

From vision to cosmovision: Memory and the senses in the creation of Maya ritual space

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This article considers the role of ancient Maya ritual action and material engagement in constructing visible and invisible social spaces. While the archaeological study of human engagement with space is largely focused on the visible and material, it is the interpretation of the non-visual and immaterial aspects of space (i.e. experiential and sensual aspects) that present a particular challenge for archaeologists. However, these challenges should not deter archaeologists from engaging in a thoughtful consideration of how these spaces were experienced in the past through a sensual interaction with materials.

Recent scholarship regarding the place of ritual practice and the act of ritualization in archaeological studies has emphasized cumulative actions as significant in the process of constructing the ongoing social memory of spaces. This perspective emphasizes the place of ritual as a generative process rather than the symbolic meaning or intent behind individual actions (Bell 1992; Berggren and Stutz 2010; Bradley 2003; Fogelin 2007; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; Van Dyke 2004, 2009). Moreover, the spaces produced in this process evoke elements of social memory through a sensual engagement with materials (which are not reserved to objects alone). Following this observation, a growing number of scholars have expressed a concern for the senses as an essential component to the social sciences (Eagleton 1990; Hamilakis 2014; Howes 1991; Seremetakis 1994; Strathern 2013; Vannini et. al 2012).

In describing an 'archaeology of the senses,' Hamilakis (2011, 2014) asserts that such a focus is not a sub-discipline, but rather an addition to existing archaeological perspectives surrounding past perception. While a study of the senses may appear as a process constituted of immaterial phenomena, such a pursuit is rooted in the material and emerges through bodily practices. We therefore assert that this type of discussion is not beyond the reach

of archaeological inquiry (see Houston and Taube 2000 for a discussion of an archaeology of the senses in ancient Mesoamerica). It is not our goal to recreate *what* the sensory experiences were for individuals in the past, but rather, *how* the senses were engaged and how such engagements were made to endure both materially and as social practice. Furthermore, how did these engagements recall the past in the present and influence the future through the production of actions? It is through multiple sensory engagements and the memories they evoke that spaces are made meaningful. In discussing seen and unseen spaces, we are not simply referring to the visible and invisible features of space, but also the visual and non-visual *perceptions* of space. How things are perceived is derived from the merging of individual past knowledge within a collective history (Halbwachs 1980 [1950]). We examine the making of space through an analysis of repeated traces of ritual action and argue that it is the accumulation of those acts that create collective memory. Memory exists within a network of social relationships and the material life of those relationships (Connerton 1989). With this in mind, we will consider the materiality of caching during ritualized exchanges between the living and the dead in a residential mausoleum at the ancient Maya site of Caracol, Belize. Through a discussion of the aesthetic qualities of materials that are implemented in these interactions, and the maintenance of a collective memory, we are given the opportunity to explore the ways in which spaces are made meaningful through the visibility of the space itself and the invisibility of the ritual offerings and the deceased buried within.

The seen and the unseen: An ancient Maya perspective

Within ancient Maya cities, stone pyramidal structures, palaces, monuments and ball courts surrounded by resi-

