10 The depositional history of ritual and power

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The premise that human agents shaped past social and natural environments and were also constrained by those environments prompts the question: How can we, as archaeologists, glean the variable results of such activity from the archaeological record? It is tempting to assume that we must develop methods and theories to infer something of the thoughts and intentions of prehistoric actors (e.g., Hodder 1986; also Hodder, Cowgill, this volume), but as Giddens (1979: 44) has stated, the "recovery of the subject," in this case the actor, does not necessarily entail "lapsing into subjectivism," nor embracing "social phenomenology." (Bourdieu 1990: 135–40). After all, the dialectical interplay between actors and their environment leads to both intended and unintended consequences (Giddens 1979: 232, 244; 1984: 282, 344–6). In this chapter, we focus on how agents shape the flow of material objects (people, artifacts, and architecture) from and through cultural systems to the archaeological record. Our goal is to use a stratigraphic method to identify agential behavior and the ritual strategies behind it. We illustrate this method by assessing how emerging leaders in the American Southwest and the southern Maya lowlands of Central America appropriated traditional domestic rituals to promote their particular interests.

As archaeologists import concepts such as agency into their explanations of archaeological deposits (e.g., DeMarrais *et al.* 1996; Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Nielsen 1995; Roscoe 1993), it is important to consider how we can operationalize such ideas, especially those proposed by Bourdieu (1977, 1990) and Giddens (1979, 1984). To achieve this goal, we highlight how agents organize material culture in pursuing various activities including raw materials acquisition, manufacture, use, and discard (Schiffer 1976, 1995). By examining how agents create the life histories of artifacts we can link their final discard activities (the archaeological record) to earlier practices (systemic context). In this chapter, we explore the depositional history of ritual and power in the Southwest and the Maya Lowlands. These regions possess detailed ethnographic and archaeological data that allow us to examine the relationship between the activities of ritual agents and the formation of the archaeological record. In the northern American Southwest between AD 500 and 1400, Anasazi peoples of the Colorado Plateau established pit houses in farming villages, later constructing above-ground stone pueblos. At different times in this sequence their settlement patterns alternated from aggregated villages and towns to dispersed homesteads and hamlets. Periods of aggregation were often associated with the emergence of ritual traditions, created in part by the intentional acts of ritual leaders.

The ancient Maya differ from the Pueblo Southwest in that they had a more complex political organization headed by several rulers throughout the lowlands. However, in the

dispersed, mirroring the distribution of arable land. However, after 250 BC, ritual leaders emerged as the rulers of this dispersed populace (see also Joyce, this volume). Their power, while greater than that known in the Pueblo Southwest, was similar because both had origins in earlier household rituals: ancestor veneration, dedication, and termination rituals. Emerging Maya rulers appropriated these rituals to acquire and maintain their growing power. Large Maya temples became ancestral shrines writ large, highlighting ties between the ruler's lineage and the divine realm. These processes resulted in sequences of deposits, or depositional histories, in ancient Pueblo and Maya settlements that document the successes of past ritual agents.

Agential behavior

Bourdieu and Giddens recognize that individual agents have more autonomy than they were accorded in classic structural–functional (Radcliffe-Brown 1952) and social evolutionary models (Steward 1955; White 1949); yet this freedom is not complete. To understand the interaction between actors and their social and natural environments, Giddens and Bourdieu attempt to model the actual practices and goals of the actors involved. These environments provide the arena within which agents not only act, but also participate as members of a social group. Giddens developed his theory of structuration in part to account for the internal and external forces (or constraints) that characterize the interaction between agents and these environments. Tradition, the routine of daily life, and individual motivation result in a duality, where there are both rules (a constraint) and actual practices (agential behaviors), and where the relationship between individuals and society can be reconceptualized as a dialectic between agency and structure. Even the least powerful actors, whose goals frequently go unrealized, have some power, and in the process of acting can restructure social constraints. In the process of social restructuring, agents contribute to the variability within society and the material remains it leaves behind.

The dynamic relationship between structure and the actual practice of agents leads to a state of continuous feedback. Here, structure is defined as social relations that are created, reproduced, and transformed by members of a society because "structures should be understood as enabling as well as constraining" (Hays 1994: 61). Consequently, actual practices, though governed by "cultural rules," do not always result in exact reproductions of previous or traditional practices. An outcome of such dialectical relationships is variability at a number of scales across space and time, including variation between individuals (e.g., warrior societies, religious sodalities, clans) and entire social systems such as bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states (cf. Fried 1967; Service 1962, 1975). From day-to-day events to the rise of agrarian states, social change can be identified by this variability. Archaeologists can identify this variability in the archaeological record, both synchronically and diachronically, by understanding the organizational properties of relationships at each scale.

