

INTRODUCTION

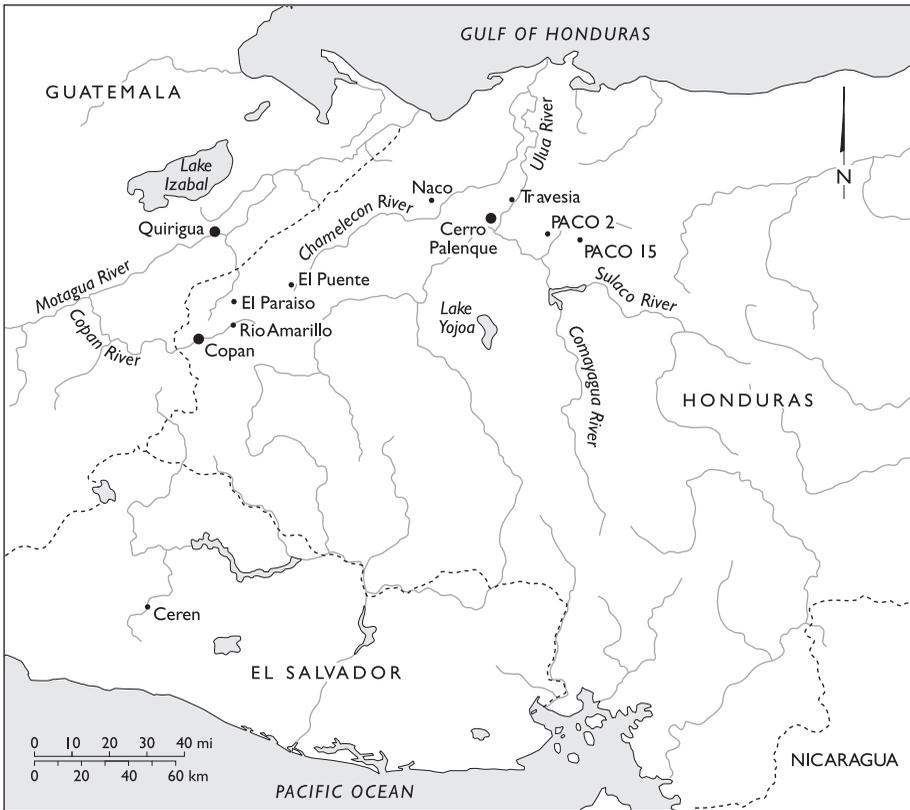
Thinking About Memory

This is a book about memory and everyday life in three societies that flourished more than one thousand years ago in what is now Honduras, including the Maya kingdom in the Copan valley and its neighbors in the Cuyumapa valley and at the site of Cerro Palenque in the lower Ulua river valley. The people who lived in these places left behind monumental buildings, intricate works of art, fine examples of craftsmanship such as pottery, figurines, and stone tools, the remains of their dead, and the broken and discarded remnants of their daily life; but they left only a small body of written records. My project may seem quixotic because of this, but my contention is that an archaeological study of memory in past societies such as these based largely on material remains is both possible and worthwhile. It is possible because memory is not just a faculty of the

individual mind operating in isolation but a social process of remembering and forgetting that is embedded in the materiality of human existence. It is a social practice intimately bound up in the relations people develop with one another and with the world around them through what they do, where and how they do it, and with whom or what—and results in physical traces that make up the archaeological record. It thus belongs with such processes as learning, knowing, and making sense of things, which have been productively studied by social anthropologists, philosophers, phenomenologists, semioticians, and psychologists and which, I argue, are susceptible to archaeological examination.

It is a worthwhile project because discussing memory in a specific historical and cultural context, moreover one so emphatically “non-Western” as pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, sheds light on the how and why of social memory itself. The project also offers a new perspective on the complex societies of Mexico and Central America that developed outside of the influence of Europe for millennia before the shock of conquest and colonization beginning in the sixteenth century. These are societies that G. W. F. Hegel (1975:152–96) dismissed as being not just outside history but incapable of progress. This view is contradicted by the words of the people themselves and by the work of archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, epigraphers, linguists, and art historians, which reveal much about the historical consciousness of the Maya, Aztecs, and other groups native to the region. Yet the concept of history that permeates a great deal of this research is a restricted one. Approaches to Maya history during the Late to Terminal Classic periods, my focus here, have combined an intense engagement with art and hieroglyphic writing with a long-standing fascination with elite life to produce an overly narrow and fetishistic obsession with royalty. Shifting to a broader, theoretically more complex approach made possible by positing a more intimate and less disjunctive relationship between history and social memory, I am able to discuss how the “political economy of memory” (Melion and Küchler 1991:30) plays out at different levels of society and among three distinctive neighboring societies that were part of the greater Maya world.

Thinking about memory is also worthwhile precisely because I am working from the material remains to social context and questions of meaning, from physical residues to the actions and interactions that produced memory. I thus find myself challenged to reverse the analytical approach taken by much research on memory and related cognitive and social practices. These



Map I. Location of important sites in southeastern Mesoamerica. Drawn by Bill Nelson.

bodies of research, developed from various disciplinary perspectives, converge on their insistence that the ways through which people learn, remember, develop a sense of self, and understand are situated in social, spatial, temporal, and physical contexts. These contexts must be studied, not just set aside as complicating factors or background noise. Furthermore, these contexts are not only linguistic or discursive but also nonconceptual, based in action, and part of “the body’s intelligent orientation to the world” (Carman 2005:71).

Taking seriously the proposition that making meaning, remembering, learning, and knowing are linked acts that people engage in through practice, I focus on how people interact with one another and with the world around them in contexts that are localized in time and space. The relationship between time and memory is obvious. Time’s intimate connection to

space is often ignored. As Nancy Munn (1992:94) asserts, “In a lived world, spatial and temporal dimensions cannot be disentangled, and the two come together in various ways.” I achieve this focus by subjecting the material culture itself to a concentrated scrutiny, resulting in an extended, creative, and fruitful engagement with the material remains of human endeavors. I draw on a panoply of analytical techniques and multiple lines of evidence, including what I can learn from the properties of the material remains themselves and what their spatial associations tell me about why and where people interacted. I also consider what kinds of comparisons I can draw with other groups from the information provided in documents produced from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth by Spanish and native writers as well as those produced by later explorers and ethnographers. Information conveyed through visual imagery and texts also adds to my understanding.

As an archaeologist, I approach the study of memory as lived out through everyday life from an intensely material perspective. Archaeologists find themselves enmeshed in the materiality of two worlds, that in which they live and that of the past which they study. I start with a body of materials recovered from excavations in and around ancient houses. These include the spatial proximity of certain buildings and artifacts—remains of at least some of the things people made, used, exchanged, and interacted with—as well as a knowledge of where those artifacts were found and thus what associations exist between objects and space in the residential group. I take a set of physical things—tangible and capable of being excavated, measured, analyzed to determine the characteristics of their material properties, compared, and represented—and use them to explore the significance of memory for people living at Cerro Palenque, Copan, and Cuyumapa from the seventh century through the eleventh CE, when their societies were at their largest and most diverse. The communities of memory (Burke 1989) that develop through actions and interactions bind individuals, places, and material culture together over time and in the process create a sense of relational personhood. Communities of memory are embedded in specific material domains that engrain memory, knowledge, and subjectivity in the human body through actions and interactions with people and things in particular spatial settings. I consider how the experience of living daily life, burying the dead and storing things, crafting objects and transmitting knowledge, and exchanging goods and feasting at home helped these people construct their particular histories and subjectivities.