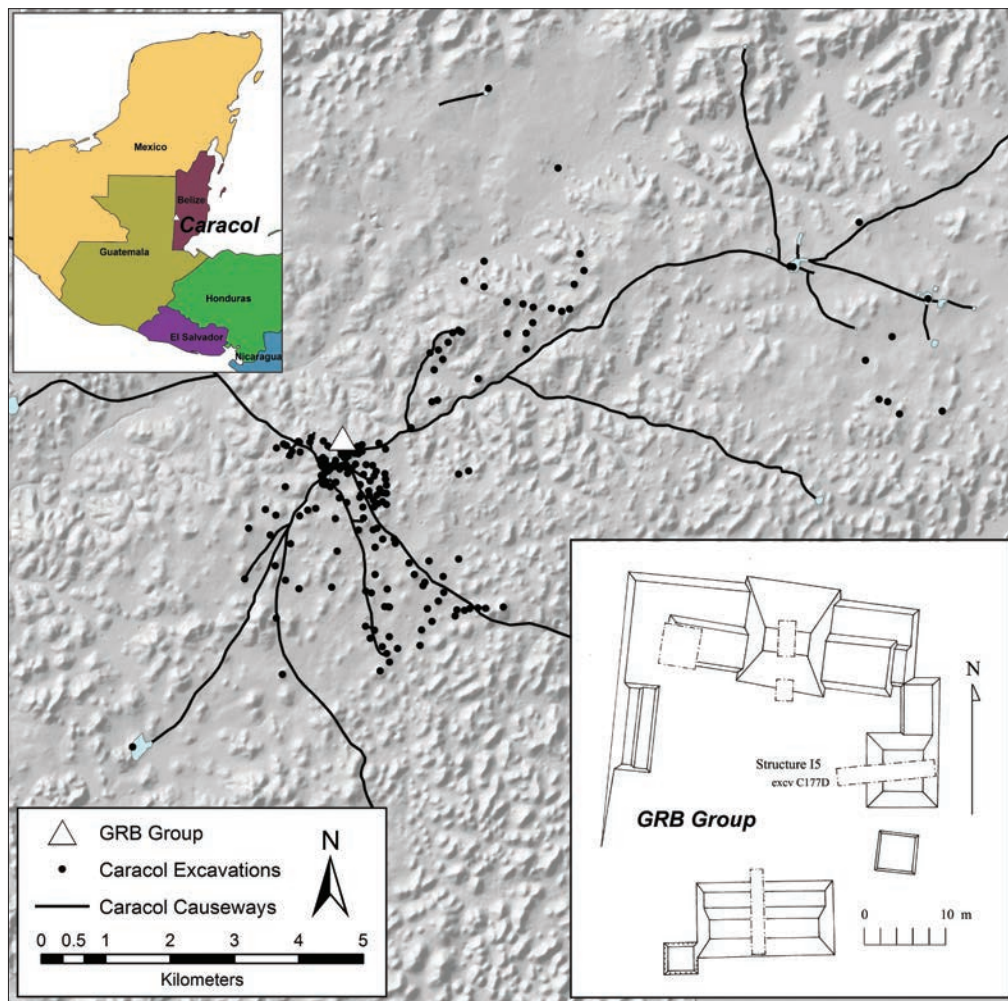


Figure 1. Map of Maya Area showing Caracol and the GRB Group (map courtesy of Caracol Archaeological Project, modified by Lucas R. Martindale Johnson).

dential *plazuela* groups¹ were common features in the built landscape. These were discrete visible spaces in many urban sites throughout the Maya region; however, beneath those features lay earlier buildings, repeated ritual offerings, and the bodies of the deceased. These spaces and materials were rendered invisible through their concealment. The physical placement of these visible and invisible features across the landscape often followed a shared Mesoamerican concept of cosmological spatial ordering (Ashmore 1991; Ashmore and Sabloff 2002; Garcia-Zambrano 1994; Matthews and Garber 2004). Thus, the cardinal directions were ritually significant. The significance of directional orientation in the construction of both public architecture and private residences was largely tied to the movement of the sun and the layered planes of the cosmos in ancient Maya thought (e.g.

1 'Plazuela groups,' 'residential groups' or 'patio groups' are all names used to describe the basic orientation of Maya households found in Classic Maya archaeological sites, as well as in modern ethnohistoric contexts. These groups are generally constituted of several structures surrounding small plazas and are usually interpreted as being the social locus of Maya domestic organization (Willey 1981).

the underworld, lived world and world above; see Ashmore 1991 for a discussion of the architectonics of Classic Maya cosmology). However, ideological orientations do not entirely account for the design and layout of the built environment. Geological topography, histories of social practices and modes of religious-political capital were also influential in its construction and transformation (Joyce 2004; Moore 1996; Pauketat 2000; Sanders and Webster 1988; Swenson 2014). There were, however, patterns of structured deposition in Maya ritual activity that resulted in the directional placement of materials and features.