A brief discussion of exchange practices illustrates this variability at multiple scales. Individuals involved in balanced reciprocity can manipulate exchange to create obligations with those who cannot afford to return a gift, since "giving is also a way of possessing" (Bourdieu 1977: 195). Along with economic stratification, labor specialization, and political inequality (Brumfiel and Earle 1987), the variety of exchange types (generalized, balanced, redistributive) change in tandem in increasingly complex societies. Agential redistribution, for instance, redefines the nature of traditional gift-giving and accompa-

Southwest practiced a religion focused on crop fertility and moisture which comprised a series of cult institutions such as the *katsina* cult. In this cult, masked dancers impersonated ancestral spirits (*katsinas*) that danced for rain and social harmony. During public performances, *katsinas* also redistributed food brought to the ceremony by those who could afford it. Ethnohistorically, leaders of the Hopi *katsina* cult facilitated the redistribution of food to those in need, often farmers with less productive land (Eggan 1950; Levy 1992).

The origins of this cult derive from a period of aggregation in the fourteenth-century American Southwest, when competition for arable land around nucleated settlements increased (Adams 1991). Although the rise of this new religious cult grew from earlier traditions, its particular form or structure was not inevitable. Are not the material remains of this phenomenon the result, in part, of the agential behaviors of prehistoric Pueblo leaders? Leaders often mask inequities by appropriating familiar cultural "traditions." For example, prophecy, an integral part of decision making in the Pueblo world, has just this quality of transforming everyday events into evidence that legitimizes the decisions of ritual leaders (Whiteley 1988).

In larger scale societies, feasts, ceremonies, and celebrations display wealth and power and continue to serve as avenues of giving in order to possess even more (*sensu* Bourdieu 1977: 195). This "social alchemy" (Bourdieu 1977: 190–2, 1990: 128–9) allows leaders to legitimize existing structures (which are their sources of power) and to promote a sense of solidarity, inclusiveness, and equality (e.g., DeMarrais *et al.* 1996; Earle 1997; Hayden 1990; Hayden and Gargett 1990). Bourdieu (1990: 195) labels this phenomenon "collective misrecognition." The emergence of inequality and concomitant leadership thus leaves a material record of this structural change, where the social reproduction of tradition resembles an ideal never completely realized. It is no surprise, therefore, that Bourdieu and Giddens illustrate their concepts of agency by focusing on political or ritual agents and how they acquire the skill to manipulate the choices of others in order to justify and legitimize their own political goals (see also Joyce, Pauketat, this volume).

Often, public events are successful because leaders incorporate familiar ritual practices into them, which is why household rituals are embedded in the ancestral rites of lineages (Friedman and Rowlands 1978: 218; Helms 1993: 192; McAnany 1995). This pattern becomes evident in stratified societies such as the ancient Maya, where natural kinship ties incorporate supernatural relations between rulers and deities, or by non-kin ties in state-level societies where pretense is no longer required (Johnson and Earle 1987: 319–20). The significant issue here is that agents employ existing "principles of legitimation" (Earle 1989), euphemizing their acquired authority and power to mobilize the agency of others, as well as to control resources, surplus, and wealth. Thus, actions instituted by these agents have social repercussions that can result in social change.

The importance of utilizing existing principles of legitimation cannot be emphasized enough, and can best be illustrated by a few case studies where existing traditions were not so used. There have been instances where new strategies fail because leaders did not appropriate traditional practices. Webster (1976) notes, for example, that the first emperor (unifier) of China, Ch'in Shih Hwang Ti:

> made an abrupt attempt to replace the prevailing Confucianist political philosophy, which emphasized moral precepts as the basis for social tranquillity of the state, with a strongly pragmatic legalist doctrine backed by centrally administered, coercive force. . . . This attempt was an abject failure and resulted in the destruction of the emperors' administration and dynasty after only 15 years.
>
> (Webster 1976: 824)

In a similar vein, Hill (1944) explains that proselytizers of the Ghost Dance (a nineteenth-century revitalization movement incorporating the resurrection of the dead) failed to convert many Navajos because of their traditional fear of ghosts. These brief examples suggest that change is often more successful when built upon processes that begin with the familiar (cf. Kertzer 1988: 10).

The activities of political/ritual agents can be gleaned from the archaeological record by specifically focusing on how their activities create archaeological deposits. For example, in the American Southwest between AD 500 and 1400, we see a change in ritual abandonment practices. Before the advent of pueblos, pit houses – places of household ritual – were often ritually abandoned through burning; later, this burning shifts to the more specialized underground ceremonial rooms (*kivas*) associated with sodalities and clans. Similarly, in the Maya lowlands between 700 BC and AD 900, household ritual dedication and termination activities were first replicated in elite compounds by lineage heads (ca. 700 BC), and later in temple rituals by rulers (ca. 250 BC). In both cases, these changes in ritual activities proved relatively successful because domestic rituals familiar to all members of society were the basis of larger scale ceremonies. In the Pueblo Southwest, ritual activities still take place in kivas, while in the Maya area, post-collapse ritual only persists where it began, in the households of local communities (Thompson 1970: 163).