My focus is on what people do at home as they live out their day-to-day

life. I ask, How does everyday life become a locus of memory? Through the argument I present in this book I demonstrate how practices of everyday life in Copan, Cerro Palenque, and Cuyumapa turn domestic spaces into places of memory with important consequences for the production of social difference, the entrenchment of social hierarchies, and the ability of some to exert control over others. The multiple memory communities in these societies may be in competition or disagreement with one another or with the effort by some to produce a more encompassing and larger-scale totality through public acts of commemoration. The presence of multiple communities built around memory and practice opens a way to understanding how a historical consciousness is made manifest in material culture, practice, and landscape.

The ability of archaeology to discern associations among the built environment, the natural landscape, artifacts, and the remains of the dead speaks directly to how materiality, embodiment, and the spatiality and temporality of social life give meaning to people's actions and interactions at multiple social scales and in diverse settings. Archaeological materials and contexts recovered from excavation in living areas in Cerro Palenque, Copan, and Cuyumapa attest to the repetition of actions that involved more than one person, were carried out with and through things, and were productive of interaction. Archaeologists have typically divided these actions into those related to daily life, those with economic significance, those relating to ritual, and so on. The usefulness of these essentially functional distinctions is not great when one considers identity to be relational and intersubjective, although many archaeologists, like historians and cultural anthropologists, have given a greater role to ritual and commemoration than to the everyday in the production of memory. I find this emphasis debatable and explain why in the course of this book.

I cannot discern the actions and relations of any specific person. Archaeological data are too coarse grained to pretend to such ethnographic particularity. The hieroglyphic inscriptions created by the Maya living in the Copan valley might seem to offer hope of a more biographical insight. These carved and painted texts, mostly concentrated in one area of the settlement, have been used to produce lists of rulers and to identify a limited set of politically significant acts by royalty and a few favored relatives or noble supporters (see W. Fash 2001; Martin and Grube 2000; Stuart 2005). These documents serve the political purpose of reinforcing the authority of the king and his family, who deliberately limited which events and which people to record. They also determined when events should be memorialized, often preferring

to create retrospective accounts on monuments erected long after the moment when the event took place (Grube 2006). From my perspective, therefore, they give insight into how one memory community attempts to perpetuate the memory of certain events and people through inscription in a permanent medium.

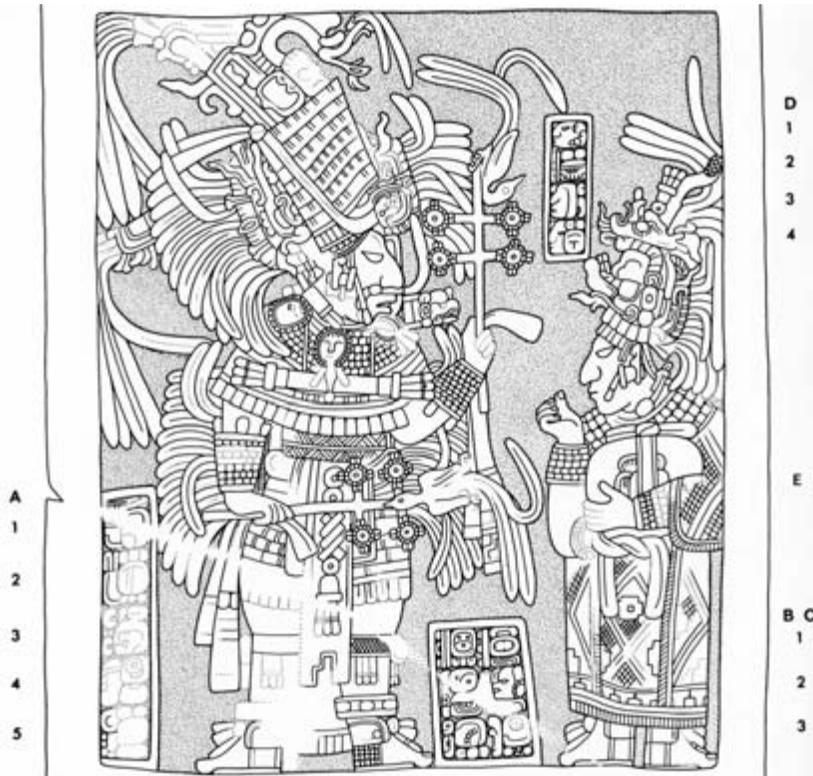
UNBUNDLING MEMORY

In Maya sculpture, women of high rank may hold large bundles tied up in cloth. Sometimes the bundle is shown with the wrapping folded back to reveal its contents: a clay bowl holding bark paper and sharp stone knives used to let blood as an offering to ancestors and deities (see Joyce 1993b, 1996). When I state that memory can be approached as embodied and situated intersubjective social practices of remembering and forgetting intimately bound up with the materiality of the world around us, I have presented readers of this book with the textual equivalent of that bundle.

If memory were indeed something that could be taken out of an offering bowl and turned around in one's hands, one would discover that memory takes on a different shape depending on the angle of view. One way scholars have tried to understand memory is by making a distinction between individual and social memory. From this angle, memory is seen as both a faculty possessed by individual people and a property of social groups or larger collectivities such as society. This also creates a seemingly neat division of labor between disciplines that study the individual and individual memory, such as psychology, the cognitive sciences, or biography, and those, including sociology, anthropology, and social history, that concentrate on the groups, structures, institutions, and beliefs that form society and culture. Whether one wishes to argue for the primacy of one of these forms of memory over the other or for their complementary coexistence, individual and social memory are taken to be a duality that separates memory into two disparate things. Research on the individual, however, has increasingly had to come to grips with the social, while research on the social has discovered it risks reifying abstractions if it ignores the individual.

THE SOCIABILITY OF INDIVIDUAL MEMORY

The study of memory as an individual faculty or a property of an individual mind may seem at first glance the obvious way to approach the subject. From this perspective, contemplative activity is inside of people, it is



1. Royal Maya man (left) and woman (right) from a stone lintel. The woman holds a bundle of ritual paraphernalia. Drawing, YAX: Lnt. 5 from *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, Vol. 3, Part 1, Yaxchilan, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

“intrapyschic,” and thus “our only knowledge of reality comes through the representations we have formed within ourselves” (Taylor 2005:26), which must be stored and retrieved in some manner. A very old model of how this happens has been reconstructed by Frances Yates (1966) in her history of classical, medieval, and Renaissance arts of artificial memory. The anonymous author of *Ad Herennium* (ca. 86–82 BCE) instructs his rhetoric students that they can become better orators by learning the techniques of artificial memory, the invention of which is attributed to the poet Simonides of Ceos (ca. 556–468 BCE). Endorsed by Cicero and Quintilian, the art was said to help orators improve their ability to remember words, facts, images, and all the things necessary to deliver long, complicated speeches. The approach relies on a system of storage and retrieval that is entirely mental and inten-

tional. A person creates a set of associations in his mind between what he wants to remember and a series of places (*loci*) and images that are vivid but not necessarily based on some real-world example already known to the person. This process is not only intrapsychic but resolutely unsocial: “It is better to form one’s memory *loci* in a deserted and solitary place for crowds of passing people tend to weaken the impressions. Therefore the student intent on acquiring a sharp and well-defined set of *loci* will choose an unfrequented building in which to memorise places” (Yates 1966:7).