Eastern oriented buildings in the southern Maya lowlands often served as a locus for ritual performance, and it has been argued that the orientation of buildings built on the eastern and western side of a plaza signified the rising and setting of the sun (Ashmore and Sabloff 2002: 202). This relationship has also been identified as a symbolic reference to the cyclical nature of life and death, and birth and renewal (Mock 1998). Within these spaces, collections of materials such as lithics, shells and other faunal materials were often deposited during construction, rendering them

invisible on the living surface. These materials were submitted to the realm of the invisible during moments of interaction between the living and supernatural gods and ancestors. While traditionally described as ‘offerings’ by archaeologists, the placement of these objects during some ritual events was not a one-way relationship, but rather served as an interaction with an expectation of a return. They are therefore considered here as an *exchange* (Godelier 2004; Morehart and Butler 2010; Osborne 2001). Following Susanne Küchler’s discussion of a sacrificial economy, we argue that the material *exchanges* with ancestors placed within supernaturally charged buildings are “contradictory to our oppositional framework of commodity and gift exchange” (1997: 40). In this way, this material *exchange* can be considered both as an offering anticipating a return and also as a mediatory vehicle of communication with the supernatural. These material exchanges did not lend themselves to the accumulation of wealth, but rather to the development and maintenance of social relations between the living and their ancestors (Godelier 1999). Far beyond the economic implications of commodity or gift exchange, the ancient Maya were active participants in building a relationship between the living and the supernatural. Further, the materials themselves were active participants in the exchange (Hanks 2013). These relationships were made salient in the construction of both hidden and visible spaces through the production and deposition of relational objects in ritualized practices.

Making space meaningful through the seen and the unseen at Caracol, Belize

The site of Caracol is located in western Belize, situated on the Vaca Plateau overlooking the eastern boundary of the Petén region of the lowland Maya (fig. 1). During its political and demographic apex in the Late Classic Period (AD 550-800), it is estimated that there may have been more than 100,000 persons living within the 200 square kilometres of Caracol’s political domain (Chase *et al.* 1990: 502, Chase and Chase 2012). Caracol was a complex anthropogenic landscape composed of agricultural terraces, monumental structures, ball courts, carved monuments, extensive paved causeways and thousands of residential structures. The spatial layout of the majority of Caracol’s structures largely follows a typical Maya pattern, with buildings oriented to the four cardinal directions surrounding a central plaza. During the earliest history of Caracol’s occupation, the caching of objects within buildings was predominantly concentrated in public architecture, and was likely associated with elaborate public spectacles (Chase and Chase 1987; Inomata *et al.* 2006). Archaeological investigations demonstrate that over time, these caching practices became increasingly common throughout the site’s residential areas (Chase and Chase 2010, 2011, 2013). In considering

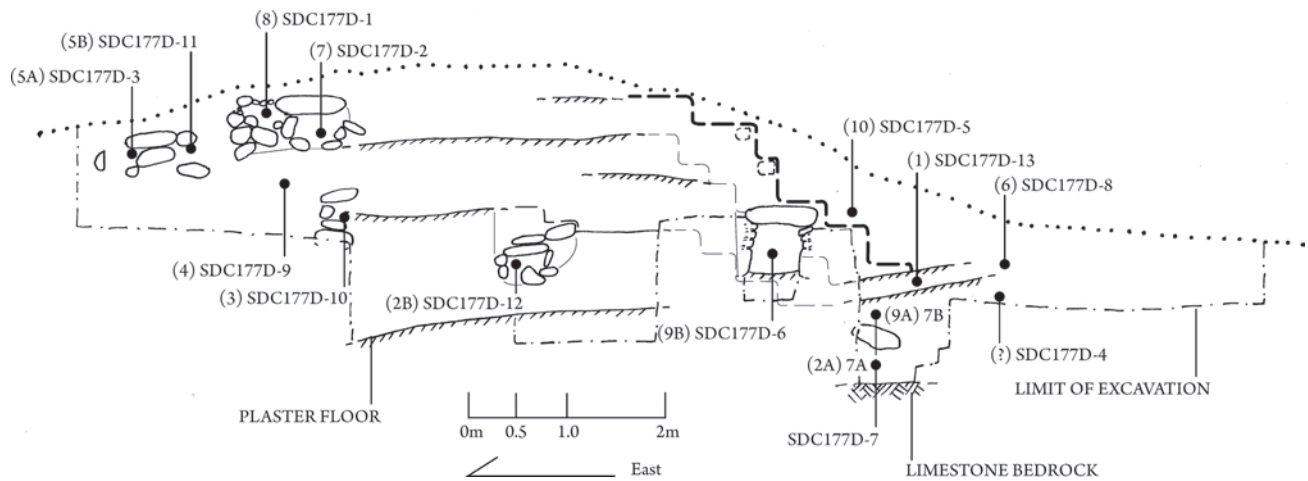
this general shift in ritualized caching, we argue that the acceptability of material exchange as a means of activating interaction with the supernatural on a public level had carried over to interactions between the living and the dead that were interred at home.