Evidence of ritual agents

Every time an agent interacted with an artifact, it was propelled along a pathway that began when it was fashioned from raw materials and ended in an archaeological deposit. Artifacts and architecture start as raw materials and pass through a series of activities including manufacture, use, reuse, recycling and eventually abandonment or discard. Actors literally created and changed the life histories of these objects in their dialectical struggle within the social and natural structures that constrained them. They used and reused artifacts as well as created new ones, and in the process left traces of these behaviors in the archaeological record (Deal 1988; Deal and Hagstrum 1995).

Not surprisingly, the functions of objects are not static; for example, cooking pots, while seemingly utilitarian or domestic, can become ritual artifacts if an actor takes them out of a pueblo kitchen and uses them in a kiva ceremony, or in the case of the ancient Maya, a serving plate is taken from a house, rendered useless ("killed"), and then offered in a dedicatory cache (Walker 1998; Walker and LaMotta 1995). The functions of objects do not ultimately reside in their forms, but rather in their variable pathways created by ritual and political agents.

Simplistic utilitarian/nonutilitarian functional classifications lead to equally simplistic inferences of prehistoric activities from archaeological contexts. Obvious interpretations based on the assumed functions of artifacts can be deceptive when detailed contextual clues are not considered. For example, when archaeologists in the Southwest encounter a burned pit house (a utilitarian structure) that contains whole cooking vessels and stored food (utilitarian objects), they may presume its abandonment resulted from an accident or catastrophe rather than a ritual activity, especially if human remains are mixed in with the deposits (Walker 1998). Ethnographic evidence, however, suggests a number of alternative explanations for such burning.

In the Southwest, virtually all peoples who lived in mud-and-brush structures, (similar to prehistoric pit-house dwellers of the past), practiced life-crisis religions (Underhill 1948) that involved the funerary burning of a deceased's house. In California, the Desert, Pass and

Mountain Cahuilla burned their houses (Strong 1929: 84, 121, 180–1) as did the Cocopa (Kelly 1977: 87), Halchidhoma and Maricopa (Spier 1933: 303, 309), Hsupai (Iliff 1954; Spier 1928: 234, 292), Mojave (Allen 1891: 615–6; Drucker 1941: 146–7), Navajo (Mindeleff 1898; Kent 1984: 139–41), Pima (Drucker 1941; Grossman 1873: 415), Papago (Drucker 1941; Beals 1934: 7), Quechean (Bee 1983: 89), Shoshone (Steward 1933: 62), Southern Yavapai (Gifford 1932: 185), as well as Western Apache (Bushkirk 1986: 108; Gifford 1940: 68; Goodwin 1942) living in Arizona and New Mexico. In addition to homes, other utilitarian objects owned by the deceased were also often destroyed, including tools, keepsakes, granaries full of food, and even crops in the field.

There are also compelling ethnographic and epigraphic examples of burning and the ritual deposition of both utilitarian and nonutilitarian artifacts among the Maya. Many Maya groups today conduct dedication rituals at the completion of a house. For example, among the Zinacantan Maya of highland Chiapas, builders bury the heads of sacrificed chickens in the floor with other offerings (Vogt 1993: 52–5). Afterwards, a shaman performs rites to compensate the Earth Lord for the materials he has provided, as well as to "summon the ancestral gods to provide the house with an innate soul" (ibid.: 52). Again, more offerings are buried in the floor of the new house (see also Vogt 1970: 78, 98). A similar ritual is noted among the Maya of the towns of Tizimin (Wauchope 1938: 143) and Chan Kom (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934: 146) in the Yucatán. Epigraphic accounts carved on stelae, temples, and palaces at Palenque, Yaxchilan, Naranjo, Tikal, Copan, and other Maya centers (Freidel and Schele 1989; Schele 1990; Schele and Freidel 1990) record similar dedication and termination rituals.

Maya renewal ceremonies show a similar pattern through space and time. For example, among the Zinacantecos, yearly renewal ceremonies involve the all-important ancestral gods (Vogt 1970: 99). Among the Lacandon Maya of Chiapas, a feature of the renewal ceremony is the manufacture of new incense-burners (*incensarios*), the lighting of new fires, and the use of new utilitarian goods such as cooking vessels (Tozzer 1907: 106). During the last rite of the renewal ceremony, old *incensarios*, jars, and other items are taken out of habitation areas to a nearby cliff and deposited in a specific ritual dump (ibid.: 146–7). These rites are identical with those described by Landa for Colonial Yucatán (Tozzer 1941: 151–2; see also Thompson 1970: 173–5). Epigraphic accounts also tell of large-scale *katun* (twenty 360-day years) period-ending rites and renewal ceremonies that included the construction of twin pyramid complexes at a number of Maya centers, notably Tikal (e.g., Jones 1991; also Schele and Freidel 1990).

Ancestor veneration rites also display continuity from the past to the present (cf. McAnany 1995). Among the Zinacantecos, ancestral gods are the most important deities, even more important than the Earth Lord (Vogt 1970: 6). "The powers whose influence on human affairs is continuous and unremitting are the ancestors, who represent the great moral force" (cf. Deal 1988; also Bunzel 1952: 269; Tozzer 1907: 45). Although the ancestral gods live in sacred places such as caves or mountains, their physical remains are kept close to home, literally buried in the floors of houses. Again, Landa describes similar practices for Colonial Yucatán (Tozzer 1941: 130), where the skulls of ancestors were kept in sacred huts or house altars (ibid.: 131). Epigraphic accounts leave little doubt that Maya rulers linked themselves and their lineages to ancestral founders and deities, and that these linkages were continually displayed in ceremonies that took place on top of temples (Freidel and Schele 1988; Houston and Stuart 1996; McAnany 1995; Schele and Freidel 1990).