Revived in the thirteenth century by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, the art of artificial memory, in its medieval practice influenced by the rediscovery of Aristotle, took on a moral tone as memory became an aspect of Prudence, one of the cardinal virtues, rather than a technique of rhetoric. Yates (1966:78–79) suggests that the Scholastics’ recognition of the value of images to memory and more generally to the ability to apprehend spiritual matters may in part explain why visual imagery of religious subjects expands during this period. Images and places that the Roman students of rhetoric each held in their mind, in their individualized and imaginary memory palaces, have now become something that can be viewed and used by others in the form of paintings and frescos. During the Renaissance, the art of memory was taken up by the Neoplatonists, who continued the process of externalization, embodied most strikingly in Giulio Camillo’s theater of memory. (Or at least it would have been if the wonderful project Yates describes had ever been finished and put into operation.)

More modern attempts to model how natural memory works turn out to mirror this shift from interior to exterior processes and from the individual in isolation to the individual as enmeshed in relations with other people and with things. Memory has been modeled as a set of mental operations based on the application of rules that are consciously applied by “a computer-brain isolated in the skull” (Fisette 2003:56). Such computational and representational models have become increasingly unsatisfactory, however, as the importance of dynamic interaction between individual cognitive processes and “content, context, environment and social setting” (Hirst and Manier 1995:108) has become more and more apparent (Gallagher and Varela 2003; Heath and Luff 2000; Küchler 2005). In other words, the notion of individual atoms of humanity sitting all alone doing something called remembering has become increasingly untenable as a way of approaching memory.

Social psychologists have emphasized how talking about events plays an important role in an individual’s ability to remember experiences and

feelings—and in their ability to forget (Pennebaker and Banasik 1997). At this point, we are moving from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal. The processes going on “inside people’s heads” are thoroughly entrenched in and inseparable from the world in which people live and which they construct through their action (Lave 1993; Wenger 1998). Memories are created as much as they are retrieved through such practices as storytelling, conversation, participation in activities of daily life or ceremonies, visual cues, associations with objects or places external to ourselves, and the repetition of actions that perpetuate a sense of relationship (Boone 1994a; Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Leibold 1994; Melion and Kuchler 1991; Muriuki 2002; Petrov 1989; Rappaport 1990).

This phenomenon makes it possible for individuals to feel they remember events they did not experience or know people they have never met (Halbwachs 1994). Visiting London for the first time, Maurice Halbwachs has the sense that he knows the city, even parts that may no longer exist. His memories are based on the novels he read as a child and on conversations he had with friends who live there (Halbwachs 1997:52–53). Halbwachs is immersed in the palimpsest (Bender 1998) that is the complex urban landscape through which the past becomes part of a particular present enacted as the visitor experiences the city as social space (Lefebvre 1991b). Thus, the anxiety we seem to feel about whether memories are real or really our own stems in large part from a disjunction between a particular model, one might even say ideology, of memory and how remembering actually occurs. In *The Autobiography of Goethe. Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life (Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit)*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1891:2–3) writes,

When we desire to recall what befel [sic] us in the earliest period of youth, it often happens that we confound what we have heard from others with that which we really possess from our own direct experience. Without, therefore, instituting a very close investigation into the point, which after all could lead to nothing . . . our family liked to tell of all sorts of waggeries to which I was enticed by [the neighbors]. . . . One fine afternoon, . . . I . . . hurled [a pot] into the street. The [neighbors] . . . cried out, “Another.” I was not long in flinging out a pot; and, . . . by degrees the whole collection, platters, pipkins, mugs and all, were dashed upon the pavement.

We remember through other people’s statements about past events—in effect, we learn to remember. Like Halbwachs wandering the streets of Lon-

don in the company of a long-dead author, Goethe in his memoir illustrates the degree to which remembering is a social act. He asks whether the pot-throwing incident was “a real memory,” something he knows from “direct experience,” but then decides it does not matter. Given how psychologists have shown that memories are not merely stored in the individual mind waiting to be retrieved but are instead developed through interaction and social relations, this question is not answerable and attempting to do so “could lead to nothing.”

The distinction between poetry, fiction, or imagination (*Dichtung*) and truth, fact, or reality (*Wahrheit*) is ultimately irresolvable—if we assume that true or truthful memories can exist only through individual recall by Goethe as an autonomous, self-referential subject responsible for “his” memories. Goethe as a participant in intersubjective relations with others, however, contributes to the production of a sociable memory, the validity and value of which depend on more than just his contribution.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEMORY?

The study of social memory reverses the analytical arrow. It takes some social group or society itself as its starting point and considers how memory can transcend the life span or mental capacity of the individual. Just as studies that begin with the individual had to find a way to move beyond the particularity of intrapsychic mental processes, so studies that start with society had to find a way to reincorporate people into social memory.

Halbwachs, profoundly influenced by Emile Durkheim, published his work on collective memory in 1925, thereby opening the way for the study of memory separate from the psychological focus on the individual (Coser 1992; Halbwachs 1992, 1994; Hutton 1993:77–90). By positing that “memory depends on the social environment,” Halbwachs (1992:37) argued that the social groups with which a person interacts become the primary locus for recalling memories. Memory is more than an activity of an individual mind because it is the social context that determines how and why memories are recalled, recognized as important, and connected to places and events. Memories are not always there in a person’s mind or immediately accessible but must be made to recur through social interaction.

The value of memory interlocutors is apparent in Vladimir Nabokov’s description of how he revised his autobiography. The first edition had been written while he was isolated geographically and emotionally from his family and did not have access to materials that would confirm his remem-

brances. Years later, he traveled to Europe and renewed ties with his relatives: “At these family reunions, *Speak, Memory* was judged. Details of date and circumstance were checked, and it was found that in many cases I had erred, or had not examined deeply enough an obscure but fathomable recollection. Certain matters were dismissed by my advisers as legends or rumors or, if genuine, proved to be related to [other] events or periods. . . . Both my sisters angrily remonstrated against my description of the journey to Biarritz . . . and by pelting me with specific details convinced me I had been wrong in leaving them behind” (Nabokov 1966:14).

Remembering is thus a process of reconstruction or even construction, not merely preservation. Groups endorse a past that makes sense in light of present circumstances and attitudes. From this perspective, one should ask why Goethe’s parents considered the dish smashing worthy of being remembered—of becoming part of their family’s history—and how this memory shaped Goethe’s relations with his parents, sister, and their neighbors.

The recognition by Goethe that our memories combine what we have been told with what we have experienced is certainly very close to the recent shift in emphasis among some psychologists toward a recognition of the social context of remembering. Halbwachs, however, emphasized the collective over the individual, taking such social formations as families, social classes, and religions as abstract entities that exist independently of any particular individual and can be said to possess an identity of their own. By identifying a variety of collectivities that serve as loci of collective memory, Halbwachs stressed that people are members of several groups, including more than one family through marriage or other social ties, but also community, social class, ethnicity, and they contribute to memory making in multiple contexts in which different memories are salient. This process leads to the creation of diverse bodies of memories that may be deployed by groups as they assert connections or differentiate themselves.

The anger of Nabokov’s sisters at having been written out of the trip to Biarritz illustrates one of the criticisms leveled at Halbwachs: that he was indifferent to the possibility of conflict or disagreement in the process of reconstructing a past (Burke 1989; Cole 2001; Connerton 1989). A shared past is not derived solely from processes characterized by social solidarity and communication that are untainted by relations of power and differences in authority (Best and Kellner 1991). His lack of attention to this issue must be recognized but does not vitiate the value of his two main insights, which have proved productive for research on social and individual memory. One is

that memories are made, not just retrieved, and that memory making is *work*, requiring not just remembering but also forgetting, debating, learning, reconciling or suppressing differences, and engaging across time and space with other people and ideas. The other is that groups of people that habitually interact furnish a prime opportunity for the work of memory making to go forward.

