsible as Europeans are for the creation of a history drenched in mystery. Nowadays Mayanists take pains not to judge the elements of Maya history that seem contrived, constructed, or myth-like. Such elements, as recorded both hieroglyphically before the Conquest and alphabetically in the Colonial period, are usually characterized as simply reflecting a non-Western approach to the packaging of social memory or the construction of the historical record. In this view, Mayas (indeed, Mesoamericans) see time as cyclical rather than linear—although it is obvious that Mayas, early modern Spaniards, and we ourselves view time in both linear *and* cyclical terms (Restall 1998:41–43). It is also supposedly characteristically Mesoamerican to blur “myth” (metaphorical tales that could not have actually happened) and “history” (events supported by multiple lines of evidence). Dennis Tedlock (1985) has called this “mythistory.” But arguably, “Maya mythistory” is a mere alias for “Maya mystique.”

I have argued elsewhere that cultivating mystique was a deliberate and deep-rooted policy among the Yucatec Maya elite, and a key component of elite ideology and lordly legitimacy. Elite claims to foreign origins did not reflect a literal history of past migration from central Mexico or elsewhere—as almost all historians of the peninsula since Landa have assumed—but rather represented the assertion of an exclusive, sacred, even celestial connection to remote places and ancestors. The more deliberately distant and vague these origin sites and ancestors were, the better they evoked the supernatural connections that allowed rulers to transcend their earthly roles and distance themselves from the commoners—thereby simultaneously (and paradoxically) legitimizing their earthly roles as rulers over those commoners (Restall 2001b: 370–375). In various genres of colonial-era documents in Maya, including mundane materials such as land sale records, elites invoked their connection to specific ancestors and local places (Restall 1997:170–173, 196–200; 1998:77–143). The “mythistory” of elite origins was thus generated in order to inject mystery into the social distance between rulers and ruled. As further reflection of the pre-conquest roots of this ideology in Yucatan, when a new foreign elite arrived in the sixteenth century, Maya dynastic leaders exploited their association with the new elite to strengthen their local authority. Some adopted the name of Montejo, the conquering “dynasty,” or even “don Francisco de Montejo” as a first (Christian) name, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and adding to Maya lordly mystique (Restall 2001b:368–369).³

If it is social distance we are looking for in Maya-language sources, perhaps we need look no further than the *Books of Chilam Balam*. If archaeologists are somehow complicit in the creation of a Mayanist cult that draws energy from “the aura of ruins” (Castañeda 2002:1), secretly imagining piloting Luke Skywalker’s rebel fighter over the jungles of Tikal (Webster 2002: 29), then ethnohistorians are guilty of imposing an esoteric mystique on the colonial Maya through their fanciful interpretations of the nine surviving manuscripts named after the prophet *Balam*. Yet it would be facile to argue that the *Books* seem opaque simply because we are unable to understand them. The social distance is not only between us and the notaries who compiled the *Books*; there was also plenty of distance between those notaries and the sources—both Spanish and Maya, written and oral—that they sought to reconcile and preserve within some kind of coherent, syncretic whole. The editors of the longest *Chilam Balam* and the most recent to be published, Victoria Bricker and Helga-Maria Miram, present the *Kaua* as a

testament to “the process of syncretism” (Bricker and Miriam 2002: 85). A scholar of Claude Lévi-Strauss called the Frenchman’s life work “the result of a remarkable will to coherence” (Johnson 2003:191). The compilers of community copies of the *Chilam Balam* literature could be said to exhibit a will to syncretic coherence. No doubt Landa’s original long-lost *Recopilación* was the product of a similar will. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a century in Yucatan’s history that posed a greater challenge to coherent historical writing than the sixteenth.

DIGGING FOR DOCUMENTS

The production and transmission of history (or the codification of social memory; see Golden 2010) in sixteenth-century Yucatan posed a challenge of coherence to the “historians” of the time, from Landa to the successors of the eponymous prophet *Balam*. The challenge arose from the concatenation of sources. Source materials were disparate and bountiful in nature, representing various historical traditions and purposes. A small percentage of these sources have survived, but they are enough to present modern historians of Maya history with similar challenges. Scholars will always be drawn to the small number of “exotic” sources—*Chilam Balam* literature, codices, primordial titles—but the larger body of documentation written in Yucatec Maya from the late-sixteenth through late-nineteenth centuries amounts to thousands of extant items. The mundane material—wills, land sales, petitions, notarial records of various kinds—arguably pose challenges of interpretation just as great and have the potential to reveal just as much about the Maya experience as exotic sources. And while they may not serve to completely demystify the Mayas of the past (after all, would we really want that?), they certainly help us to better understand the nature of the distance between us and them (see Figure 1). (A more detailed comparison of sources on Maya “ethnohistory” and Yucatec “Afrohistory” is accessible online [Restall 2007].)

A scholar first entering the bountiful world of historical sources in the Yucatec Maya language, and about the colonial Mayas, is likely to be overwhelmed by its wealth. In contrast, historians of Afro-Yucatan have had the opposite problem—primary sources appear, at first, not to exist at all (which is perhaps why historians of Afro-Yucatan are so few in number).⁴ In fact, sometimes one simply needs to dig a little deeper. Over the past decade I have found hundreds of written sources on colonial Afro-Yucatan buried in dozens of archives in Yucatan, Mexico City, Spain, the United States, and even England (and no doubt I have only found a fraction of what exists; see Figure 3). In few cases were there obvious keywords, such as *negro* or *esclavo*, to lead the historian down the highway from catalogue to document; more often one is obliged to take the pleasurable but prolonged scenic route through parish records, criminal cases, Inquisition investigations, notarial records of sales and mortgages and tax payments, and disputes among Spaniards of all kinds, to discover the thousands of Afro-Yucatecans who have been waiting in the archives to be rediscovered and brought back to life (Restall 2007, 2009).

Put together, with a certain will to coherence, all these sources are gradually rendering the invisible visible while also offering clues as to why that invisibility persisted. To simplify, there are four reasons. First, the role of Africans in Spanish colonial society as slaves and servants denied them a corporate identity comparable to that of Maya communities or *cahob*, thus preventing the emergence of Afro-Yucatecan notaries or even many literates

(Afro-Yucatecans did produce their own written sources, but not often; see Figure 3). Colonial Yucatan was not a slave society; it was a society with slaves. This distinction means that the master-slave relationship was not the exemplar relationship in colonial Yucatan; the exemplar was the complex relationship between the small Spanish elite and the Maya majority, whose labor sustained the colony. That relationship was mediated partly by Maya elites and partly by Afro-Yucatecans. The latter, both enslaved and free, lived in what I have called “attached subordination” to the Spanish community (Restall 2009).

Second, as early colonial ideas about *casta* or socio-racial rank evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into modern concepts of race, racism against blacks emerged in Yucatan as it did throughout the Americas, taking the form of a denial that Afro-Yucatan had ever existed. The modern Mexican mythology of a nation forged from the meeting of two—not three—races and civilizations is reflected at the local level in Yucatan’s own Spanish-Maya origin myth.

Third, the process whereby Afro-Yucatan was gradually eclipsed was not disturbed or altered by abolition, which occurred with relatively little controversy, conflict, or drama in Yucatan (as in most parts of what became the Republic of Mexico). This was partly due to, fourth, the process of *mestizaje*. In addition to the intermixing of Afro-Yucatecans, Spaniards, and Mayas in the urban settings of Mérida and Campeche, there occurred a steady migration of Afro-Yucatecans into Maya villages (typically black and mulatto men who married Maya women); such migrants and their children were absorbed into Maya communities, effectively turning Yucatan’s Mayas into Afro-Mayas by the end of the Colonial period (Lutz and Restall 2005; Restall 2009). The combined impact of *mestizaje* and shifts in *casta* classifications helped turn Africans into mulattoes and eventually *mestizos*—a catch-all category that in the early nineteenth century came to include everyone in Yucatan that was not Spanish or Maya. The fact that today “Mayas” are often called “*mestizos*” underscores the extent to which this slippage of categories served to erase Afro-Yucatecans from the peninsula’s social memory.

Studying the non-Spanish inhabitants of Yucatan’s past requires not only bridging the social distance generated by differences of time and culture, but also grasping the specific nature of that distance. Because the Maya mystique in the modern imagination is as much the creation of ancient and colonial-era Maya elites as it is the product of scholars, we must move beyond exotic sources to engage the myriad extant mundane materials. But we must also cross an additional bridge and pay attention to “Afrohistory” as well as “ethnohistory.” If we can accept the latter as a codeword for the study of native peoples in the Americas, perhaps we can endorse the former as sibling code for studying African-descended peoples in the same colonies. Ideally, categories such as “Afrohistory” and “Afro-Maya” are temporary. The more we study them, the sooner we can move beyond them; the more we study Afro-Yucatecans and Afro-Mayas, the better we can understand “Mayas” in the Colonial period.