As in many other Maya settlements, the people of Caracol often buried their dead within and around their homes.² While bodies were usually placed within buildings and plazas, between AD 550-900 there was an increase in the practice of constructing formal mausoleums to specifically house the dead within residential patio groups (Chase and Chase 2010). These buildings were routinely modified to correspond with the life history of the living social group. Constructed on the eastern side of plazas, mausoleums provided physical spaces for the living to interact with the dead through ritual activities and acts of exchange. Many mausoleums are associated with more ritual offerings than there are burials, suggesting a continual engagement and ongoing generation of relationships between and among the living and the dead. Deceased ancestors maintained a very real presence in the lives of the living Maya that remembered them (Chase and Chase 2011); even after the death of the physical body, the memory of an ancestor and their perceived presence had the power of affect (Gillespie 2002; McAnany 1995).³ In most residential *plazuela* groups, inhabited for hundreds of years, only a handful of individuals were given the privilege of a tomb or crypt burial within associated eastern oriented mausoleum buildings. The memory of people buried within would have endured through the prominent visibility of the ancestral mausoleum to those carrying out their daily lives. This memory was reformulated and presented to younger generations through the repeated deposition of caches, including small bowls containing human phalanges referred to as ‘finger bowls’⁴ and lidded ceramic pots with appliqué facial features known as ‘face caches’. Dated texts painted on the capstones covering burials, in conjunction with repeated and structured cache deposits sequentially placed in many mausoleum structures, provide evidence of timed ritual events (Chase and Chase 2013). In Maya society, the spirits of the dead were the intangible property of the living and were often called upon, negotiated with and remembered through the passage of time (Chase 2011; Gillespie 2001, 2010; McAnany 1995).

2 See Gillespie 2002 for an overview of this practice and its possible social significance.

3 Here, agency is not solely equated with ‘intention’ but rather understood as the ability to influence other humans/nonhumans to act.

4 It is unclear whether the fingers placed in these bowls were from the living or the dead, the fragmentary nature of skeletal remains in many of Caracol’s excavated burials make this distinction difficult to discern. However, an ethnographic account of a group in Highland New Guinea removing fingers as a form of grieving present an intriguing possibility for these deposits (Sillitoe and Sillitoe 2009: 12).



Behavioural sequence	Deposit	Description
1	SDC177D-13	Construction of plaza floor, cache placed, then capped with next floor
2A	SDC177D-7A	Floors intruded and burial placed under 1st plaza floor
2B	SDC177D-12	Intruded into 1st structure and burial placed within
3	SDC177D-10	2nd phase of construction cut to place cache vessel and objects
4	SDC177D-9	2nd phase of construction cut to also place cache vessel and objects
5A	SDC177D-3	Latest phase of architecture modified to house deposit
5B	SDC177D-11	Latest phase of architecture modified to house deposit
6	SDC177D-8	Latest plaza floor cut and two cache vessels placed within
7	SDC177D-2	Burial placed within latest phase of architecture
8	SDC177D-1	Latest phase of architecture modified to house deposit
9A	SDC177D-7B	Cache placed during modification of structure and deposited more vessels
9B	SDC177D-6	Stairs cut to construct crypt and then capped with latest stairs
10	SDC177D-5	Cache vessel with lid placed in association with latest stair
?	SDC177D-4	Human bone deposited in front of structure

Figure 2. Section of Eastern Mausoleum Building showing location of material deposits and behavioral chronology (after Chase and Chase 2013: fig. 3, table assembled by Lucas R. Martindale Johnson).