These examples from the American Southwest and the Maya region dramatically illustrate the central role ritual agents played in the creation of archaeological deposits. To develop more complex behavioral inferences that take into account the ritual manipulation of objects by agents during dedication, termination, ancestral veneration, and abandonment rituals requires models that take into consideration the contextual clues found in specific sequences of archaeological deposits. The processing of architecture during episodes of construction, remodeling, or abandonment often leaves traces of ritual pathways that can be inferred from the depositional histories of these buildings. Although this approach was developed as a method to discriminate different abandonment processes in the Pueblo Southwest (Walker 1998), we show here that it is widely applicable. Although agency studies typically discourage general methods, a depositional history approach is flexible enough to highlight behavioral variability within and among cultures as diverse as the prehistoric Anasazi and the ancient Maya.

A life history approach to houses, kivas, and temples

When a Maya temple was closed during a termination ceremony, caches and layers of formal fill were laid down and a new temple constructed over them (see Freidel and Schele 1989: 237–8; Schele and Freidel 1990: 104–8). These construction activities result in sequences of causally related deposits, depositional sequences or histories that document the ritual life of the temple. Although one can consider these as separate events, perhaps simply construction activities, they are evidence of ritual activities. This ritual layering (Freidel and Schele 1989), as well as the traces of ritual activities that took place on the temple top (such as bloodlettings, human sacrifices, and accession ceremonies), can be considered part of a larger unit of analysis: the temple's life history. Thus, the stratigraphic relations, or more specifically, the depositional histories of temples, provide important clues for understanding the activities of past ritual agents. For example, obsidian debitage and other utilitarian objects, when found cached in temple construction layers, may actually record evidence of past ritual activities (Deal 1988; Freidel and Schele 1989; Garber 1986, 1989).

Even the fill and floor layers of houses, if considered causally related, can provide important evidence of prehistoric ritual agency. Houses, like temples, are complex artifacts that possess life histories comprised of a number of stages (e.g., manufacture, use, reuse, abandonment, and post-abandonment). They begin their lives as raw materials and pass through one or more stages before entering the archaeological record.

Sub-stages of a structure's life history can themselves be subdivided into analytical units that correspond to the feature's stratigraphy. Events in the life histories of structures result in the creation of several interconnected deposits, including fill of floor features, artifacts on floors, the lower fill and upper fill of a structure. Such deposits often have one ritual process that connects them. In some cases, the entire stratigraphic sequence can be employed as a unit of analysis. For example, a series of variables describing their deposits can be used to define the rebuilding of a structure. If considered independently of its relationship to the rest of the structure's stratigraphy (e.g., broken *incensarios* resting on a burned floor, whole plates in the fill, obsidian cached in construction rubble), any one variable could be used to argue for several interpretations. But a life history approach forces interpretations to consider relations between multiple variables in a sequence of deposits. For example, a burned Maya house floor could be the result of warfare, accident, funerary ritual, or any number of hypothetical causes. The addition of more stratigraphic information, however, begins to differentiate strong from weak inferences, by revealing in a

probabilistic sense more or less likely sequences of events.

To distinguish between warfare and ritual abandonment, for example, one could consider a series of linked deposits in a structure such as whether whole, fragmentary, or no artifacts were present on the floor; whether it was burned or not; and finally, whether or not there were whole artifacts, fragmentary artifacts, or no artifacts in the fill between floors. Differences between deposits would distinguish one structure's life history from another's. When considered alone, roof burning or the presence of utilitarian floor artifacts could not help conclusively distinguish a ritual abandonment from a fiery catastrophe. But when these floor artifacts occur in a sequence of burned floors intruded upon by caches, a depositional history is revealed that suggests the structure has been ritually remodeled.

Such ritually created sequences of deposits can be identified at Maya and Anasazi sites. Differences in these deposits can be quantified through a series of variables that describe each stratum in a structure. For example, in the Southwest, four variable strata – floor feature deposits, floor artifacts, lower fill, upper fill – can be used to describe a structure's stratigraphy (Figure 10. 1). A structure (A) with unsealed floor features, fragmentary artifacts on its floor, unburned weight-bearing (primary) roofing beams in its lower fill, and without artifacts in its upper fill, would exhibit a different pathway from another (B) with sealed floor features, whole artifacts on its floor, burned roofing material in its lower fill, and whole artifacts deposited in its upper fill. These would be two possible pathways of the many potential ones that could exist, given these four variable depositional events.