ALTERING HISTORY

In Alejo Carpentier’s novel *Los pasos perdidos*, the nameless protagonist travels into the jungles of Latin America to reach what he believes is the Valley-Where-Time-Has-Stopped. Here he sets out to write down his magnum opus, only to find that he has insufficient paper and must resort to erasing earlier passages in order to keep

composing. Eventually, out of desperation, the protagonist returns to the city for more paper and ink. But he is never again able to find the jungle refuge that is the source of his inspiration, and so his great work remains unfinished (first published in English as Carpentier 1956; also see Echeverría 1990:1–4).

Carpentier's metaphor of literary frustration works on various levels for historians of Yucatan: Are we up to the challenge of imagining a magnum opus, of finding sufficient source materials, of finding too many? Will words fail us, or will we fail to find their end? Whatever the problem and its concomitant solution, the fact remains that in working on Maya history, a scholar creates his or her own "memory" of how Mayas worked their own history. In working on Afro-Yucatecos (few of whom had the opportunity to compose their own documents), a scholar must create such a "memory" from how Spaniards recorded what Afro-Yucatecos said and did. We can search for our own Valley-Where-Time-Has-Stopped and bring extra paper and ink; we can dig deeper in the archives and exert a will to syncretic coherence. But we are still engaged in the process of imagining and constructing; we are still indulging our own version of what the prophet *Balam* did.

In the spirit of a will to syncretic coherence (or perhaps an eccentric interpretation of it), I would like to end with a reference

to the sixteenth-century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne has nothing whatsoever to say about Mayas, or Afro-Yucatecos, or Yucatan at all. But, in his essay *Of Cannibals*, he offers a relevant perspective on the process of historical production (or the effort to codify social memory). Cannibals were (and still are) notoriously mysterious and usually invisible, prompting Montaigne to comment on the difficulty of finding a "true witness." "For clever people," he remarks,

"observe more things and more curiously, but they interpret them; and to lend weight and conviction to their interpretation, they cannot help altering history a little. They never show you things the way they are.... We need a man either very honest, or so simple that he has not the stuff to build up false inventions and give them plausibility" (quoted in Davis 1987:111).

Our challenge, as students of Mayas, Afro-Mayas, and Afro-Yucatecos, is not to avoid "clever people" in the sources and find only "honest" or "simple" ones, but to understand the cleverness of witnesses, to accept the plausibility of their inventions, and to appreciate the altered state of history.

RESUMEN

En este breve ensayo se argumenta que el estudio de los habitantes no-españoles del Yucatán pasado requiere disminuir la distancia social generada por las diferencias de tiempo y de cultura pero que la naturaleza específica de esa distancia debe ser entendido. Con respecto a los mayas, su mística en la imaginación popular y académica es tanto la creación de elites mayas precoloniales y coloniales, ya que es el producto de los arqueólogos e historiadores. Para desmitificar los pueblos mayas, tenemos

que entablar fuentes mundanas así como exóticas y ser conscientes de la influencia de los que antes de nosotros han interpretado la cultura maya. Una imagen completa de Yucatán colonial y de los mayas coloniales debe incluir a afro-yucatecos, o los africanos y sus descendientes en la península. Hechos invisibles por los procesos históricos y la falta de atención académica, los afro-yucatecos deben ser ver si vamos a aprovechar plenamente la experiencia yucateca—incluida la experiencia de los mayas.

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self-promotional nature of the original paper helped me to find a somewhat more appropriate tone; and to Charles Golden for his patient persistence in keeping me a part of this special section project.

NOTES

¹ The conference was a special symposium on "New Perspectives on History in Yucatán," Yale University, 2000; my argument published as "The Janus Face of Maya Identity" (Restall 2001a), and more thoroughly as "Maya Ethnogenesis" in *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* (Restall 2004). An expanded version, coauthored with Wolfgang Gabbert, titled "Maya Ethnogenesis and Group Identity in Yucatan, 1500–1900," will appear in *'The Only True People': Linking Mayan Identities Past and Present*, edited by Bethany J. Myers and Lisa LeCount (forthcoming 2011).

It has long been conventional wisdom to see a contemporary of Landa's, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, as a founding figure in the history of modern anthropology and ethnography, and I used that argument to apply to both Sahagún and Landa in my "The Renaissance World from the West: Spanish America and the 'Real' Renaissance" (Restall

2002:80–82); but for a persuasive counter-argument on Sahagún that has inspired me to consider Landa as an "ancient" rather than "modern" figure, see Walden Browne 2000.

Spencer Delbridge is developing this idea as part of his doctoral dissertation at the Pennsylvania State University, titled *Reconstructing Conquest: Mayas and Spaniards in the Making of Yucatan*, forthcoming (2012).

The first full-length monograph on Afro-Yucatan is *The Black Middle* (Restall 2009), but the foundations of this subfield were laid by Yucatec historians: Redondo 1994 is a book-length extended essay that drew important attention to the topic; Fernández Repetto and Negroe Sierra 1995 is an original and aptly-named article-length study (published as a book); and Campos García 2005, focused on the end of the Colonial period, is a scholarly milestone in the subfield's development.

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MAYA MEMORY WORK

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Abstract

The critical role of social or collective memory in ongoing processes of societal reproduction and transformation is well acknowledged by anthropologists and is being increasingly modeled in archaeological interpretations as well. Investigating how social memory impacted the materialities and historical trajectories of the Maya civilization has great potential for advancing archaeological methodologies as well as enlarging our knowledge of the Maya. In addition to the wealth of epigraphic, ethnographic, and early historical information available for the Maya, archaeologists are examining enduring architecture, representative imagery, and even mundane artifacts that constitute a “technology of memory” for clues to the interplay of recollection and forgetting in the operation and transformation of Maya societies. This commentary reviews issues and problems in archaeological studies of social memory and addresses the specific prospects for investigating social memory among the pre-Hispanic Maya, drawing upon the analyses provided by the papers in this special section.

Since the 1980s social memory has become an increasingly important topic in anthropology (e.g., Climo and Cattell 2002; Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Forty and Küchler 1999; Hallam and Hockey 2001; Küchler and Melion 1991; Mines and Weiss 1997; Stewart and Strathern 2003; Whitehouse 1992) and archaeology (e.g., Alcock 2002; Borić 2002; Bradley 2002; Chesson 2001; Dietler 1998; Hendon 2000, 2009; Holtorf 1997; Jones 2007; Kuijt 2008; Mills and Walker 2008; Mizoguchi 1993; Rowlands 1993; Stanton and Magnoni 2008b; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003b; Williams 2003; Yoffee 2007), as well as a number of related disciplines (Assmann 1995; Burke 1989; Lowenthal 1985; Olick and Robbins 1998; Wertsch 2002; Zelizer 1995; Zerubavel 2003; none of these lists is comprehensive). Memory has been moved from the individual psyche to the social collective, out of the mind and into the active body, thereby allowing for the temporal mediation of materiality, spatiality, textuality, and sociality in the production and transmission of social memory. Significant topics in anthropology and related disciplines include memory as embodied (Bourdieu 1977:94), as conveyed in performances (Connerton 1989:40), and as inscribed or objectified in various media. These media include portable objects (Battaglia 1990, 1992; Joyce 2000, 2003; Küchler 1987, 1988; Lillios 1999, 2003; Thomas 1993); architecture, especially the house (Bachelard 1969; Lane 2005; Meskell 2003; Van Dyke 2004); landscape features (Holtorf 1998; Küchler 1993; Morphy 1993, 1995; Santos-Granero 1998; Schama 1996); and images, oral narratives, and written texts (Barrett 1993; Holtorf 1997; Liebsohn 1994; Nora 1989; Wertsch 2002).

The focus on memory entails a foregrounding of the consciousness of time as passage and duration, as well as its interruption, in interpretations of social and cultural phenomena. Edmund Husserl’s writings on phenomenological psychology (e.g., Husserl 1964) provided a ground for subsequent studies of time and thus memory (Gell 1992:

221). Some aspects of the past are Husserlian “retentions,” treated as “horizons of a temporally extended present” (Gell 1992:223), denying a difference between the present, or now, and past. Others are “reproductions,” replays of past experiences of a remembered or constructed “present” in what is the “now” moment (Gell 1992: 223). Recollection links the past with the present, thereby endowing the present with a certain meaning or value.