The eastern mausoleum of the residential ‘GRB Group’⁵ at Caracol is an example of a social space constructed, experienced and remembered over multiple generations (fig. 2). Construction of this residential group was initiated during the onset of the Late Classic Period (*ca* AD 600), with Caracol’s major 40m high pyramidal complex (Caana) looming overhead just 170m to the west. Following established Caracol architectural traditions, the residents of the GRB Group constructed buildings around a central plaza, including a small structure used to house the dead on the eastern side of this space.

The earliest material traces of ritual behaviour within this group consist of three sets of bowls containing human finger bones (SDC177D-13). This deposit was sealed between two plaza floors on the eastern side, and may indicate that the area was a focus of ritual activity before the construction of the eastern structure and its associated tombs. It was most likely not visible when construction of the surrounding buildings began. It is unclear whether the

GRB Group’s inhabitants had any direct connection to these finger offerings, but they did not disturb the deposit when they constructed the first mausoleum structure above it. While the buildings bounding the north and south sides of the plaza were largely constructed in one effort, the eastern mausoleum underwent a series of modifications and additions throughout the life history of the residential group.

During the first generation of the GRB Group’s inhabitants, a crypt was cut into the plaza floor towards the front of the eastern mausoleum. Due to a later disturbance, it is unclear how many individuals were buried within this first crypt (SDC177D-7a). A fragment of a basal flange bowl included in the burial dated the event as having occurred around the time this group was undergoing its initial construction.⁶ Following widely shared architectural practices, the bulk of the building was constructed in stone and capped by a platform that likely supported a perishable

⁵ ‘GRB’ is named after a film company that recorded the excavations here for a television series.

⁶ For a complete description of this excavation, see 2007 Caracol Archaeological Project season report, available online at: www.caracol.org. *In situ* interments or intentional deposits at Caracol are designated by their Special Deposit designation (SD), operation number (C177), building designation (D) and deposit number (7).

wooden pole and thatch structure, in which the living could visit and engage with the deceased (fig. 3).

Once the burial was sealed, it was rendered invisible. It was through the absence of the body that the space was ritually created. Once invisible, it was committed to memory as a “mentally owned asset” (Küchler 1997: 41). The full extent of this knowledge may not have been equally shared throughout the group. When another member of the group died sometime later, the living were once again brought together as they cut and dismantled the floor to lay the body of a sub-adult within it (SDC177D-12). These events were not solely for the commemoration of the dead, but likely served to reinforce a social bond between the living while simultaneously inscribing a group identity onto the landscape (see Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008, Fitzsimmons and Shimada 2011 for general discussions surrounding social interactions between the living and the dead).

Following this burial, a small pit was cut within the building’s construction fill and a collection of objects were placed within it (SDC177D-10). The inclusion of material mediators between the living and the supernatural is a common practice cross-culturally (Hanks 2013; Keane 1998), with materials allowing for aspects of the intangible to become tangible (Keane 1998; Meskell 2005). The materials implicated in such a task carried meaning and value through both their visual and non-visual characteristics, while simultaneously exerting a very real material presence not restricted to their semiotic qualities (Barad 2003). In examining these objects individually and as an assemblage, a complex entangled web of materiality and signification emerges. A ceramic face cache was included, as were a range of objects placed both inside and alongside this vessel. This face cache is of a fairly standardized form and manufacture technique that was widely accessible and used across Caracol during this time, leading the principle investigators to suggest that they were made locally, specifically for this ritual purpose (see Chase and Chase 2013 for a discussion of these vessels).

The beads included within the face cache were made of jadeite and shell. The green colour of jadeite has been argued to carry symbolic meaning for the Maya as a reference to life and renewal (Freidel *et al.* 2002; Saunders 2001). Shell, on the other hand, has been argued to index the watery underworld. Jadeite and Shell are often paired together, reinforcing the cyclical nature of Maya cosmology (Freidel *et al.* 2002). As beads, they were likely worn. Intimate objects may carry the extended personhood of their owner, and have been shown to act as a tangible social proxy (Hendon 2000; Joyce 2000; Weiner 1992). Also included in this assemblage was a drilled shark tooth, several whole shells, a chert biface and 3 limestone ‘bars’. The drilled shark tooth may have been worn in suspension as an adornment, and was also procured from at least as far as the nearest ocean (over 90km away). The ancient Maya often depicted animals with quasi-human features, acting alongside humans