The ancient Pueblos

The large fourteenth-century ancestral Hopi pueblo of Homol'ovi II located near Winslow, Arizona (Figure 10.2), contains 1,200 surface and subsurface rooms (Figure 10.3). This is one of several late prehistoric ruins relating to the rise of the Pueblo *katsina* cult (Adams 1991). Between 1984 and 1996, the Homol'ovi Research Program (see Adams 1989, 1996; Adams and Hays 1991) excavated seven kivas and twenty-six surface structures, in part to assess variation in domestic and ceremonial architecture during the *katsina* period (Walker 1995; Walker *et al.* in press).

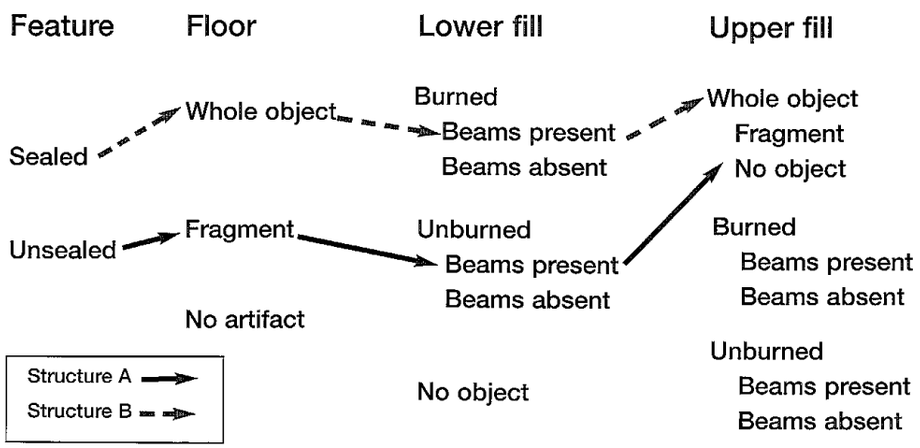

Figure 10.1 Schematic of depositional histories (pathways)

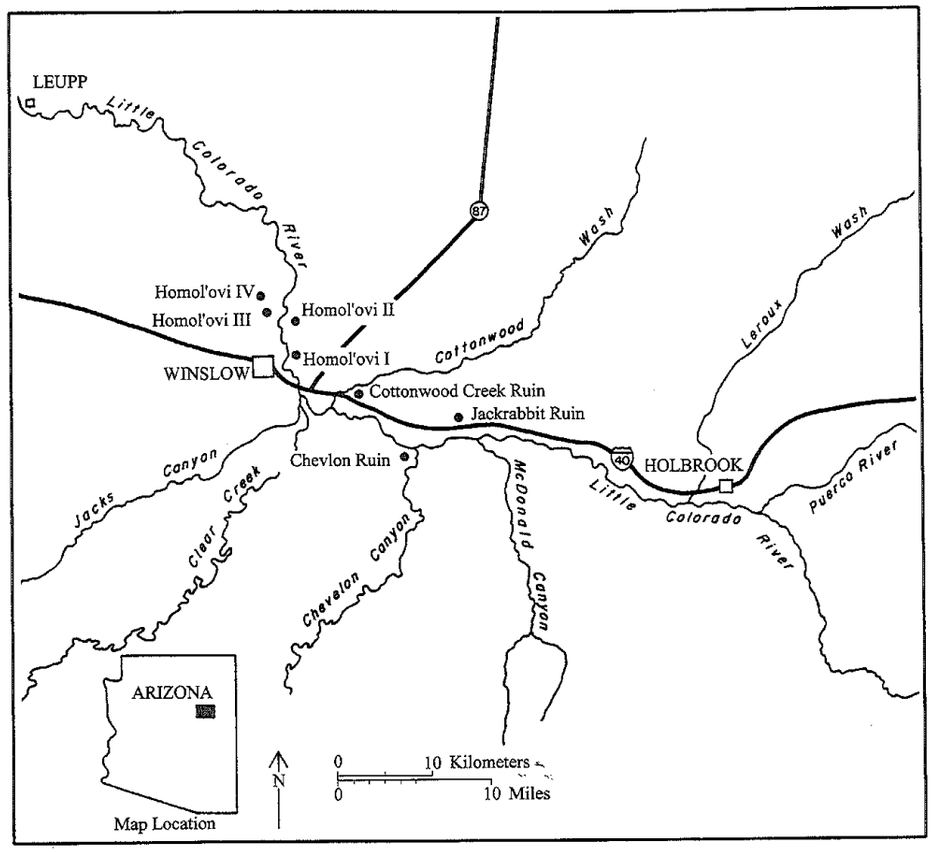

Figure 10.2 Homol'ovi Pueblos

Six of the seven kivas excavated were burned, but only one of the twenty-six surface structures. In all but one kiva, the large weight-bearing beams had been purposefully removed. In four of the seven kivas, objects (such as dog skulls, stone balls, and crystals) had been placed in the structures' internal features including hearths, ventilation tunnels, and *sipapus* (a small hole in the floor symbolically representing a door to the underworld). Several of these features had been sealed prior to burning. Whole pottery vessels were also left on the floors of several of these structures prior to burning. Afterwards, other whole artifacts found their way into the layers above the burned roofing materials. When these stratigraphic relationships are considered in aggregate, it is clear that one catastrophic event could not explain them all. Why would features have been sealed and only kivas burned? Why would victorious warriors remove primary beams and then bury whole useable artifacts in the upper fill? What appears to have happened is not a battle or series of accidents, but a carefully planned ritualized burning and burial of Homol'ovi II ceremonial structures. If the structures had burned because of accidents, kivas as well as non-kivas should have burned. If a structure had been burned in warfare, we would not expect the sealing of features, removal of roofing beams, or deposition of whole artifacts in the fill above the burned roofing strata.