Since Halbwachs, the term *social memory* has become widely adopted as an alternative to as well as an expansion of his concept of collective memory. Social memory, it is argued, allows greater awareness of the individual (Crane 1997; Fentress and Wickham 1992) and expresses a sense of dissatisfaction with the Durkheimian notion of the collective (Cole 2001; Connerton 1989; Handler 1994). Nevertheless, it generally places greater emphasis on the social, that is to say, the group aspect of socially meaningful remembering, than on the individual.

Social memory has certainly become a widely evoked concept (see Canuto and Yaeger 2000; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Williams 2003; and Mills and Walker 2008 for recent archaeological applications). In a thoughtful attempt to characterize what they call “social memory studies,” Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins sum up this multiplicity of approaches and perspectives as a “nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise” (1998:106). Maria Cattell and Jacob Climo (2002:4) go so far as to suggest that social memory is something “impossible to define” but that “we seem to recognize it when we see it.” This rather startling alignment of social memory with pornography implies that at least some of the difficulty results from the reification of social memory as a static object (an “it”) with commonly held properties regardless of context.

MEMORY AND IDENTITY

One’s perspective on the memory bundle from this angle highlights the connection between memory and identity, which is widely held to be central both to the individual sense of self and to the group sense of coherence that makes people members of something larger (Burke 1989; Gillis 1994; Le Goff 1992). As an analytical concept, identity has been divided into the same two parts as memory: either it is something inherent in the individual person or it is a property of collectivities, groups that can be treated as a kind of individual writ large and clearly separable from other groups, just as individuals are distinct from one another physically and psychically. Writing on the

relationship between memory and identity, Richard Handler suggests that one view social groups as situational and symbolic, “constituted and reconstituted through historical action” (1994:29). What we call social groups are neither merely agglomerations of individuals nor unchanging collectivities but practice-based sets of relationships and contexts for interaction and action, marked by varying degrees of participation and understanding that “inevitably subsume hostility and amity, rivalry and solidarity” (Jackson 1998:14). These relations are intersubjective but not always harmonious, as some approaches to intersubjectivity assume (Best and Kellner 1991; Smolka, de Goes, and Pino 1995). Any surface impression of integration and collectivity is the product of a great deal of work by the group’s members.

Handler’s analysis of identity has important implications for our understanding of memory. It argues that society is less a clearly bounded and integrated totality encompassing equally bounded and stable groups than a shifting congeries of relations and groupings. His suggestion does not lead back to an isolated atom of individualism. It recognizes that people do group themselves (or are grouped by others) into and consider themselves to be members of something longer lived and larger than any individual but asks one to be aware of the historical circumstances through which these groups come to be and which help explain why they matter. In this book I focus on how the Maya at Copan and their neighbors at Cerro Palenque and in the Cuyumapa valley formed themselves into social groups that endure over time through practice. One such group I am interested in is created through the sharing of domestic space and participation in the activities of daily life. As will become apparent, some of these domestic spaces were quite large and were home to larger numbers of people than we associate with domestic groups in contemporary society. This variation in size and scale reflects the fact that some households are longer lived than others, the greater time depth of their personal history resulting in a more substantial physical presence. It also may be related to differences in wealth (frequently the result of accumulation over time) and reflective of differences in social status. Despite this variation, certain fundamental kinds of actions and interactions emerge as integral to daily life in these societies.

Handler’s ideas align with practice-centered approaches that argue that abstractions such as society, social groups, the individual or gender, power, economy do not have a prior existence that is reflected in and determining of relations and actions but are in fact constructed over and over again through these practices (Bell 1992; Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 1998; Farnell 1999; Keane

1995, 1997; Lovell 2000; D. Miller 1987, 2005; Moore 1994; Sawicki 1994; Weedon 1997; Wenger 1998). I see the significance for memory this way: accepting, as I do, the close connection between identity and memory, once the one (identity) becomes something recreated over time (historical and symbolic), then so does the other. In other words, memory is also something reconstituted over time in particular contexts. Social memory does not enshrine a collective narrative of events so much as it becomes a process through which people bring the past into the present.

MEMORY, HISTORY, AND MODERNITY

Shifting the memory bundle yet again reveals another set of issues, that of the relationship between memory and history. Any attempt to consider memory in diverse cultural and historical contexts must come to grips with an intellectual framework that has characterized the modern and the postmodern as different from preceding periods of European history (such as the medieval), rural society (peasants), and the non-Western. The modern and the postmodern (or the late modern) become stages in human world history and particular kinds of social formations that are also geographically and philosophically Western (Best and Kellner 1991; Harvey 1990; Lovibond 1993; Piot 1999; Poster 1997; Rabinow 1994). This condition corresponds to what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1991) calls the “savage slot,” also known as the primitive, the traditional, the premodern, and the archaic, and apparently necessary to the self-definition of the Western philosophical subject as the sole possessor of history and culture capable of progress (Hegel 1975). Mesoamerican societies before European contact, like those of Africa and other parts of the non-Western world, are a large part of the conventionally defined premodern or traditional counterpart that provides the implicit comparison point against which modern life differentiates itself (Giddens 1981, 1990). The premodern is not so much a temporal division as a marker of difference based on assumptions about history, change, complexity, and evolution. The problem is not the recognition of the existence of cultural and historical difference fundamental to an anthropological project such as this one. It is how differences between groups labeled modern and premodern, Western and non-Western, have been framed and how they have been unreflectively absorbed into discussions of history and memory.

Premodern or traditional societies are supposed to lack historical consciousness, rely on myth for explanation, and be subject to the unconscious

force of custom (Burke 2002; Rappaport 1990; Sweetman 2003; Trouillot 1991). Some have gone so far as to argue that there is a primitive or pre-modern kind of mind that differs in its cognitive abilities because of these disparate conditions. These assumptions permeate a range of literature in anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics, and history. They emerge in the attempt to oppose oral and literate cultures and the role and nature of memory in them (Connerton 1989; Goody 1986; Le Goff 1992; Hutton 1993; cf. Halverson 1992; Houston 2004; Parmentier 1987; Rappaport 1990; Rosaldo 1980; Schöttler 1995). Premodern or traditional people have memory, moderns have history. When Jacques Le Goff (1992:98) takes memory to be one of the objects of history, he assumes there is some coherent thing identifiable as memory that can not only be studied but also usefully contrasted to two things both called history—a critical, analytical mode of inquiry or the series of events and circumstances that make up the history of a people (see also Hutton 1993; Nora 1996). Other historians collapse the two, arguing that history is social memory (Archibald 2002; Burke 1989).

An example of the opposing of memory and history may be found in Pierre Nora's introduction to his collaborative work on French history and identity. The example is appropriate because some archaeologists have embraced Nora's organizing concept, *lieux de mémoire*, translated in an early version of his introduction as "sites of memory" (Nora 1989; see Alcock 2001; Holtorf 1997; Knapp and Ashmore 1999; Mills and Walker 2008; Moshenska 2007). The attractiveness of the English-language rendering of the phrase to an archaeologist is obvious. Not only does it incorporate a common term in the discipline but it seems to refer to something spatial and physical, the very essence of what archaeology studies. Monuments and other large-scale, enduring, visible constructions have been labeled sites of memory.

In his introduction to the later English-language edition of the work published under Nora's direct supervision, however, Nora notes that there is no "precise English equivalent" for the term and, as a result, asked the translator to "keep the French expression whenever possible, while substituting *place* or *site* only when these English words seem to capture the sense adequately" (Nora 1996: fn 1). Although the *lieux de mémoire* that loom large in the French national consciousness include monuments, they also encompass ideas, songs, books, fictional characters, and institutions.