Figure 3. Artist rendering of the eastern mausoleum structure in Caracol’s GRB group (drawn by Lucas R. Martindale Johnson).

in various acts, suggesting a shared understanding of animals as acting subjects (Brown and Emery 2008). The inclusion of this shark tooth would also have referenced the perceived vitality of the animal (see Mock 1998, and Saunders 2001 for discussion of Mesoamerican ontology surrounding the ‘essence’ of animals). The limestone bars are similar to other objects found at the site bearing traces of burning and pigment (Chase and Chase 2013). One of the limestone bars in this particular assemblage had evidence of red pigment on the end. Through its use as a tool in ritualized activity such as the processing of pigment or smudging, the limestone bar was an active participant in the ritualized event (see Hanks 2013 for a similar example of ritualized power objects among contemporary Yucatec Maya ritual specialists). The chert biface carried physical aesthetic qualities, but also may have indexed the individual(s) that crafted, used and offered this object. As an assemblage,⁷ all materials—including the humans that carried out the burial of the materials—were ritualized in the act of this exchange.

To contend with the often complex character of things having both physical and communicative qualities, Webb Keane has described the sensuous nature of things as ‘bundled’ characteristics (2005: 187). Following Keane, we argue that the physical properties, enchain relationships and their semiotic qualities together constitute the ‘bundled’ nature of objects included in Caracol’s ritual caches. It is likely that the use of these objects during fundamental exchanges between the living and the dead imbued the spaces with meaning, and in the process committed these relations to the collective memory of the social group (Ayala 2002).

Another set of face caches was placed behind this collection (SDC177D-9). Within these pots was a large collection of obsidian, jadeite beads, whole shells, stingray spines and other faunal remains. The obsidian objects included in these ritual exchanges are typically referred to

⁷ Here we are explicitly referring to the concept of ‘assemblage’ as put forth by Deleuzian scholars (Bennett 2010).



Figure 4. ‘Face Caches’ with associated obsidian eccentrics in Special Deposit 9 of the eastern mausoleum structure. Numbers 1-5 indicate where refits among artifacts are present (vessel photographs courtesy of Caracol Archaeological Project, photographs of eccentrics by Lucas R. Martindale Johnson).

as ‘eccentrics’;⁸ however, a close examination reveals that most are exhausted blade cores, systematically notched and shaped by removing their proximal pressure platforms,

8 This term has a long history in the study of flaked stone artefacts that do not appear to carry functional attributes. In a Central American context, these are often argued to have been used as elite-centred symbols rather than as utilitarian tools (Iannone and Conlon 1993; Joyce 1932). While we continue to use this term, we understand it is problematic as it does not address the varied technological features and biographical nature of these objects, nor how cores and core fragments may also be seen as eccentrics depending on contextual associations (see Moholy-Nagy 2003:32).

distal ends and lateral margins, thus ending their potential to produce blades. Birth, termination and transformation imbue much of Mesoamerican ontology (Mock 1998). The act of terminating these obsidian cores transformed and renewed them as ritualized objects (fig. 4). This unseen incorporating action was carried out by someone familiar with the material properties and technology of obsidian blade production. Many of the parts removed from the exhausted cores are also included within these caches; refits of fragmented obsidian objects are thus common in Caracol’s ritual deposits. The presence of standardized kinds

of reworked cores and refits indexes the unseen relationships between household members and the obsidian crafters that provided objects for ritual. It also reveals a shared knowledge of how to create, curate, and later use and deposit these items to create ritualized spaces.

At the time that these two sets of offerings were placed, only two burials existed in the building. Spatially, the two face cache exchanges were closely associated with the individual in the centre of the floor. Temporally, the two offerings and the burial in the floor could have occurred during the course of one lifetime, and may not have been more than one generation later than the burial in the front of the building. Following the placement of these offerings, the GRB inhabitants covered them with cobble fill and placed a new floor, effectively rendering them invisible.