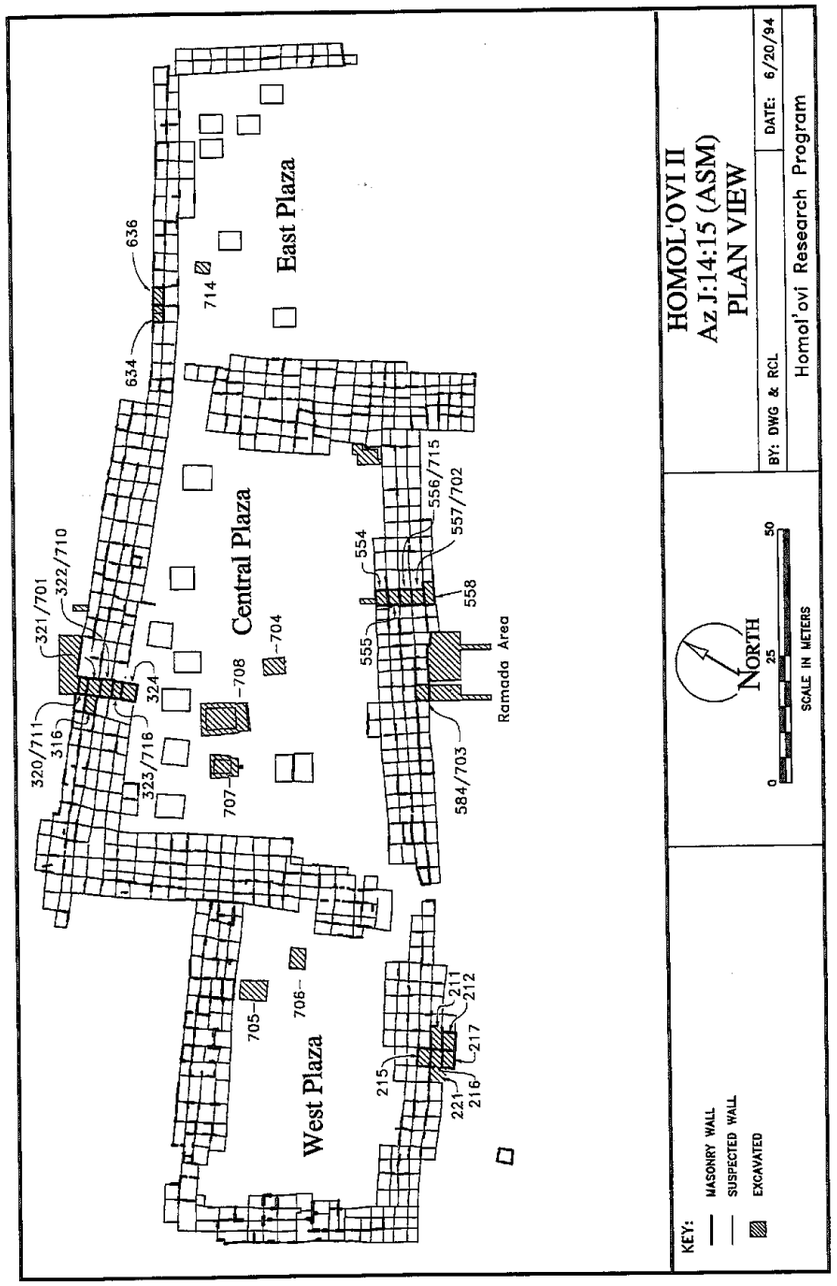

Figure 10.3 Homol'ovi II

At Homol'ovi II, there are hundreds of possible pathways if one considers all the combinations of variables. However, only a few pathways were actually found in the kivas, and these only partially overlapped with the sequences found in the non-kiva structures. Non-kiva sequences had unsealed features, no artifacts or only fragmentary objects on their floors, unburned roofs with beams, and fragmentary objects in their upper fills (sherds, lithics, bone). These pathways reflect abandoned rooms reused as trash dumps. Other possible pathways, such as sealed features, no floor artifacts, unburned roofs without primary beams, whole artifacts in the upper fill, simply did not occur.