Nevertheless, this process is not straightforward; “collective memories help us fabricate, rearrange, or omit details from the past as we thought we knew it” (Zelizer 1995:217). In social contexts, acts of remembering are future-oriented, and only certain recollections are selected as a means to influence future circumstances (Battaglia 1990:8). Examining how societies use objects or other material phenomena from their past (or others’ pasts) to create meanings in the present is one way to study social memory; significantly, it is precisely what archaeologists regularly do (Lane 2005:20). Lane (2005: 21; emphasis in original) observed that archaeologists have the opportunity to investigate how social memory “was constructed *by people in the past*,” as “a form of ‘archaeological practice’ *in the past*” (see also Van Dyke and Alcock 2003a:3; examples in Stanton and Magnoni 2008b; Yoffee 2007). Moreover, highlighting the role of artifacts, structures, and the landscape in memory work should ultimately transform how archaeologists investigate the role of enduring material forms in processes of social reproduction and social change (Jones 2007:4).

Despite almost three decades of burgeoning interest, “social” or “collective memory” remains a slippery subject that has proven difficult to circumscribe. There is no agreement on what this phenomenon consists of or even its appropriate name. Alternative monikers include cultural memory, local memory, popular memory, public memory, and shared memory (Cattell and Climo 2002:5; Olick and Robbins 1998:111; Wertsch 2002:33; Zelizer 1995:214). The papers comprising this special section reveal this state of affairs—they present a selection of the diverse and even conflicting understandings of social memory, in part as a result of adherence to different definitions and theorists. These case studies from the greater Maya sphere illustrate the role of memory in forming and

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reiterating group identities, the political uses to which collective memory is put, the interplay of multiple and competing memories, and also collective, even “forced,” forgetting (following Connerton 1989:15), which is not merely the loss of memory but may result from the “willed transformation of memory” (Battaglia 1992:14). Borgstede (2010) and Stockett (2010) in this issue also observe that social memory creates or sustains continuities with the past among Maya peoples in the present-day, a topic important to all archaeologists given the prominence of archaeology in cultural and national heritage issues.

Among the papers in this special section, Golden (2010) and Restall (2010) particularly focus on text-mediated memory as “history”—eliding what has been called “the most contested boundary” between memory and other domains (Olick and Robbins 1998:110; see also Nora 1989; Wertsch 2002:19). The authors of the other articles treat quotidian and nonquotidian archaeological phenomena—pottery types, stone objects, caches, architectural complexes—as nontextual *aides-mémoires* for everyday, ritual, and commemorative performances that invoked and transmitted collective memories necessary for social reproduction and social change. Even the most mundane artifacts can form a “technology of memory”: “Material things condense the social history of a community, the stories of individuals, and through their persistence and materiality project them forwards” (Thomas 1993:32). The fact that these papers raise more issues than they resolve reflects the inchoate state of memory studies (see Olick and Robbins 1998; Zelizer 1995). Taken as a whole, the contributions to this special section demonstrate the need for not only additional conceptualizing, but also the great potential for anthropologically-based social memory studies in Maya archaeology.

Three major foci among the general aims of these papers illustrate how archaeologists might investigate social memory (see Ricoeur 2004). One is the emphasis on *what* is remembered (or forgotten)—that is, memory versus the process of remembering (following Wertsch 2002:17). A second is a concern for *who* is doing the remembering, especially when those in power attempt to direct or control collective memories (Child and Golden 2008; Golden 2010; LeCount 2010; Stockett 2010). A given society will have multiple “memory communities,” only some of whose memories are preserved, and different groups typically maintain rival, conflicting, or at least alternative memories (Burke 1989:107). The third is a focus on *how* social memory reproduces or transforms society or its constituent groups, entailing a greater interest in “memory-work” rather than “accounts of distinct memories” (Küchler 1993:86).

Although all three factors are important, the third one has the greatest potential for archaeology. However, this potential is neglected as long as memory is relegated to a purely cognitive phenomenon inaccessible except where it has been expressed through texts or similar representational media (e.g., Stanton and Magnoni 2008a:13). From the relationist practice or performance approaches typical of some contemporary theory (see Ortner 1984:144ff), investigating memory as a social and material process entails the most direct archaeological evidence because the materiality and temporality of the landscape, portable objects, and other social subjects are necessarily drawn into memory work. As Tim Ingold (1993:152–153) noted, the act of remembering requires an engagement “with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past.” Beyond archaeological concerns, Paul Ricoeur (2004:4–5) observed that the “what” of memory is less important than the “how,” and the “how” is necessary to understand “whose” memory is in question, with all the social and political ramifications that follow from that assessment.

In sum, it is widely acknowledged that social memory is better investigated as a process than as a thing (Cattell and Climo 2002:23; Curtoni et al. 2003; Küchler 1993:86; Olick and Robbins 1998:122; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003a:3; Zelizer 1995:218). This point was reiterated by most authors of these papers, although exactly what that process is—cognitive, historical, social, or material—varied depending on which scholarly authorities they drew upon. Nevertheless, memory as process was more often backgrounded or taken for granted rather than foregrounded in these case studies. If one simply assumes that social memory is integral to the operation and reproduction of society, then it can easily overlap with history, myth, the past, identity, biography, ethnicity, emulation, legitimacy, discourse, knowledge, cognition, narratives, place, style, habitus, persistence, continuity, custom, tradition, norms, and so forth, such that its particular role in social processes becomes muted (see Cattell and Climo 2002:4; Olick and Robbins 1998:112). Once granted an all-pervading presence, “lurking behind every nook and cranny of everyday life,” social memory becomes a mere “catch-all category” (Zelizer 1995:234–235). Compelling papers in this special section incorporated social memory into related topics that have their own literatures and well-developed constructs for investigating materiality and sociality, especially “identity-formation” (Borgstede 2010; LeCount 2010) and “place,” the latter considered as individual structural loci (Schwake and Iannone 2010; Stockett 2010) and within a network forming a regional landscape (Borgstede 2010).

I therefore begin this commentary with certain theoretical and methodological problems that impact memory studies in archaeology (for more general discussions, see, for example, Golden 2005:271; Olick and Robbins 1998; Zelizer 1995). I then address the prospects of archaeological usages of social memory among the pre-Hispanic Maya, highlighting several issues that stand out in these papers within the context of more wide-ranging topics. In terms of topical coverage, this essay is therefore not comprehensive concerning what could be done in Maya (or other) archaeological studies of memory. Some important issues were neglected in this small sampling of papers, an indication of the vast potential for memory studies in archaeology.

SOCIAL MEMORY AND MEMORY WORK

Social memory studies of the last two decades usually trace their origin to the pioneering work of Maurice Halbwachs (1980 [1950]; died 1945), whose ideas on collective memory were updated in a seminal book by Paul Connerton (1989). Halbwachs’s contribution to the study of memory was his emphasis on the “collectivity” that is necessary for social, as opposed to individual, memories: “groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised” (Connerton 1989:37; see also Bastide 1978:24). He showed that the group determines what is “memorable,” what individuals remember (or forget) and how (Burke 1989:98). Halbwachs’s focus on groups has proven useful to archaeologists, in that such (often corporate) groups typically occupy or are associated with certain social and material spaces, giving a literal meaning to the notion of localization:

[N]o collective memory can exist without reference to a socially specific spatial framework. That is to say, our images of social spaces, because of their relative stability, give us the illusion of not changing and of rediscovering the past in the present. We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material

milieu that surrounds us. It is to our social spaces—those which we occupy, which we frequently retrace with our steps, where we always have access, which at each moment we are capable of mentally reconstructing—that we must turn our attention, if our memories are to reappear. Our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group (Connerton 1989:37).

To Halbwachs's general thesis Connerton contributed the notion that social memory depends on acts of communication between individuals and that "to study the social formation of memory is to study those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible" (Connerton 1989:39; see also Burke [1989:100] on "modes of transmission of public memories"). Besides oral communication, Connerton focused on two other "acts of transfer"—commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices—in support of his argument that "images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances" (1989:40). However, the analytical distinction between these two acts of transfer is not necessarily maintained in actual practice (Battaglia 1992:3–4). Practices are repeated, "and repetition automatically implies continuity with the past" (Connerton 1989:45), a linking of the present present and the absent past upon which memory is based. The same premise applies to the related notion of "tradition," whether "invented" or not, comparably defined by Hobsbawm (1983:1) as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."

Thus, Connerton would have us examine repeated activities of a formalized nature occurring in certain places that were associated with specific corporate groups. Such repetition or recapitulation (also modeled as citation) is definitely visible to archaeologists—indeed, it is the foundation of practice approaches in archaeology (Joyce and Lopiparo 2005)—and can elucidate the material mnemonic aspects of daily life even in the deep past (Borić 2002:51). Several of the papers in this section demonstrate its potential, including the repeated ritual use of pottery vessels (LeCount 2010), architecture (Stockett 2010), and features embedded in architecture (Schwake and Iannone 2010). In addition, the phenomenologically influenced understanding of practice as experienced and embodied—as in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and his notion of *habitus*, alongside Connerton's (1989:22ff) "habit-memory" (see LeCount 2010)—is also salient in memory studies. These theoretical perspectives and their subsequent methodological implementation direct our attention to the processes of memory work, to the "pragmatics of memory, by virtue of which remembering is doing something" (Ricoeur 2004:4).