While the architecture in the back of the building has subsequently deteriorated, complicating the stratigraphy, it does appear that burial events continued in this area of the building. While there appear to be no physical markers of previous graves, we argue that the living memory of the individual buried in the centre of the floor and the two sets of face caches behind it prevented later disturbances, as many of these deposits appear to coincide with construction episodes. A single adult and a face cache were placed in the back of the building (SDC177D-3 and SDC177D-11). Within the face cache was a limestone bar and an unworked pomacia shell. It is likely that each time individuals from the group returned to conduct these material exchanges, memory of the individuals buried within were recalled, and possibly shared with those that did not possess individual memories of their own. Later members of the group may have adopted this ‘borrowed memory,’ effectively establishing a history that could be called upon to assert a group identity and connection to the physical space (Halbwachs 1980 [1950]: 51).

Using previously established stylistic seriation of the face cache pots, developed with associated dated texts from Caracol and where available radiometric dating (Chase and Chase 2013: 18, fig. 5), we are able to derive a relative date of particular face cache deposits. Based on ceramic changes, we can at least say that roughly a generation later, two ceramic pots with bird faces were carefully placed at the base of the building stairs facing out to the plaza, alongside a small set of bowls containing human finger bones (SDC177D-8).⁹ One of the bird pots contained a collection of obsidian, a whole shell and an intricately carved limestone head of *kinich ahau* (the Maya sun god). The presence of a sun god in this eastern building reaffirms the importance of celestial movement in the creation of sacred spaces. East was seen as particularly important as it marked the beginning of the sun god’s journey across the sky and acted as a symbol of regeneration and rebirth (Chase and Chase 2007: fig. 53a, Thompson 1970).

⁹ Elsewhere it has been hypothesized that these events occur during specific calendric cycles, such as every Maya *katun*, or twenty years (Chase and Chase 2013).

This event was followed by the placement of a single individual in an intrusive crypt in the back of the building (SDC177D-2) during the Late Classic period and, later, the placement of a face cache just behind the burial. Within the face cache were 8 obsidian eccentrics, a shaped piece of malachite and an unworked shell (SDC177D-1).

The presence of ceramics dating to the Terminal Classic Period (AD 800–950) indicates that many years later the building underwent a serious modification, as the GRB inhabitants removed a large section of the frontal portion of the building to construct a formal tomb (SDC177D-6). When they cut through the building and the plaza floor beneath to construct and reinforce the tomb wall, they disturbed the first burial that was placed roughly three hundred years prior (SDC177D-7A). Following that disturbance, a collection of ceramic vessels were stacked and piled on top of this earliest crypt (SDC177D-7B). The tomb (SDC177D-6) was then finished and a single individual was placed inside with two vessels at the feet and covered by a large capstone, with a new stairway completed above them.

Archaeological discussions of memory have often emphasized the entangled process of remembering and forgetting (Chapman 2009; Mills 2005). Up until this particular deposit (SDC177D-7B), all previous burials and caches were placed consistently without disturbing any prior deposits. By the time the GRB inhabitants placed this deceased individual in SDC177D-6, the mausoleum had already been in use for many years and was housing numerous burials and offerings. It is possible that over the course of 300 years, that earliest burial (SDC177D-7A) had slipped out of living memory, thus explaining the visible disruption.

Remnants of incense burners were also found throughout the use of the building, indicating that the burning of incense also likely occurred during these interactions. Incense burning has been argued to be a way of both establishing communication with the supernatural and demarcating sacred space among the ancient Maya (Taube 1998:446). Together, the multiple burials, deposited materials and incense burners created a ritually significant space in which the identity of a social group was inscribed on the landscape over subsequent generations.

Discussion

In a reflection on Paul Connerton’s (1989) division of ‘inscribing’ and ‘incorporating’ practices of social memory transmission,¹⁰ Strathern (2013: 191–193) observes that the act of ceremonial exchange simultaneously incorporates

¹⁰ Connerton (1989: 72–73) outlined two ways in which (social) memory becomes ingrained within the body. First, he outlines incorporating practices or the acts by which information is sent and received through bodily expressions. Secondly, he identifies inscribing practices as intentional acts that have the quality of curating memory. In Connerton’s view one practice does not preclude the other.