These data suggest that the order of strata is behaviorally meaningful and can be used to identify ritual structures and to model deliberate ritual acts. Structures involved in ritual activities earlier in their life histories (e.g., construction rituals, rain making ceremonies, or tribal initiations) appear to have been propelled along pathways that culminated in their ritual abandonment. The specific abandonment procedures in the Homol'ovi case directly implicate the agency of ritual leaders associated with the early *katsina* cult. Ethnohistorically, religious fraternities such as the *katsina* society constructed and used kivas under the direction of fraternity leaders. The introduction of Spanish colonial rule and subsequent US Indian reservations altered the relatively frequent prehistoric abandonment of pueblo villages, and therefore ethnohistorical data do not describe similarly purposeful kiva abandonments. Instead, once constructed, kivas tend to outlive the group that built and used them. If the fraternity does not replace its membership nor transfer a kiva to another group, the structure has no one to abandon it. The prehistoric abandonment of kivas was more common and reflected the mobility of Pueblo peoples. Presumably, leaders guided the abandonment of kivas as well as their use and construction. Understanding depositional histories is crucial to revealing past activities, ritual and otherwise; this issue is further explored through a discussion of Maya house and temple architecture.

The ancient Maya

When people think of Maya architecture, they often envision temples, palaces, and ballcourts. However, the majority of Maya lived in pole and thatch structures dispersed throughout densely settled hinterland areas, mirroring the patchy distribution of agricultural land (Fedick 1994, 1995, 1996; Fedick and Ford 1990; Ford 1990; Lucero 1994, 1997). While there is extreme diversity in structure configuration, size, and function, current evidence indicates that they have similar depositional histories. These depositional sequences, or pathways, are similar in form to other archaeological contexts found throughout the Maya lowlands that have been attributed to dedication and termination rituals, renewal ceremonies, or ancestor veneration rites (see Freidel 1998; Mock 1998). For example, termination caches are found in the construction fill of numerous prehistoric houses as well as temples (summarized by Garber 1989: 50) including Tikal's North Acropolis (Coe 1965a, 1965b) and San Jose, Belize (Thompson 1939: Fig. 20, 184–92). These caches often include broken jade pieces (e.g., ear spools, pendants, beads), stone disks, and smashed ceramic vessels (Garber 1986, 1989: 98). In contrast, dedication rituals involve the caching of similar objects, but whole rather than broken. Further stratigraphic evidence of ceremonies in houses and temples is indicated by the continual replastering of floors and walls (renewal) or complete destruction (termination) and rebuilding (dedication) over earlier structures, with offerings sandwiched in the fill between construction phases (e.g., Haviland 1981, 1988; McAnany 1995: 97; Willey *et al.* 1965). Numerous burials also occur in these domestic and monumental archaeological contexts throughout

the Maya lowlands, documenting the expansion of the household ritual practice of ancestor veneration at larger more integrative scales (summarized in Deal 1988; see also Coe 1965a, 1965b; Haviland 1981; McAnany 1995: 55–7; Thompson 1939: 193–220; Willey *et al.* 1965).

To illustrate explicitly our point about continuity and repetitive sequencing, we discuss two examples: first, a large housemound at Barton Ramie and, second, the temple complex of the North Acropolis at Tikal (Figure 10.4). Barton Ramie, a large river center located in west-central Belize, was mapped and excavated in the 1950s by Gordon Willey and others (Willey *et al.* 1965). Tikal, located in the Petén district, Guatemala, is one of the largest and most well known Maya centers, and has been extensively studied by the University of Pennsylvania research team (e.g., Coe 1965a, 1965b).

Willey and others excavated a number of mounds at Barton Ramie to assess their

Figure 10.4 Southern Maya lowlands

function and to devise a regional ceramic chronology (Gifford *et al.* 1976; Willey *et al.* 1965). For purposes of this study, we focus on the most extensively excavated mound, BR-1, which measured 28 m in diameter and approximately 2 m high. "It was typical of the small to medium-sized mounds of the site" (Willey *et al.* 1965: 36). The depositional sequence of BR-1 consists of twelve strata, dating from about AD 0 to 1200. These strata represent a number of rebuilding phases (Figure 10.5). Twenty-four burials were recovered spanning the entire sequence. Unfortunately, not all of the burial locations were precisely described, although their numbers clearly increased through time. The earliest evidence of occupation consists of three superimposed pits with ash, probably signifying hearths. The first obvious structure (F) has a burial under its floor, as well as under its terrace (porch). A ramp was added to this structure, within which is a circular pit with rocks; in addition, sometime after the ramp was constructed a burial was placed within the fill. After a series of plaster floors (with pebble ballasts and another burial), there appears to have been a burning episode of some kind, which Willey and others suggest might have been the result of a burned thatch structure. Above the burned layer are several smashed vessels and six burials, capped by another floor. The next activity represented is a large pit dug in the structure that was subsequently filled with rocks. This pit was then covered over by another floor of thick plaster, along the edge of which a pottery vessel was cached.