More problematic for an archaeological study of social memory and historical consciousness in a particular cultural context is the degree to which

the uncritical adoption of the concept carries with it acceptance of a specific perspective on the relationship between memory and history, so-called traditional and modern societies, that is part and parcel of the supposed disjunction between societies with and without history. For Nora, *lieux de mémoire* contrast with *milieux de mémoire*. In fact, *lieux de mémoire* exist in modern France only because “there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience” (Nora 1996:1). Peasants, that surviving remnant of premodern thinking in the West, were the last to inhabit *milieux de mémoire*. If these *milieux* still held sway, the French (or anyone living in modern or postmodern times) would not need *lieux de mémoire* because it would not be necessary to create external markers to force remembering. In fact, there would be no history. All acts “would be experienced . . . as a religious repetition of sempiternal practices” (1996:2). Memory, if one can even call it that, is undifferentiated wallowing in ritual; history is critical analysis of something outside of one’s own experience. Our problem, according to Nora, is that modern society has acquired a historical consciousness but has not yet freed itself from memory. Therefore, we still need the crutch of something specific, whether concrete or imaginary, to serve as a memory marker. If we recognize historical consciousness as a universal yet culturally constructed category rather than a symptom or development of modernity, however, the distinction between *milieux* and *lieux* is meaningless, just as it makes no sense to argue that traditional societies have no history.

In fact, to say that moderns (and only moderns) have history implies at least three things: first, that moderns, which includes us, the contemporary analysts of ancient societies, are the only ones capable of recognizing that there is a difference between past and present which allows events to be defined by their temporal occurrence; second, that we have the right kinds of records, records that allow us to reconstruct past, or historical, events; and, third, that we construct narratives about the past with the goal of explaining causes or origins as well as preserving the knowledge of historical events (Parmentier 1987). Because we live in a society so wedded to a particular definition of history it is difficult for many of us to grasp the possibility that remembering over time can occur without a specific kind of historical record or evidence, the written text. This oversight allows us to label some societies as being without history and as lacking even the ability to think historically. From this perspective, social memory raises the specter of inaccuracy, at best, and fabrication, at worst. Thus Richard Bradley, commenting on the

chapters in *Archaeologies of Memory*, worries about the “progressive distortion of history” (2003b:223) over time in societies without writing, even when material markers like monuments exist that function as temporal referents.

Similar worries may be discerned in the valorization of Maya documents dating from before the Spanish conquest. The texts that have survived (only a portion of what once existed) are most commonly carved on stone monuments, painted on pottery, or incised on portable objects made of jade, obsidian, bone, turtle shell, and other materials. Although their existence has been extensively documented since the nineteenth century, their translation proved difficult, and it is only in the past twenty to thirty years that large numbers of texts have been translated and published (see Coe 1999; Houston 2000; Wichmann 2006). Even now, large gaps remain, and some readings are disputed. The growing body of information made available through an understanding of these texts has led some Mayanists to claim they are now engaged in a historical enterprise rather than an anthropological one—Mayanists should be historians and the Maya emerge as possessors of a true historical consciousness, that is to say, one that looks like a modern or Western one (Coe 1999; Fash and Sharer 1991; Houston 2000; Pyburn 1998). These claims have been countered by those who feel that the sequences of events revealed in the texts, especially those on stone monuments, do not come up to the standard of history because they contain inconsistencies that make it impossible to construct a single coherent historical narrative for any one kingdom, such as Copan, or for the Maya area as a whole. The texts are deliberately inaccurate because they are the result not of a dedication to recalling the true sequence of events but of politically motivated decisions designed to hide the truth when inconvenient and bolster the fortunes of certain royal families—making them propaganda, not history (see Marcus 1992a, 1992b, 2002).

My approach is anthropological in that I argue that all societies have a sense of history but how they have defined the concept differs (Parmentier 1987; Rappoport 1990; Rösen 2002). In other words, history is as susceptible to anthropological analysis as the family, the household, the economy, and other institutions: “In many other cultural realms . . . wide variations in form and content are acknowledged at the same time that family resemblances across cultures are recognized. Why should the sense of history be an exception to this general rule of anthropological analysis?” (Rosaldo 1980:91–92). History is a universal but culturally constructed category that provides a way

for people to relate past, present, and future in a meaningful narrative that is expressed in various ways and takes various forms, not all of which mimic those we consider important or share the same concerns we do.

It is not a question of distinguishing true memories from false or accurate accounts from inaccurate ones but of trying to understand how and why people create connections in the present that are validated by a shared history. Who shares the history and what alternative histories coexist with one another, creating potential sources of conflict within or between societies? The Late Classic residents of Group 9N-8, one of the largest residential compounds in the Copan valley walked over the graves of at least eighty-eight people who had been buried over fifteen hundred years earlier (Davis-Salazar 2007).¹ By the time the later houses and associated buildings were built in the seventh century and the eighth CE, the collection of graves lay two meters below ground. Did the later residents of this compound know what was under their feet? What they knew and in what detail depends on what they considered worth remembering. Long-term retention of information is attested in Mesoamerican societies that lack written records, as is an interest in ancient objects, which may be found in burials and as offerings (Hamann 2002; Joyce 2003).² As I discuss in this book, the process of constructing social memory in Copan, Cerro Palenque, and the Cuyumapa valley involved, in part, an active engagement with buried remains of the dead and of valued objects. If, however, what mattered to the residents was their ability to claim in a more general sense that their forebears, whether directly related to the later inhabitants or not, were present because such a claim is sufficient to support a genealogy based on a sense of long-term being in one place, then that is the kind of memory likely to be cherished.

TIME'S ARROW, TIME'S CYCLE

Time—how it is measured and how it is understood—is taken to be a crucial difference between the modern and premodern or traditional mind that makes it impossible for traditional societies to be historical. Models of temporality underpin models of historical consciousness and everyday life (Munn 1992). A basic tenet of temporal models that seek to differentiate between modern and premodern concepts of temporality is that a dichotomy exists in how the movement of time is understood. Stephen Jay Gould called the two parts of this dichotomy, time's arrow and time's cycle. These metaphors represent two different ideas about the ways in which time moves, ways that Western thought conceives of as dichotomous.

Time's arrow is "history [as] an irreversible sequence of unrepeatable events. Each moment occupies its own distinct position in a temporal series, and all moments, considered in proper sequence, tell a story of linked events moving in a direction" (Gould 1987:10–11). The ability to apprehend time's arrow is central to arguments for how the West became different from the rest and began its historical development toward modernity. Time's arrow freed the West from the prison of a cyclical view of time and history. A distinctly Western historical consciousness, it is argued, develops from the radically different sense of time and history created by Christianity's recognition that human history is moving toward salvation, a recognizable endpoint. This view, however, has been called into question: "It is often said that history comes to be seen as meaningful and goal-directed under the impact of Christianity. This is true, but not in the sense in which it is usually meant. History comes to be seen as meaningful as a result of . . . apologetical disputes with the non-Christian Greeks and Romans; the idea of history as goal-directed is not so much theological as rhetorical" (Press 1982:22). The rhetorical force of *telos* or a goal-directed movement of history does not diminish when the religious model is replaced by secular developmental sequences, such as social evolutionary frameworks, with different proposed or implied endpoints (Burke 2002).

The privileging of time's arrow and the assumption of a *telos* become the basis for an idea of history, both as an object of study and as a definition of how the history of something should be presented. This idea of history can be a powerful tool for the elucidation of events and relationships, but it has also made it possible to argue that non-Western societies have no sense of history because they do not share this particular idea of it or because they do not produce appropriately structured narrative accounts of the past (Parmentier 1987; Van de Mieroop 1999). Such an argument applies not only to societies that do not write things down but also to those with a long literary tradition. Orientalists, European specialists in the study of South Asia in the eighteenth century and nineteenth, dismissed "Indian civilization as being ahistorical" (Thapar 2002:181) because they claimed that only one of the many written sources of information produced in India over centuries could qualify as an example of a historical way of thinking. This deficit meant that it was up to the Orientalists to provide that history.