The "how" of memory as a *social* process—the acts of transfer effected through mundane repetition associated with places and groups—was best developed here by LeCount. Other papers focus on "what" was to be remembered or forgotten, especially in terms of the modification of architecture or the reading of texts, assuming that recollection (or forgetting) was the intended purpose for transforming structures or erecting monuments with inscriptions. However, intention is difficult to demonstrate with archaeological evidence, especially because archaeologists have privileged knowledge of the future or consequences of those actions, which the original actors did not, and that knowledge tends to bias our interpretations. If old buildings are covered with new surfaces, was the purpose to force forgetting or, alternatively, to add a new

layer of memories to the old ones, requiring an enforcement of remembering (see case studies in Stanton and Magnoni 2008b)? Iannone (2010) suggests that the destruction or burial of architectural features—rendering them invisible—may have had the effect of burning them into the collective memories of those who witnessed these events and those who later heard the stories about them. Paul Lane (2005) presents case studies in which the razing and rebuilding of structures elicited assertions from their builders that the structures had not been changed and were old rather than new. Thus, reading "remembering" or "forgetting" from the evidence of architectural modification, abandonment, or reuse is problematic (see also Canuto and Andrews 2008:265–266).

Too often such strategic actions are relegated to political elites by default because they controlled the erection of masonry architecture and stone monuments. As a consequence, "who" is supposed to remember or forget "what" is often insufficiently delineated. Although subroyal lords may have used monumental inscriptions to create their own counter-memories in contrast to royal hegemony, as developed in Golden's (2010) contribution, a focus on elite-commissioned monumentality leaves the commoners with little role to play other than to passively remember or forget as manipulatively bidden by those in power. Moreover, whereas architectural modification is often taken as evidence of political power, the agency involved in the absence of modification has tended to be ignored by archaeologists. Nevertheless, the continued reuse of an unmodified building could manifest a political agenda to prevent forgetting by maintaining a link between past and present, or to obviate the past by treating it as the same as the present.

Despite these limitations and difficulties, the archaeology of social memory holds out the promise of substantial advances in knowledge. Social memory was a critical factor in the endurance and dynamic modification of material settings of human existence, influencing what was preserved, changed, rejuvenated, destroyed, or rebuilt. As Lane (2005:21) observed,

a complex set of recursive relationships would appear to exist between how societies use ancient remains to construct their past *and* the form and processes by which such ancient remains are passed on to future generations. If this is so, then it would appear that archaeology has enormous potential to illustrate the operation and relative significance of different concepts and attitudes to time over the course of human history.

A methodological tool to help realize this potential is to adopt John Barrett's (2001) suggestion that we abandon the notion of the archaeological "record"—treating physical remains as the mere traces or outcomes of antecedent past activities and intentions—and consider instead that archaeologists investigate them as the physical media within which social, material, and historical processes were embedded. Remembering and forgetting are entailed in those processes. Archaeologists also bring to the table the disparate experiences of lived memories of pre-modern and non-Western societies, as well as a temporal framework surpassing that of historians. In the remainder of my commentary, I point out certain prospects for Maya memory work, drawing on the contributions in this special section as examples.

SOCIAL MEMORY AND THE MAYA CIVILIZATION

The wealth of information available on the Maya should prove fertile ground for modeling social memory in ways that could

benefit similar studies in other world areas. Maya archaeologists are well aware of the utility of the hieroglyphic inscriptions that could codify and preserve certain long-term memories or innovate new ones; calendrical systems that evidence a concern for timekeeping and a measured means to refer to the past (or future) in the present; symbolically embellished masonry architecture that provided “places” for groups to embed their social memories but which were remodeled, often in association with death and burial, invoking recollection and forgetting; and finely crafted objects, many of them heirloomed and imbued with their own biographies (Joyce 2000, 2003). This information is supplemented and enhanced by information on Maya practices that was recorded in the colonial period. Some of these practices can still be observed today (see Borgstede 2010; Iannone 2010; Restall 2010).

In contrast to the rest of Mesoamerica, the level of long-enduring linguistic and stylistic homogeneity in the Maya world is quite striking (an observation that does not understate the spatial, cultural, and temporal heterogeneity within that world). Because this area maintained a discernibly distinct though dynamic civilization for over a millennium, one can investigate the role of the past and its commemoration among ancient Maya peoples themselves—their “archaeological practice.” They saw the ruins of earlier failed cities; they experienced the loss of place and the trauma of dislocation, sometimes as the result of violence. Some of their settlements were revived with specific reference to past individuals or events, while others were not. Still others were rejuvenated by engaging innovated cultural understandings or borrowing styles from distant (non-Maya) places—an apparent break with the past. There was no uniformity to these strategic uses of collective memory, a fact that requires further examination, especially along the distinctive systemic breaks between the Early and Late Classic periods and the emergence of Terminal Classic and Postclassic political economies and ideologies.

Although much of Maya archaeology has focused on major cities, more recent concerns have shifted to the lived experiences of commoners as well as aristocrats, and to secondary as well as primate centers. To what extent were memory habits and identities shared across social strata, and at what levels were they made different in order to reinforce social distance? That is the topic explored in this issue by LeCount (2010) in her examination of mundane commensal practices—namely, how eating shaped social spaces at Xunantunich—and by Stockett (2010) in her distinction between “public” and “social” memory as contested in the construction, use, and abandonment of monumental structures. Another topic to be investigated is the patterned organization of space at multiple levels, such that the familiarity and practices associated with humble households was writ large in the spatial organization of palaces (and vice versa).

A subject not well covered in these papers but worthy of consideration is the profound transformation of the original natural environment. Something as simple as dense stands of *ramón* trees or barely visible trails through the forest could have evoked memories of generations past and networks of places forming a lived landscape. These natural features need to be taken into account, even if they did not survive to the present (see Iannone 2010). In fact, the localizing of this civilization within a tropical forest setting has not sufficiently played into theorizing about Maya social memory (see below).

To take advantage of the potential value of social memory studies, more attention needs to be addressed to certain widespread features of Maya civilization (following Van Dyke 2004). I refer not

to a common art or writing system or to rulership of centers by an *ahaw*, but to a fundamental cosmology—a “classification of the world and a set of prescriptions for correct action towards the world in both its human and non-human elements” (Gosden 1999:77)—that was continually produced within the social and material frameworks for the construction and sedimentation of collective memories. Although adherence to a basic cosmology is widely accepted by Maya scholars, it has more often been considered a shared cognitive phenomenon overlain on a physical landscape, such that how it continually emerged from material practices has less frequently been modeled. Among the contributions in this issue, LeCount (2010) tackles this problem via the evocation of memories that link past and present in the mundane practices of maize consumption by domestic groups as contrasted with the “toasting” activities of chocolate-drinking by elites. The latter were not the brief salutations to fellow drinkers or honored guests we make today. LeCount is referring instead to lengthy oral discourses on the fame or history of the individual aristocratic groups, something that may well have been the privilege and responsibility of titled individuals such as the “Great Toastmasters,” the keepers of “the Word,” in the K’iche’ *Popol Vuh* (Tedlock 1985:227). Such formal recitations, made in the contexts of ritual drinking and feasting, linked smaller scale experiences of households to the reiteration of collective memories at the level of the larger community.

TIME-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE TEMPORALITY OF MEMORY

Another significant component of Maya cosmology is their experiencing of time; as noted above, forms of temporality that connect past and present are critical to memory (Gell 1992:221ff; Husserl 1964). This aspect of the temporality of memory was succinctly explained by Connerton (1989:2):

Concerning memory as such, we may note that our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present. And we will experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present. Hence the difficulty of extracting our past from our present: not simply because present factors tend to influence—some might want to say distort—our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present.

Although too much has been made of the simple distinction between cyclical and linear time among Native Americans (Krech 2006), it is nevertheless important to recognize the existence of different kinds and durations of temporality (Fabian 1983), as well as “different categories of the past that make up historical consciousness” (Sutton 1998:3). Francis Yates (1966) demonstrated how Western ideas of memory are tied to linear conceptions of time (see Feeley-Harnik 1991:121; Rowlands 1993:143). Nevertheless, as Susanne Küchler (1993) has argued for memory work in Melanesia, the tropical forest—similar to the environment of much of the Maya area—is a landscape of forgetting, something that inhibits notions of persistence and linear continuity. Little is permanent; decay is a constant process to be either accepted or worked against, and mobility is an important survival strategy.