social memory through obligatory gestures and performance *and* inscribes by way of its curatorial practice. Similarly, these actions may include the use of materials, in which case incorporating and inscribing practices rarely occur separately. Such exchanges include the corporality of exchanging materials through gesture and performance, while these acts may inscribe, reify, or transform participants' bodies through their places and actions of exchange. Such performances are predicated on the materiality of space, objects and nonhuman animals that engage with the senses during incorporating and inscribing processes. These actions in turn position future acts through the inclusion of memory in the spaces where they are performed, and through the materials utilized in these performances. The structuring of unseen spaces can be viewed as an extension of this unfolding of past memories in the production of ritual acts as well as the generation of new traditions in the construction of ritual spaces during these ritual exchanges. The ritual practices observed in the GRB Group were widely shared across Caracol's urban landscape during the Late Classic Period. We argue that the construction and maintenance of ritual mausoleum structures as well as the insertion of caches and burials periodically brought both the living and the dead together through timed events. Such exchanges formed the basis of social relations at Caracol, Belize.

We have attempted to show that the cumulative practices carried out by the Late Classic Maya utilized what Assmann (2006) refers to as the secondary aspect of ritualization. Whereas the first aspect is the production of objects and their routine use in daily life (i.e. the production of lithic materials, the use of ceramics, the burning of incense, etc.), it is within the secondary act of ritualization, where their engagement with the senses during marked occasions create a 'mnemonic mark' which perpetuates the significance of such actions for those present, allowing the transmission of social memory. Although it is important to note that ritual and the everyday often co-occur and are not necessarily separable, ritualization can be understood as a momentary emphasis of the fluid temporality of daily actions (Bradley 2003). As such, it is the repeated constitution of such sensorial acts during exchanges with ancestors that anchors spaces through routinized action as a locus of future activities, in this case eastern buildings in Maya residential groups. While the formalization of such spaces solidified social relations between the living and their ancestors (McAnany 1995), the ritualization of such places may have maintained their significance even as the recognition of particular past ancestors may have been forgotten (see Bloch 1995 for an example of this process). The spaces which are constructed from such actions may visibly solidify their significance through the unseen accumulation of actions and materials.

Within the GRB Group, earlier burials were disturbed through the process of depositing later materials. While these spaces maintained a formalized significance for future ritual action, the memories of particular burials from

past ritual activities had faded. Thus it was the meaningful action that was remembered, and not necessarily a particular person or set of cached objects.

While the practice of caching materials has a long history in Mesoamerica, the practice of assembling particular groupings of materials within Late Classic households defined a particular mortuary tradition. Following Hobsbawm (1983), this new form of ritualized practice formalized relations among the Maya at Caracol and may have initialized new forms of tradition within particular households by their utilization of older practices previously acted out in formal public arenas. While materials such as shell, jade, obsidian, and ceramics have a particular significance in ritual activity for both ancient and modern Maya peoples (Brown 2004: 330), their deposition as a process also has a particular significance and may have been predicated on beliefs related to the appropriate orientation of bodies and shrines (Brown and Emery 2008; Hanks 2013).

Furthermore, the materiality of these assemblages amplified their significance for the production of social memory in ritual practice (Iannone 2010: 355; Schwake and Iannone 2010). However, it is not too far to extend the argument that practices that engaged the senses in the production and bundling of cached materials, such as those deposited in the GRB Group, were likely imbued with some mode of personhood, as has been argued to be a fundamental ontological position of the 'multinaturalism' of many Amerindian perspectives (Vivieros de Castro 1998; 2004; 2012). Such elements of personhood are often generated through the perspectival qualities of materials and the sensual relationships which they often exhibit (Zedeño 2009: 413).

Conclusion

An archaeology concerned with the senses includes the consideration of how materials enable sensuous engagement. The small mausoleum structure in the GRB Group was constituted and experienced through bodily practices during repeated visitations and burial events. The practices and the memories they produced established a sacred space. The materials interred in the building were also important in the development and endurance of a collective memory, as both "objects and people are engaged in the process of remembering, in that objects provide humans with the ground to experience memory" (Jones 2007: 22).

The collection of structures clustered around a central plaza known to contemporary archaeologists as the GRB Group was at one time a thriving lived space complete with an array of sounds, smells, visual reminders of a collective identity, history, and vision of the world. The hidden and unseen presence of buried caches and burials recalled a collective memory that simultaneously produced a space where the largely invisible cosmos was materialized through both seen and unseen acts.

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