Time's cycle encapsulates the idea that "events have no meaning as distinct episodes with causal impact upon a contingent history. . . . Apparent motions are parts of repeating cycles, and differences of the past will be

realities of the future. Time has no direction” (Gould 1987:11). Premodern (or non-Western) peoples are caught in this eternal repetitiveness that precludes an understanding of time’s forward movement, Nora’s sempiternal practices. Always returned to point zero by their entanglement with the natural rhythms of the body, the seasons, or the movement of celestial bodies, they find themselves in a situation in which “neither history as a whole nor any individual historical event can have any particular meaning or value” (Press 1982:7). Instead of events, they experience nothing more than the reoccurrence of seemingly eternal forms. The present recapitulates the past rather than the past informing an understanding of the present. This assumes that repetition means stasis and results in a kind of amnesia caused by the lack of anything distinctive to remember.

Reserving the sequential as the superior framework for history impedes understanding of what different models of history and what different kinds of historical consciousness might be possible (Herzfeld 1991; Press 1982; Rappaport 1990; Rösen 2002). An insistence on sequences and cycles as two opposing modes of understanding time also downplays the coexistence of sequential and cyclical temporal models in many cultural contexts, including Western ones. Scholars attempting to write the history of the Aztec empire (ca. 1430–1521 CE) or of how one group of Nahuatl speakers, the Mexica, came to dominate much of what is now Mexico and Central America have been confronted with variant accounts of this history preserved both in indigenous forms of recording information and in the roman alphabet introduced by Spanish colonizers.³ These accounts, written by societies conquered by the Mexica, allied with them, or successfully resistant to them, have proved difficult to reconcile into a single narrative and to attach to a firmly dated chronological framework. Several reasons have been put forward to explain the difficulty (Gillespie 1989). It has been argued that Mesoamerican peoples are subject to time’s cycle rather than to time’s arrow, in effect reflecting a premodern sense of the relationship between time and event. It has also been suggested that the accounts reflect a merging of mythical and historical elements and causes in a way that a modern understanding of history rejects; this tendency also afflicted many Spanish writings, especially those of members of religious orders, who were eager to fit Mesoamerica into their own mythic (religious) universe and millenarian traditions (Phelan 1970).

Rather than assume that time’s arrow and cycle are mutually exclusive, that sequential chronologies are inherently superior, or that the inclusion of

myth renders narrative unhistorical, I consider how these elements help make sense of lived experience and memory as part of a process of the cultural construction of past, present, and future (Munn 1992). The value of the written documents that have survived lies in their ability to offer one insight into a Mesoamerican idea of what history should be, an idea that may not match a modern Western idea. Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions and later, colonial-era writings by Aztecs and Spaniards share an interest in presenting the significant people, relationships, places, nonhuman forces or entities, and events of their own memory communities (Boone 1994a; Gillespie 1989; Leibsohn 1994; Marcus 1992b). The variation they exhibit suggests that the ability to crystallize memory in more permanent form becomes part of the attempt to privilege one body of memory over another (Hassig 2001).

PHILOSOPHIES OF TIME

Understandings of time in Mesoamerican societies have been most commonly approached by looking at the methods these societies developed to measure and structure it. The most widespread of these calendars are cyclical in that the elements they record repeat themselves over some period of time. Mesoamerican peoples were aware of and interested in many astronomical cycles, including that of the sun, moon, and the planet Venus. The Late Postclassic Mayan book the *Dresden Codex* contains tables charting eclipses and the passage of Venus (Lounsbury 1983; D. Tedlock 1992). One of the most important cycles is based on the solar year and has a repeat of 365 days. The 365 days are divided into 18 months, each with its own name and each lasting 20 days, plus a final period of 5 days' duration. One purpose of this calendar is to structure agricultural activities such as sowing, but it was used primarily to organize a series of small-scale and large-scale, often community-wide or statewide religious events (Bricker and Bricker 1988; B. Tedlock 1992a). According to the elaborate descriptions in the *Florentine Codex*, compiled in the sixteenth century by the Spanish Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún with the help of Nahuatl-speaking students and elders, these ceremonies were celebrated in a specific sequence—in specified months and at specified times in the month—over the course of the year (Sahagún 1953–82; see also Durán 1971; Tozzer 1978).

A second way of structuring time, one which survived Spanish conquest and continues in use today among some Maya in Mexico and Guatemala, is a 260-day cycle created by combining 20 day names and 13 numbers; this cycle is referred to by some scholars as the sacred almanac (Sharer 1994:560–62).

Like the 365-day cycle, this one is both sequential and cyclical in that the day names follow one another in order, as do the numbers. This means that having entered the cycle at any point one knows what the next combination will be.⁴ Achieving a competent understanding of the 260-day calendar is not just a matter of grasping the mathematical relationships or of being able to move backward and forward as needed from any point in the cycle. Each day and each number and their combinations have associated meanings (Quiñones Keber 1995; B. Tedlock 1992b; D. Tedlock 1992). The 260-day cycle provides a way to keep track of ritual observances that often must take place in specific locations and as a way to carry out divination. These seem to be rituals and actions of concern to small-scale social groups such as individuals, families, and households. People who have been specially called and trained divine in response to problems and questions brought to them by people. The questions are often quite specific and involve marriage, illness, and other concerns, but somehow they always work back to people's relations to a larger world made up of humans and nonhumans, animals, plants, corporeal and noncorporeal entities, ancestors, deities, and natural forces, the living and the dead. Divination is thus a social act carried out in the context of the people involved, the question asked, the day on which the question is asked, and other factors (B. Tedlock 1992a, 1992b).

Peter Furst (1986) has discovered that some contemporary users of the 260-day system note a similarity between its duration and that of a woman's pregnancy. His sources did not claim that the cycle was invented as a way to keep track of pregnancy, only that the two could be seen as similar. This correspondence is interesting because of the light it sheds on the meaning of cycles in the context of everyday life. Over the course of gestation, the passage of time is signaled quite obviously by changes in a woman's body, changes that are most apparent to her but are also increasingly evident to those around her. These are sequential changes. At the conclusion of the pregnancy, with the birth of the child, one could claim that the cycle has returned to its starting point and things are exactly as they were before. But this is not the case. The social group has been increased by the addition of a new individual, whose presence changes what people do and how they relate to one another. New relationships have come into existence and old ones have been redefined. The infant has begun its passage through the life course, an experience that is again a sequential series of changes. The mother may seem to have returned to a pre-pregnancy state, but her body is no longer the same as it was before. Even if this is not her first pregnancy, the physical effects are

not identical each time; if anything, they are cumulative. Neither is her social identity the same. Cycles are thus as likely to be about transformation as about repetition.

The one form of time measurement that matches our understanding of a linear chronological system has been named the Long Count, known to us through inscription on permanent media from several areas. Although the earliest surviving texts come from the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, it was the Maya who used it for the longest period of time. Even they stopped using it in the early part of the tenth century CE, and it was not in evidence when the Spanish arrived, although the 260-day cycle, the 365-day cycle, and others not described here continued to be important. We know most about the Long Count from its use by Maya rulers on their monuments. It is the existence of these dates that has allowed epigraphers to construct king lists for different Maya cities and, by extension, to create a chronological sequence for some royal activities (see Grube 2006; Martin and Grube 2000). Although the Long Count seems eminently linear to us and appears to reflect an understanding of time's arrow, it may also be understood as an extremely large-scale example of time's cycle. The Maya saw the Long Count as measuring the passage of time within a very long cycle of years that began in their distant past (equivalent to 3114 BCE) and would come to an end in the distant future (2012 CE), then to start over again if all went well (Sharer 1994:567–68). Mesoamerican philosophies of time, in fact, continually stress the working out of sequential actions that are also subject to repetition that makes them part of smaller- and larger-scale cycles.