Melanesian villages and gardens are carved out of the forest only temporarily, to be returned to the forest in a cycle that began in the past and dominates future-oriented agendas. In the Maya world, typically only certain tall trees, such as the ceiba—the quintessential axis mundi that marked the communal origins of Maya settlements—evidence an organic longevity of a different order, beyond the annual round of agricultural activities and the domestic cycles of extended family households that usually endured only about three generations. Even today Maya families generally don't remember—they forget—ascendant relatives more distant than grandparents (Borgstede 2010; Gillespie 2000). Such variant, though coexisting, temporalities will obviously impact the nature and production of social memory.

In this setting, replacement or transfer—encapsulated by the term *k'ex*—along with regeneration or generational change—subsumed as *jal*—became salient twinned processes in Maya cosmology (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991). Studies of Maya memory work should account for the continual replacement and rejuvenation of the visible and invisible worlds that Maya peoples inhabited. One manifestation of the *k'ex/jal* dialectic is that grandchildren become the replacements for their grandparents; both kin categories are called by a reciprocal term, *mam*, in many Maya languages (Gillespie 2002). That is, people today do not simply act in the way of their ancestors, which is the basis for the temporalizing connection of past and present often known as *costumbre* (e.g., Nash 1970:xvi); instead they replace/become them. Generational continuity is further reinforced by carrying out the practices attributed to the ancestors in the same places (e.g., Watanabe 1992:96). The Maya achieved a form of immortality that overcame the surface appearance of ephemerality.

Processes of replacement and regeneration may thereby obviate a temporal separation between the past, present, and future; that is, time as linear succession may elide with the notion of the “eternal return” of the past. The sheer measurement of elapsed time distinguishing living people from their ancestors is not necessarily an issue, as Borgstede (2010) demonstrates in his discussion of how a Jakaltek Maya community maintains a corporate identity via rituals of commemoration at certain archaeological sites the Jakaltek associate with ancestral figures. By the repetitive nature of these rituals, they continually assert continuity with the past. However, for that reason, Borgstede's presumption that the Jakaltek community has collectively maintained a centuries-long continuity of memories associated with the site of K'anil—because the site dates to the Postclassic period—requires independent verification. His own study explains how a cave site was incorporated into the Jakaltek sacred landscape via the extension of community mythology and ritual only after the site was discovered by archaeologists. These places operate as “sites of memory” more in the sense of the memories of the repeated ritual activities that are essential to group identities.

Even more interesting questions arise from his research: why do the Jakaltek continue to invoke myths of the past, reshaped into present knowledge of the landscape (which is constantly changing) via ritual practices that evoke that past, while other Maya communities have abandoned these sets of practices and embraced an identity for themselves that is more definitively future-looking, more modern and less “traditional”? This is part of the politics of social memory today, touched upon by Restall (2010) in his contribution on the production of history, which can range from a “will towards coherence” to the purposeful invention of mystique or exotic origins. It would be useful to develop as a point of contrast

with the political uses of memory in the pre-Hispanic era and the different categories of the past that are invoked thereby.

Early in the history of the Maya civilization various durable media were innovated to anchor social memories, giving rise to a more profound sense of separation between past and present. In the Preclassic period it became common to incorporate the bodies (and souls) of the dead within residential architecture (Gillespie 2002; McAnany 1995, 1998), encapsulating their persons and modifying the memories they represented as they were transformed into ancestors. The cumulative rebuilding of these structures, often at the death of an important personage, introduced a separation between the living and the dead in a literally stratigraphic fashion, materially represented by the accumulation of bodies and building additions over time. As Barrett (1999) has shown for a similar case in Bronze and Iron Age Britain, an unintended consequence of this continued practice was that the past became visibly separated from the present, setting the stage for the emergence of a new “mode of historical consciousness” (following Hill 1988; Turner 1988). At the same time, the past was also materially accessible to the present by the manipulation of objects that indexed the past. That this was indeed part of the time-consciousness of Maya peoples is demonstrated by the frequency with which they dug into old tombs and caches, removing, reshuffling, or replacing their contents (see Schwake and Iannone 2010). Such ritual activities were a means of recasting the past in the present, recalling or innovating memories of places and persons.

Cacao drinking also became a prominent social ritual in the Preclassic period (Henderson and Joyce 2006; Powis et al. 2002). In her contribution to this special section, LeCount (2010) proposes that the annual cycle based on maize agriculture, together with the daily consumption of maize foods, created a social context characterized by a redundancy of habitual food practices that blurred the separation between past, present, and future in collective memory. However, she suggests that the consumption of cacao beverage, particularly as materially marked with personalized drinking vessels owned by the aristocracy in the Classic period, could have evoked a different temporality (and a different moral or value system) associated with linear histories that were the property of individual noble houses, reiterating social distance (see also LeCount 2001). Cacao, a shade- and water-loving tree, is symbolically associated with the primordium (pre-sun period) in Maya cosmogony, a temporal context separated from the present era dominated by solar cycles and maize harvests. Cacao is a link to origins as well as to the cumulative quality of history because in Mesoamerica it was ceremonially consumed at life crisis rituals (Henderson and Joyce 2006). The fact that the ritual and social contexts for cacao consumption changed dramatically between the Preclassic and Classic periods, as objectified by the suite of pottery vessels used to make and serve it (see LeCount 2010), may provide further clues to the acts of transfer of social memory through rituals and how these changed over time.

There is other, more definitive evidence that beginning in the Middle Preclassic period new social categories came into existence based in part on creating memories associated with identities of different kinds. This evidence consists of various media—platforms, megaliths (with or without carving), and eventually painted and sculpted hieroglyphs and murals—that signaled social memories in enduring material forms, akin to Richard Parmentier's (1987:11–12) “signs in history” that “become involved in social life as loci of historical intentionality *because* of their function as representational vehicles.” The development of such media

was a strategy for political power and became a means to attract followers who did not necessarily share, or share completely, in the same sense of memory. Structures were built atop great platforms that were much more durable than the ephemeral houses of farmers, referencing the strikingly visible, elevated, monumental, and enduring qualities that the burgeoning elites appropriated for themselves (Andres and Pyburn 2000; Joyce 2004). These structures raised on high mimicked great trees like the ceiba that signal duration and links to primordial origins and therefore indicate that memory and history, in terms of the linear representation of time as duration, were played out in the spatial orientation of verticality. Paramount lords saw themselves as trees (Freidel 1992), not simply in the sense of a spatial metaphor of sociocosmic order, but also in reference to the temporal duration signaled by such trees.

Linear time was a temporalizing strategy by which the aristocracy appropriated a separate past and a distinct historicity as part of their own legitimation, sometimes codified in hieroglyphic inscriptions, some of them preserved in durable media. Nevertheless, to make these assertions credible they had to invoke the past and at certain occasions render it simultaneous with the present. By the Late Preclassic period Maya elites were using the Long Count calendar—the “endless progress of time” in the succession of *tuns* (Thompson (1960:155)—along with the erection of stone stelae with portraits of individual rulers for performative rituals of commemoration that acknowledged the separation of past and present while temporarily overcoming it. With the calendar certain persons were able to metaphysically bridge past and present via the coordination or coincidence of designated points within measured time. The stone images of individual named personages solidified those memories against the prospects of decay. Stelae or lintels depicting notable ancestors served not merely as images but as social agents in their own right (Houston and Stuart 1998). Like dynastic Egyptian ancestral busts and stelae, as Lynn Meskell (2003:44–45) has shown, they “acted as a mnemonic to reactivate the presence of a known individual.” Nevertheless, even the stelae and the monumental architecture of which they were usually a component were subject to modification and destruction, as several contributions in this special section explain.

TECHNOLOGY OF SOCIAL MEMORIES

Social memories are held by individuals, of course, and only a certain subset of them become part of a long-term collective memory that outlives the moments or the individuals who create or transmit those memories. The task for the investigator, as Connerton (1989) observed, is to analyze the acts of transfer of that information, so that it is shared (if imperfectly) within the group and across generations. Transgenerational memory underpins Halbwachs’s (1980 [1950]) ideas of social memory (Ricoeur 2004: 394), and such acts of transfer are necessary to reproduce society with constituent identities and relationships relatively intact or on their way to becoming transformed. Significantly, the typical means by which egocentric memories become sociocentric is by the use of external media, including portable objects, structures, and landscape features. Individuals are born into a physical landscape and a world of objects by which they make sense of cultural and social order, even as their individual acts (which draw on that world for their value) continually reaffirm or transform that order (Bourdieu 1977; Morphy 1995).

In this issue LeCount (2010) looks beyond the potsherds of Xunantunich to consider the embodied memory of daily food

production tasks shared across the social places within that center. She appropriately observes that it is less the pottery—as a stylistic marker of identity with inscribed pseudoglyphs—and more the actions of using the pottery in group contexts that reproduced social memories and contributed to local identities. Stockett (2010), Iannone (2010), and Schwake and Iannone (2010) consider the role of another medium—monumental architecture, including its hidden caches—in collective remembrance. Iannone suggests social memory was part of the cultural inventory carried by immigrants, who in founding new settlements emulated the places from which they originated (see also Child and Golden 2008; Van Dyke 2004 for a Chaco Canyon example). Transplanted elites thereby asserted legitimacy by reference to memories of the primate center they left behind. Eric Hirsch (1995) and Howard Morphy (1995) discussed similar sociocognitive processes whereby “background” knowledge (memories, histories, embodied systems of reference in the landscape) become “foregrounded” in the immediate practices of everyday life. Conceivably, in Iannone’s case of border polities, the memories to be invoked were not simply those of the elites of centers but also those of other persons whom they wished to attract to their settlements as clients by creating a familiar setting.

Schwake and Iannone (2010) examine the placement of caches and burials at Zubin and Minanha, secondary centers in Belize. They consider the precise vertical positioning of ritual deposits in architectural levels separated by long time spans to indicate “an uncanny ability to remember,” thus constituting material evidence of intergenerational collective memory. An interesting question that remains unanswered concerns the actions necessary for the remembering, and not just the memory itself. What types of commemorative practices—now perhaps archaeologically invisible—may have effected such acts of transfer, and how were they integrated into the reproduction of social relations and identities? Those practices are equally part of the technology of memory, and taking them into consideration makes such recollective abilities more comprehensible and less uncanny. For example, Mary Miller (1998) has discussed how social memory was communicated in association with elite structures that housed multiple monuments and interments, which she called “memory museums.” Importantly, in these architectural configurations, as she observed, “the particularistic narrative of Maya history becomes the collective, publicly promulgated from a structure that could be both ‘performed’ and performed on” (Miller 1998:196). Miller’s point was that the structures were a necessary facility for the *process* of materiality of memory—the practices of memory work—and not simply secondary objectifications of *a priori* mental memories. Through performance, relatively private or exclusive memories, which may have been ambiguous or conflictual, were concretized and appropriated by much larger groups, and their durations or lifespans were extended through continual active reproduction.

In this issue Stockett (2010) also focuses on how the built landscape was organized and activated to accord with distinct hegemonic sociopolitical discourses. By this means elites, promulgators of “public memory” in her usage, could tap into the “social” memories and memory production of commoners. This would promote a naturalized, disciplined view of the world with its proper places and proper actions and persons assigned to them (following Certeau 1984), by which commoners became or remained attached as service clients to the aristocracy. These and other specialized mechanisms for memory transfer are especially critical when the foundational narratives serving as charters for political legitimacy are at stake (Richards 1960). “Who owns the story, the narrative, the

history, the memories” has become an even more pressing intellectual question with the advent of postmodernism (Cattell and Climo 2002:33). However, the commoners may have expressed their own counter-tactics and counter-memories (in Michel Foucault’s phrase) to avoid or contest incorporation when it did not serve their interests (see Certeau 1984).

Borgstede (2010) takes up a similar subject in considering certain landscape features as sites of memory that affirm a collective identity from the point of view of contemporary people one would associate more with commoners than elites. The sacred places in the Jakaltek landscape were archaeological sites whose physical characteristics as ruins evidence a distant past even as they were all located a spatial distance from the community center, thus on a spatiotemporal periphery. Although these rituals are part of the corpus of current Maya practices, the same activities would have occurred in the past and should be investigated for the same reasons. As Ruth Van Dyke and Susan Alcock (2003a:1) noted, “past peoples [also] observed and interpreted traces of more distant pasts to serve the needs and interests of their present lives.” It is well known that among the pre-Hispanic Maya certain ruined sites were favored locales for ritual practices, including the caching of objects, and many were pilgrimage shrines (Canuto and Andrews 2008:268). Mythological narratives like those collected by Borgstede—even in the absence of “history” codified in hieroglyphs—would have linked pre-Hispanic pilgrims to the shrines as sites of memory where commemorative acts would have helped to define or affirm group identities.

These landscapes as “texts” (Duncan 1990) served to anchor and reproduce local narratives and link them to more widely shared mythological foundations. The sacred quality of the narratives (socially and materially referenced and thus reiterated in the landscape) is prerequisite in order for such knowledge to transcend the individual and to be transferred across generations (Meskell 2003; Morphy 1995; Santos-Granero 1998). Especially in nonliterate societies, the “landscape not only evokes memory but is written upon it, thus becoming memory” (Santos-Granero 1998: 139; see also Küchler 1993:85–86). Importantly, Borgstede has access to mythological narratives that help to identify how the Jakaltek maintain their identity as a distinct group via a collective connection to past ancestral beings localized in specific places. The rituals performed at these sites reiterate their sacredness and ensure the production of social memories in the present, even as the specific narratives will change depending on contingent circumstances.

MEMORY AND HISTORY

The discussion of community-held narratives raises the ambiguous distinction between memory and history which remains a fundamental unresolved issue in memory studies (Golden 2005:271; see also LeCount 2010). Much has been written on this subject by scholars concerned with the historical emergence of western notions of historiography and historicity (Halbwachs 1980 [1950]; Nora 1989; Olick and Robbins 1998; Ricoeur 2004), and it has become a popular topic within the discipline of history (Burke 1989; Hutton 1993; Kansteiner 2002; Kenny 1999; Marchal 2001). Some see social memory as indicative of cultural continuity, whereas history is different—an invented past, the product of a disruption between past and present (Child and Golden 2008:66). However, others treat history as a special case of social memory, a codified version (Restall 2010), and thus built upon the same

foundations and with the same potential for continuity or misrepresentation (Burke 1989:98; Holtorf 1997:59; Rowlands 1993). Within this latter group, Peter Burke (1989:100) suggests that historians should concern themselves with “the social history of remembering.” In this special section, history rather than memory *per se* is the subject of papers by Golden (2010) and Restall (2010).

Restall (2010) focuses on Colonial period evidence, including fray Diego de Landa’s misnamed *Relación* and what has been made of it by Maya scholarship. He characterizes both the “use” and “abuse” of this document as resting upon misrepresentations or misunderstandings of its nature and origin and further comments on the presumed invisibility of Afro-Yucatecans in colonial history. We might use these examples to get a sense of how history is produced through imperfect and inchoate interpretive processes (see Trouillot 1995). Although the contentious relationship between history and collective memory may constitute a more recent debate, there is a venerable anthropological literature on history, mythology, and oral traditions within which the multivocal and contested qualities of historical discourses and their subsequent interpretations by outsiders have been discussed (e.g., Leach 1965 [1954]).

A recurring problem for archaeology is that history has typically been treated as a unitary phenomenon from a Western viewpoint (see Burke 1990; Fogelson 1989; Ricoeur 2004:397). It is true that Halbwachs (1980 [1950]:64) considered formal history as monolithic, but he also observed that “[i]n addition to written history, there is a living history that perpetuates and renews itself through time and permits the recovery of many old currents that have seemingly disappeared. If this were not so, what right would we have to speak of a ‘collective memory’?” Connerton (1989: 13–14) insisted that “social memory” is not the same thing as “historical reconstruction,” using the traces of the past to infer the events of history, and historical reconstruction is not dependent on social memory. In contrast with the production of formal written histories, “[t]he production of more or less *informally* told narrative histories turns out to be a basic activity for characterisation of human actions. It is a feature of all communal memory” (1989:16–17).

From these positions, it is difficult to assume that pre-Hispanic Maya “recorded history” is equivalent to social memory, that it replaced social memory, or that it is equivalent to Western notions of history. In an analogous study of Roman inscriptions in Britain, Barrett (1993:237) observed that inscription is not merely a representation of a memory: “The situation in which an inscription was raised, the framing devices which were placed around it and the associations with the place of reading all acted to situate the reading.” He demonstrated that different contexts for the erecting or commemorating of monumental inscriptions, which were typically affixed to buildings or were components of architectural complexes, referenced varying perceptions of time and diverse audiences or readers (Barrett 1993:236). The task for archaeologists, according to Barrett (1993:246), is not to formulate a chronological history of persons, dates, and events that may be contradictory from one inscription to another, but to focus on “how different ways of reading and understanding became possible through certain historically specific material conditions.”