Histories of the creation of the world further illustrate how sequence and cycle form part of the same understanding of event. In the *Popol vuh*, for example, a history of the Quiché Maya that has come down to us in a colonial-era transcription, the gods attempt to create beings that will worship them. This process requires several attempts. First, the gods create beings who are unable to interact properly with the deities because, although they make noise, they cannot speak. The gods therefore demote them to being the ancestors of the animals who will serve the people to come. The deities next make a person out of clay, who proves incapable of moving or speaking or reproducing. This inherently static, unsocial creature is done in by the instability of the very material itself. Then the deities try wood, but these people, although able to speak and reproduce in a more humanlike way, turn out to be too stiff necked to submit to the gods' authority and must be destroyed. Finally, the gods decide to use corn and make people out of

masa, the dough made from grinding corn with water (D. Tedlock 1996). The individuals formed from corn are the ancestors of the Quiché. They are “beings who will walk, work, and talk in an articulate and measured way, visiting shrines, giving offerings, and calling upon their makers by name, all according to the rhythms of [the 260-day] calendar” (D. Tedlock 1996:32). Events and actions, whether, by our standards, mythological or historical, religious or political, are in one sense repeated—the gods consult, choose a material, fabricate people, observe them, find them deficient, and destroy them. Yet no recurrence is identical to its predecessor, being rather a logical extension of the earlier state of affairs. The gods consider what has happened before trying again. They choose different raw materials they hope will correct the problems evident in their previous choices.

It is tempting to see the Long Count as evidence of a temporary shift from time’s cycle to time’s arrow, from premodern cyclicity to something approaching modern linearity, that for several centuries allowed the Maya to somehow surpass their contemporaries and successors in the development of a modern understanding of time and history (Pyburn 1998). The cycles, however, never disappear during the period in which the Long Count marked royal events. The Maya did not abandon cyclical modes of time reckoning, including the notation of the corresponding position in the sacred almanac, solar year, and lunar month. And the Long Count itself was never free from its connection to the very large cycle in which it was embedded. Not all Maya cities put up dated monuments, which suggests that alternative ways of keeping track of important genealogies and events existed. This is certainly the case for the later Aztec, who did not tie their history to fixed dates but nevertheless recorded genealogies and historical narratives that are sequences of events and relationships that separate conceptually past action from present.

The Long Count as a mode of defining temporal relationships is closely bound to the support of the political actions of certain royal houses. It becomes a medium for the construction and dissemination of the royal memory community’s process of remembering and forgetting, a process made possible by the discourse structure of the text and the associated imagery (Maxwell 1997). By attempting to limit the use of permanent records of these events and their occurrence to certain memory communities, these royal houses present their idea of which (and whose) memories should be given prominence. For the histories of other memory communities and for the rest of the history of these royal communities of memory, one must turn

to the ways in which the lived actuality of the everyday becomes a source of social memory.

Everyday life at home creates an appearance of patterned repetition of actions and interactions. While not necessarily planned or deliberate, the production of repetition is the result not of automata but of people making decisions, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, about how to use their time, how to expend their energy, how to structure their daily interactions with others, and how to interpret what is done. These practices are temporal as well as spatial in nature, enacted through the movement of the body as it performs its tasks. These actions create a sense of continuity. Continuity is often represented as timeless—as the same thing over and over—and therefore not productive of memory. This view ignores the dynamism inherent in the actions and interactions of daily life. There seem to be two assumptions informing this notion. First, that what is repeated must be perceived as the same by the person performing the action and by those observing it. And second, that memory must be precise and tied to a codified temporal sequence.

The distinction between time keeping and time telling in imperial China affords another way of approaching this issue. Time keeping “allowed the government to regulate seasons, months, days, and hours” through horology and astronomy, knowledge that was the province of the few, while time telling “conveyed a standardized official time to a large population” (Wu 2003:108). Time telling emphasized patterned rhythms of action. The drum tower was the primary means of time telling for many centuries in Chinese towns and cities, but it was not a clock. It transmitted information about time by making sound at certain points during the day, conveying an “official *schedule* of projected operations and recurring events” (Wu 2003:108).

Time keeping in Mesoamerica is made possible through the use of multiple calendars that marked the passage of time in 260-day, 365-day, and longer intervals. Segmenting time allows the scheduling of practical action and religious ceremonies at home and in the plaza (Bricker and Bricker 1988; Durán 1971; B. Tedlock 1992a). Time keeping played a central part in the assertion of royal control at Copan by providing a framework for public commemorative, religious, and political events. Neither Cerro Palenque nor Cuyumapa society were as highly centralized politically or as socially differentiated as the kingdom of Copan. Both societies, like Copan, did build ballcourts (see chapters 1 and 7). These monumental arenas suggest a means of time telling and its importance since ballgames were played on a

schedule that was tied in to calendars and astronomical events (Gillespie 1991; Joyce, Hendon, and Lopiparo 2009). Calendars were not employed only by the state. The 365-day calendar was also of concern to people because of the relationship between date of birth, one's destiny, and personhood (see chapter 5). Perhaps even more central to individuals and their immediate circle was the 260-day cycle. Curing illness, deciding whom to marry, and mourning the dead are examples of concerns that would loom large in the life of people at all levels of society. Divination is integral to these concerns and would have taken place either in a domestic setting or at sacred places in the larger social and geographic landscape (Boone 1983; Brown 2000; Brown, Simmons, and Sheets 2002; Durán 1971; Tozzer 1978; Sahagún 1953–82; B. Tedlock 1992a; D. Tedlock 1993; Viesca Treviño 2001). The ability to deploy the 260-day calendar in this way comes from specialized training and the mastery of a specific body of knowledge integrated with the study of ceremonial and medical knowledge. Such expertise was not restricted to the elite or to those holding high political or religious office, although it does seem that status distinctions separated the specialists.

No evidence has been found in the societies I study here of any official means of time telling comparable to the Chinese drum tower's ongoing intervention in daily life, an intervention made possible by the nature of Chinese cities. However, the perceptual aspects of the periodic, often daily actions that take place in the domestic space of the residential compounds—particularly the combination of sights, sounds, and smells attendant on these actions—provide a form of time telling that, while not controlled by a centralized authority, nevertheless produced a rhythm by which residents scheduled their lives and provided a framework around which memory grows.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

I have exhausted the usefulness of the two angles of vision discussed so far. Memory is not just an individual faculty or social property. Neither is it the poor relation of history, emblematic of a premodern mindset incapable of thinking historically. It is time to turn this thing we removed from the offering bowl so as to achieve a more productive perspective on memory. The new angle I propose to explore in the chapters that follow argues that “memory is best conceived of in verb form” (Hirst and Manier 1995:109).

Memory is remembering and forgetting and thus changes from a static object to an interactive and intersubjective process that forms part of Handler's historical action, "stretched across individuals and the wider social and cultural environment that they inhabit" (Cole 2001:29). Memory is not something people *have* but something they *do*. People interact with one another and are bound together in webs of social relations. These relations and interactions may be transitory or enduring, connected to situations that are unlikely to ever be repeated or which recur over and over, even beyond the life span of any individual participant.