Anthropologists have tended to treat literate and nonliterate societies as having qualitatively different mechanisms of cultural transmission (e.g., Richards 1960; Rowlands 1993:141). As already noted, investigations into different Maya “historicities” (following Ohnuki-Tierney 1990; Sahlins 1985) or “modes of historical consciousness” (Hill 1998; Turner 1988; Valeri 1990), somewhat

akin to what has been called “emic Maya historicism” (Canuto and Andrews 2008:269), are still waiting to be accomplished. In this special section, Restall (2010) details some of the challenges to early colonial historiography to make sense of various indigenous sources of information, but he deals more with the “concatenation of sources” that made rendering a coherent European-style chronicle history more difficult for Spanish compilers. What remains to be considered is the clash of historicities that occurred within Maya communities and among Mayas, Africans, and Spaniards. Restall’s observation of the intentional opacity of the colonial Yucatec Maya *Books of Chilam Balam* and his notion that elite Maya “mythistory” promulgated their supernatural origins in order to distance themselves from commoners is a start toward understanding this aspect of Maya historicity, one which is comparable to others in the world (e.g., Sahlins 1985) and which could be further investigated in terms of different representational genres (see Andres and Pyburn 2000).

Other topics to be modeled to understand the various acts of transfer of social memory include different kinds of cognitive and social mnemonic devices that anthropologists have elucidated for non-Western and nonliterate societies, along with the important role of “charter keepers” (Richards 1960; compare to the mention of the “Great Toastmasters” above). Among the social mechanisms for preserving historical charters (the basis of political claims) is the common notion of the “‘owned version’ ... the system by which the group which uses the charter is responsible for preserving it, defending it, reciting it, or perhaps concealing it, while the rest of the community need not, and perhaps should not know anything about it” (Richards 1960:180). Rival versions can exist of the same narrative such that no “authentic tradition” exists as a true rendering of facts to which all can agree. Differences in details are expected based on who is telling the tale and if the narrator has the right to do so (Leach 1965 [1954]:265–266). These social aspects of memory transfer are critical to understanding the politics of history as a process and a product (Trouillot 1995). In the Maya case, it is not enough to say that only the small minority of aristocrats were literate. It was their restricted privilege to own that information and for a certain minority of individuals to have the right to recite or perform it, either in the reading of texts or the making of “toasts” (see LeCount 2010). Failure to respect those property rights would have breached a moral code. Such information would always be partial and contested by others with their own versions of the past.

Thus, in asking *whose* memory the inscriptions record, Golden’s (2010) analysis in this issue reveals the potential role of the leaders of certain secondary centers—only some of which have monumental inscriptions—as privileged charter-keepers even as they exercised their own agency and promoted their own agendas. These subroyal title-holders successfully demanded the moral authority to promulgate, in a ritually charged setting, a version of history claimed by their noble houses—in a medium normally monopolized by the royal house—to audiences likely not privy to the performance of historical narratives and the production of collective memories at the primary centers. Golden’s analysis of contested history as contested social memory, delineating thereby different “memory communities,” may reveal the degree to which various versions were differently owned, although it would be difficult to ascertain how widely such knowledge was disseminated. His analysis stands in contrast to the usual synoptic approach to Maya history whose aim is to create a single chronology of events by pulling together information recorded on

monuments from a variety of sites, erected for different purposes and different audiences.

Still, if collective memory is made to coincide with written history—the guarded property of a small subset of literate elites—or limited to “unusual feats of remembrance” as proposed by Schwake and Iannone (2010) in their contribution to this issue, something materialized primarily in elite architecture—then the mass of Maya commoners—the “people without history” in Eric Wolf’s (1982) famous phrase—may by default become the people without social memory. Again, practice as “habit-memory” and performance as the means of promulgating elite versions of history into the social memory of witnesses, who would communicate their experiences to the nonwitnessing members within their social spheres, requires more attention (along the lines of Borgstede’s study of Jakalteq community rituals), and it will involve commoners as well as the nobility, as LeCount (2010) demonstrates in her contribution (see also Navarro Farr et al. 2008). Similar ritual performances at the level of the household, patio group, or neighborhood would have had the same effects on a smaller scale (e.g., Hendon 2000).

MEMORY AS PRESERVATION OR AS MANIPULATION

The longevity and volatility of the Maya civilization presents opportunities for archaeologists to model research questions concerning the dynamic production of social memory and its contingent impacts on both future actions and the materiality of Maya settlements. This situation allows for attention to an issue raised more generally by Richard Bradley (2003:224): “Why was it so important to relate the present to the past at particular junctures, and was that past reconstructed, or was it entirely remade?” Bradley’s follow-up question returns us to a salient point in the memory (or memory versus history) literature—whether memory is better considered an intact *preservation* of past events and experiences, or an *interpretation* of the past made for the present providing an illusion of continuity, what Bradley (2003:226; see also Meskell 2003) calls a kind of “false memory syndrome.”

With their emphasis on diachronic studies, archaeologists have tended to emphasize the continuity of social memories, especially where there are durable monuments or architecture that served to extend the life span of memories of the past (e.g., Bradley 2003:222; Holtorf 1997:50; Joyce 2004; Rowlands 1993). These phenomena became “inscribed” with memories (following Connerton 1989; see Rowlands 1993), invested with specific messages (with or without actual texts) to link the past and present for the future. They were the subject of commemorative practices, meant to be talked about, manifesting their own biographies (Holtorf 1998; Rowlands 1993:144). In addition to the buildings and stelae, finely crafted costume ornaments with their own name tags were material mnemonics of an embodied history of the Maya noble houses that curated or exchanged them, as Rosemary Joyce (2000, 2003) observed. The pottery of Xunantunich described in LeCount’s (2010) contribution to this issue, although generic and constantly produced to replace broken or worn pieces, would also have served the function of inscription, and it was marked with pseudoglyphs whose meanings could not simply be “read.”

However, other scholars have recognized the need to counter assumptions of continuity by highlighting the potential for discontinuity, as the past becomes subjected to manipulation and misrepresentation to serve the needs of the present (e.g., Holtorf 1997:49, 1998; Navarro Farr et al. 2008). Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) coined the phrase “invention of tradition” because such phenomena

may explicitly assert an untrue continuity between past and present. Ricoeur (2004:4) observed that the “what” and the “how” of memory—that is, the split into its cognitive and pragmatic aspects—“has a major influence on the claim of memory to be faithful to the past[,] ... the pragmatics of memory, by virtue of which remembering is doing something, has a jamming effect on the entire problematic of veracity: possibilities of abuse are ineluctably grafted onto the resources of usage, of use, of memory apprehended along its pragmatic axis.”

Writing history onto certain media that are then the objects of subsequent ritual activities is also doing something, with a similar “jamming effect” that may silence alternative histories (Trouillot 1995). Maya elite architecture and stelae, like other enduring monuments, were intended to encode a message about the past for the future, what Cornelius Holtorf (1997:47; see also Andres and Pyburn 2000; Bradley 2003:222) termed a “prospective memory.” As noted above, in influencing “the character of connectedness between past and present,” artifacts “assume a projection forward of social relationships” (Thomas 1993:32). However, enduring objects and buildings were subject to the interpretations of later generations, which could have constituted distinct “retrospective memories” (Holtorf 1997:50) because “cultural memory is not about giving testimony of past events, accurately and truthfully, but about making meaningful statements about the past in a given present” (Holtorf 1997:50, 1998:24).

Indeed, despite the development of durable media for the preservation of inscribed memories, across the Maya world many memories were abruptly transformed at archaeologically recognizable turning points (the Middle to Late Preclassic, Late Preclassic to Classic, Early to Late Classic, and Late Classic to Terminal and Postclassic period transitions). During these turbulent times especially, ruined sites were reoccupied, or population centers were all but abandoned, requiring the invocation of memories to create the illusion of continuity (or discontinuity) through ritual acts that actually involved resignification, and hence the transformation of memories (Child and Golden 2008; Navarro Farr et al. 2008). In the Late Classic period, earlier stelae were removed and resettled, sometimes made invisible in architectural caches. Some were destroyed, others mutilated in intentional and patterned ways. Certain Late Classic artifacts and monuments were purposely made to mimic Early Classic period styles. Lengthy dynastic histories were written—or rewritten—in hieroglyphic inscriptions in the Late Classic (e.g., at Copan and Palenque). At Copan, Late Classic stelae and other monuments with a ruler’s name were placed far beyond the ceremonial center to create a new, more expansive landscape of memory (Fash and Stuart 1991: 157, 172).

These significant shifts were not made easily. Competition for status and wealth—and for the labor and tribute of commoners—was evidently brutal. Displacement and warfare, always part of Maya history but more disruptive in the Late Classic through the Postclassic periods, would have introduced uncertainty, a fear for the future, even trauma. Traumatic memories were also depicted, for example, in the Bonampak murals of warfare and its aftermath. Emotion would have played a significant role in memory production. The psychological toll of dislocation, anxiety, and violence exacted on human beings would have impacted the sites of memory and forgetting. This factor is more characteristically brought up in Aztec studies of memories after the Spanish conquest, such as Serge Gruzinski’s (1998) notion of “mutilated memory,” but it would have been important at different times in the Maya area

during both the pre-Hispanic period as well as the long aftermath of Spanish invasion, conquest, and colonialism.