Recognizing that memory does not reside only in the mind, waiting to be retrieved from some neurological equivalent of the Roman orator's memory palace or the computational model's hard drive, frees one to consider how the inescapable sociality of human beings undermines any simplistic equation of the individual and remembering. At the same time, dismantling the reification of social groups as bounded and unchanging entities allows one to reconfigure them as collections of people connected through practice and meaningful interaction. Identity and memory are practices that are constituted and reconstituted over time, practices that involve forgetting of certain aspects of history as much as celebrating others. This makes them potent political forces. The promulgation of memory may become an attempt to impose someone's preferred narrative or to elevate some group's social memory to the level of the official (Bodnar 1992; Cole 2001; Forty 1999; Koshar 2000; Levinson 1998; Nora 1996; Prost 1997; Tai 2001). This is in fact part of what elites do, not just through written texts but also through performances and how they live their lives. They wish to elevate particular genealogies and sequences of events over others (see, e.g., Kan 1989). Such exercises in legitimation are often associated with attempts to maintain social hierarchy (Cressy 1994; Gillis 1994) or with colonialism (Rappaport 1990; Thapar 2002), where they have been analyzed as attempts to impose a cultural hegemony (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

No matter how insistent the voice of elite or official memory, however, the "multiplicity of social identities" guarantees "the co-existence of rival memories, alternative memories" which reflect "different views about what is significant or 'worthy of memory'" (Burke 1989:107). I adopt Peter Burke's term *memory communities* to refer to groups that coalesce around bodies of memory. Thus memory communities are also communities of practice in which learning takes place and knowledge is constructed (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). From this vantage point, the fact that the residents of

some domestic places claim to endure over generations results from the social, political, or economic consequences of these shared practices rather than from the group's achieving some kind of transcendent life independent of the people who reproduce it through practice. Furthermore, the multiplicity of narratives present in Mesoamerican societies offers a glimpse of the accommodations with and resistance to such attempts to sustain a cultural hegemony, whether through religion, conquest, exchange, and all the other forms of coercion and co-optation practiced by those attempting to acquire and hold on to power. At the same time, these narratives allow an anthropological analysis of memory, history, and historical consciousness as cultural categories.

I have been most concerned here with demonstrating how different approaches to memory converge on remembering and forgetting as interpersonal and intersubjective, embedded in the web of human sociality. I have argued that memory and identity are intersubjective, situated in spatial, temporal, and social contexts and created through practice—constituted and reconstituted through historical action. I have suggested that we think in terms of multiple memory communities interacting with one another, an approach that provides a way to consider the political economy of memory, an economy based on remembering and forgetting that is strategic and also a potential source of conflict as well as of productive connection. Remembering and forgetting are embodied and contextualized social practices that are intimately bound up with materiality. It is through an intensive and ongoing engagement with materiality that people do the work of memory across time and space.

It is precisely the inextricability of this connection that makes it possible to approach the study of memory communities by way of their material remains. As practices, they are externalized onto objects that have an existence separate from ourselves, engrained in the body, and dependent on context (Hirst and Manier 1995). My reason for considering the activities, material world, and interactions of people living together in such depth is that by attending to these elements as components of a constituting process of social practice, I can rethink ritual, daily life, artifacts, art, and burials (to name some of the most heavily studied archaeological domains) as integral components of social practice.

I have mentioned what could be considered to be different kinds of memory, first individual and social, then intersubjective. In the following chapters I expand intersubjectivity to include embodied remembering and

relations with personlike objects. That different ways of remembering and different kinds of memory may be possible is explored as part of my discussion throughout the rest of the book. I have deliberately avoided presenting a typology of memory because such an approach tends to produce categories that must be treated as dichotomous and discrete in order to justify their differentiation. As my review of the individual–social memory distinction and the linear–cyclical time opposition makes clear, typologies obscure connections. I am interested in determining how diverse modes or ways of remembering interact. Rather than state a priori that memory can or should be divided into categories, with the concomitant developmental or sociological implications such a statement would carry, I prefer to use the detailed exploration of domestic life in the valleys of Copan and Cuyumapa and at the site of Cerro Palenque in the Uluá river valley as an opportunity to consider when and how particular modes become salient. The ways in which meaning is constructed through action, semiotics, materiality, perception, and sensation are applied to the material world in which the people in Copan, Cerro Palenque, and Cuyumapa embedded themselves.

My discussion now moves to the relationship between materiality, identity, and memory in order to grapple seriously with the interaction between practices, object domains, and how memory develops in multiple social venues. I point to the importance of understanding how memory communities assert connections between memories and identity in ways that bring the past into the present. Several processes are central to this endeavor. One is that action and interaction create society, which does not have an abstracted or reified existence separate from the practices that constitute it. A second is the active and formative role of material objects in how people make meaning and understand their subjectivity. Chapter 1 introduces the three societies in detail and discusses the material traces of life in three river valleys and their larger historical context. I also consider residential space as meaningful places inhabited by communities of practice, drawing on anthropological studies of place and phenomenological studies of perception.

In chapter 2 I examine research on the relationship between people and objects to consider how memory and identity intersect with multiple object domains to create contexts for remembering and forgetting at different social and spatial scales. Objects can be like persons. They can act as social agents, participants in relationships, and subjects in their own right. In chapter 2 I draw on Alfred Gell's discussion of the enchantment of some kinds of objects and Daniel Miller's on the humility of others to underscore

that objects, such as monuments, are not fossilized memories or static repositories. Work on ephemeral monuments argues instead that objects play a central role in remembering and forgetting because of their ability to facilitate and shape the recall of something absent.

In chapter 3 I bring together the discussion of places and communities of practice in the first chapter with the treatment of materiality in chapter 2 to expand understanding of how people living together become a memory community, always mindful that other memory communities exist as well. This discussion requires the crossing of conventional analytic boundaries to bring together practices that are integral to everyday life and those considered to be ritual in nature: the burying of people or caches of objects, the building of houses, and the storing of food. The reopening of burials, the rearrangement of caches, the frequent rebuilding of houses, and the constant putting in and taking out of goods from storage containers are dynamic processes that make the past part of the daily lives of the living through selective remembering and forgetting.

In chapter 4 I look at the relationship between memory, knowledge, and learning. I focus on doing and making, confounding the traditional archaeological separation between domestic or subsistence activities, such as food preparation, and craft production, such as weaving cloth, in order to reorient the discussion toward the importance of productive action to an intersubjective, embodied identity. I address questions of identity in greater depth in chapter 5 through a discussion of relational personhood. I present individual identity as the result of social relations and situations involving people and objects to support further my argument that memory in these societies cannot be assumed to enshrine a single narrative of events or take a constant point of view.

In chapters 6 and 7 I discuss periodic ceremonies that provide another context for the construction of social memory. In chapter 6 the text stays rooted in domestic space as it explores the implications of the celebration of important events that make up the history of the coresident community of practice. The emphasis is on feasting as a “total social phenomenon” (Mauss 1990:3) that presents opportunities for interaction among groups of people belonging to different communities of memory and, in the process, for the reinforcement of a local sense of identity. The next chapter introduces another setting, that of the ballcourt. Ballcourts, although a specialized kind of architectural construction with the specific purpose of providing a venue for the playing of the ballgame, have close connections with

domestic space in pre-Hispanic Honduras. They are also a form of monumental construction common to all three societies studied here. Like feasting, the ballgame is best viewed as a kind of umbrella term subsuming a series of activities, events, and interactions, including dancing, sacrificing, eating and drinking, processions, and dramatic or comedic performances as well as the games themselves, that together create a riveting spectacle. I sum up my discussion in the conclusion, in which I return to some of the larger issues raised here.