Disruption sometimes stimulated an increase in references to the past and to anchoring events that may have had to have been dredged up out of a shadowy antiquity (way back to the Early Classic period). Thus, the “memories” of the past were not created out of whole cloth; traditions were not simply “invented.” Maya stelae were effaced or broken, but often cached or repositioned. Old sections of elite buildings were closed off or filled in, but often to erect new superstructures or adjacent edifices. Nevertheless, the shifting of old memories requires some degree of forgetting, a “social amnesia” (Burke 1989:106), either enforced or due to the failure of transmission.

In this issue Stockett (2010) proposes the first alternative for the displacement of the monumental structures at Las Canoas and also at the larger centers of La Sierra and El Coyote in Honduras. She suggests that the decommissioning of elite buildings and thus the spaces they appropriated in official or public memories marked a resurgence of social memories and ultimately a transformation of memories, involving a degree of collective forgetting (see also Navarro Farr et al. 2008). This situation is similar to Bradley’s (2003:225) notion of “confrontation,” “the creation of entirely new structures which were intended to modify, or even transform, existing interpretations of these places ... [involving] the forcible substitution of one set of memories for another.”

But these actions may also have been practices of “incorporation,” the taking of objects out of circulation so that they are no longer visible as points of material reference linking past and present. In the case of incorporation, “[d]isposed or destroyed objects are remembered for themselves, not for what they stood for in terms of remembered pasts” (Rowlands 1993:146). They can represent a memory for the future, becoming in the act of their disposal, defacement, abandonment, or deposition, a “memory-image” as Susanne Küchler (1987, 1993) called it, that may bind together those who share in it. Julia Hendon (2000:49) similarly noted for the pre-Hispanic Maya that the hiding of burials and caches within domestic spaces was part of the creation of social memory by household members, affirming their collective identity. The purposely infilled elite structure at Minanha discussed by Iannone (2010), the decommissioned buildings in Honduras described by Stockett (2010), and the superpositioned caches in Belize analyzed by Schwake and Iannone (2010) were incorporated “memory-images” at a much larger socio-spatial scale, up to that of the community as a whole. Thus, there is a constant interplay between processes of confrontation and incorporation, between prospective and retrospective memories whose materializations make them amenable to archaeological investigation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this commentary has been to enumerate some of the many ways the pre-Hispanic Maya civilization offers archaeologically accessible evidence for analyzing the various acts of the production and transfer of collective memory in its social and spatiotemporal contexts that made social reproduction and cultural transformation possible. Although Schwake and Iannone (2010) propose a specific method or framework for investigating collective memory cross-culturally, it is more likely that “no single set of criteria will be universally appropriate” (Lane 2005:31). Cultural- and historical-contextually specific models, taking into account different historicities and time perspectives, will need to be devised to discern

how social memory is implicated in the production and transformation of society, and thus in the formation of archaeological evidence.

Drawing on the included articles, this review focused on memory work, the “how” or processual aspect of memory making and transmission (as opposed to the what and who of memory, following Ricoeur [2004]). Memory as a process entails direct archaeological evidence because the materiality and temporality of the landscape, portable objects, and other social subjects are necessarily drawn into memory work. The technology of social memory—the engagement of the material world in creating and reiterating social memories through repeated practices in specific localities—was highlighted as an important contribution of several of these papers. Another salient topic was the relationship between memory and history. This relationship is highly contested, yet its significance is unquestionable in Maya studies because of the nearly two-millennia-long tradition of hieroglyphic writing. Although they were always monopolized by a small aristocratic group, many of the monumental and portable inscriptions were used in ceremonial and performative contexts that would have generated social memories, including among nonliterate publics, beyond the content of the inscriptions themselves. This raises the issue of political power in the preservation, disruption, or manipulation of memories, which was treated in these papers especially in the contexts of the building, transforming, razing, abandoning, and sacralizing of elite/ceremonial architecture, including architecture in a ruined condition.

Other major concerns addressed in these articles include the dialectic between prospective and retrospective memories, practices of inscription and incorporation in memory work and memory transfer, the spatiality of memory, memory images, and the role of memory in identity formation, especially as associated with corporate groups and architecturally embellished places. These papers illustrate how memory work is an ongoing process, as much about forgetting as remembering and as much about the future as the past (see Battaglia 1990:8; Munn 1986:9). In this regard, the active role of the remembered and innovated past in some Maya communities today, as brought out in several contributions, is a significant facet of Maya memory work. It should further alert archaeologists to the realization of how the ancient Maya would have engaged memory in a kind of archaeological practice in the past and of the important role of collective memory in archaeological practice of the present.

In sum, the longevity, complexity, enduring materiality, variability, and volatility of the Maya civilization provides a multitude of opportunities for archaeologists to model research questions concerning the dynamic production of social memory and its material and historical media and consequences. The contributions in this special section reveal the potential for engaging concepts and methods developed by social theorists, anthropologists, and archaeologists, so that Maya memory studies can contribute to cross-cultural understandings of this phenomenon, even as they enhance understandings of both ancient Maya societies and modern archaeological practices.

RESUMEN

El papel crítico de la memoria social o colectiva en procesos en curso de reproducción y transformación social está siendo cada vez más modelado en interpretaciones arqueológicas. La investigación como la memoria social afectó la materialidad y trayectorias históricas de la civilización maya tiene el gran potencial para avanzar metodologías arqueológicas así como ampliar el conocimiento de esta civilización. Este comentario examina cuestiones y problemas en estudios arqueológicos de memoria social y las perspectivas específicas para investigar la memoria social entre sociedades mayas prehispánicas, utilizando los análisis proporcionados por las contribuciones en esta sección especial.

Los estudios de memoria social remontan su origen al trabajo pionero de Maurice Halbwachs, cuyas ideas en la memoria colectiva fueron actualizadas en un libro seminal escrito por Paul Connerton (1989). La contribución de Halbwachs era su énfasis en el grupo que es necesario para memorias sociales, a diferencia de memorias individuales. Siguiendo de este avance, muchos investigadores están de acuerdo en que el “trabajo de memoria,” es decir los procesos de la fabricación de memoria, debería tomar la prioridad en la investigación. La memoria como un proceso implica pruebas arqueológicas directas porque la materialidad y la temporalidad del paisaje, objetos portátiles, y otros sujetos sociales son necesariamente comprometidos en el trabajo de memoria.

Los arqueólogos mayenses disfrutaban de ventajas en el estudio del trabajo de memoria, incluyen las inscripciones jeroglíficas, calendarios que demuestran una preocupación por el cuidado de tiempo, arquitectura de albañilería simbólicamente embellecido y soportando (o restaurado) que proporcionó localidades para grupos para empotrar sus memorias sociales, y objetos sutilmente trabajados, a menudo con imágenes figurativas, muchos de ellos curados e imbuidos de sus propias biografías. Estos fenómenos, junto con

artefactos mundanos, constituyeron “una tecnología de la memoria” pistas que proveen a los “actos de la transferencia” (recordar y olvidar) necesario de reproducir o transformar la sociedad, como detallado en contribuciones por LeCount, Stockett, Iannone, y Schwake e Iannone. Esta información es complementada y realizada por datos en prácticas mayas registradas en el período colonial así como aquellos observados hoy, como revelado en el artículo de Borgstede. Un sujeto no cubierto en esta sección especial pero digno de la consideración es el trabajo de memoria implicado en la transformación del ambiente natural.

La memoria se superpone inevitablemente con la historia, el sujeto de contribuciones por Golden y Restall. Los mayas prehispánicos codificaron el conocimiento como “la historia” escrita en inscripciones jeroglíficas. Sin embargo, uno no puede asumir que la historia maya es el equivalente con la memoria social o que esto sustituyó la memoria social. Además, a pesar del desarrollo de medios duraderos para conservar memorias inscritas, a través del mundo maya las memorias e identidades fueron repentinamente transformados en períodos diferentes. Estas interrupciones requirieron que la evocación de nuevas memorias creara la ilusión de continuidad (o discontinuidad) por actos rituales que realmente implicaron el nuevo significado, y de ahí la transformación de memorias sociales.

En suma, la longevidad, complejidad, y volatilidad de la civilización maya presenta numerosas oportunidades de arqueólogos para modelar preguntas de investigación acerca de la producción dinámica de la memoria social y sus consecuencias materiales e históricas. Las contribuciones en esta sección especial revelan el potencial para conceptos y métodos simpáticos desarrollados por teóricos sociales, antropólogos, y arqueólogos en otras partes del mundo, de modo que los estudios de memoria maya puedan contribuir a amplia comprensión de estos fenómenos.

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