Similar site formation processes shaped the temple mounds of Tikal. This center has one of the longest sequences of monumental architecture in the Maya lowlands. More than a thousand years of temple construction, destruction, and rebuilding occur in the site's North Acropolis, leaving at the time of abandonment a complex measuring approximately 100 m by 80 m, and 40 m high (Figure 10.6). Pits, tombs, caches, and ceremonial inclusions of sculpted facade fragments document ritual activities in most strata encountered. For example, the earliest architecture (300 – 200 BC) includes three superimposed temples (comparable in size to large thatched houses) on stone platforms, approximately 6 m square. Describing the last of these three temples, Coe notes:

> The roof was probably of thatch with poles at the corners. . . . This building burned, then was refloored, then charred again, as if its roof had caught fire. . . . Beneath its floors were three burials, an infant and two adults. Pits in bedrock in front of these platforms yielded other insights. One contained a young adult. . . . The other pit contained the incomplete disarticulated remains of an adult accompanied by fragments of one or more stingray spines. (Coe 1965a: 12–13)

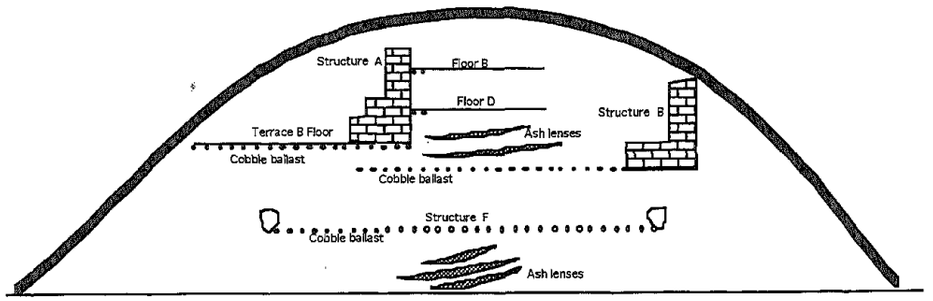

Figure 10.5 Schematic of Barton Ramie housemound depositional history

Source: based on Willey *et al.* 1965: Fig. 11

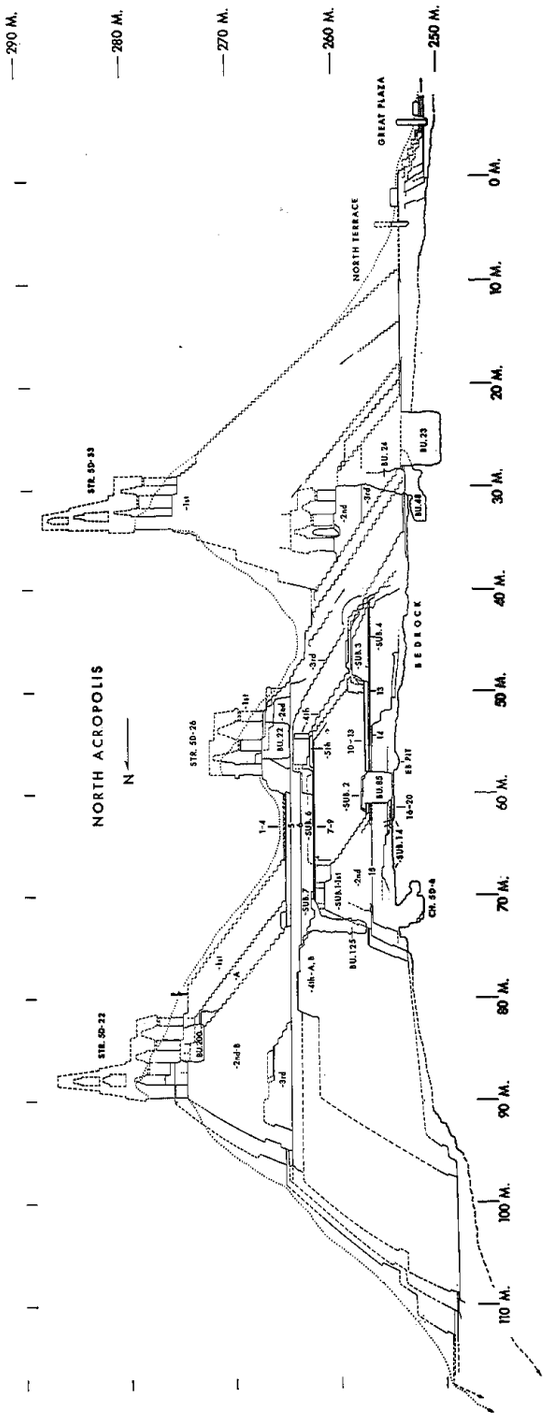

Figure 10.6 Profile of North Acropolis, Tikal (dawing by William Coe)

Source: reproduced courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia.

"In . . . almost constant renovation, razing, and renewed construction" (Coe 1965a: 13), ever larger temple complexes were built over these earlier deposits. This process clearly resembles household rituals, albeit on a grander scale. The depositional histories of temples even led to the purposeful reinterment of fragments of older temple facades as offerings in younger structures. For example, Miscellaneous Stone 54, originally a Preclassic sculptural decoration, was refit with another facade fragment from Late Classic temple fill, 800 years later. In such sequences, the houses of ancestors, and eventually the temples of deified royal ancestors, form one continuous familiar history.

As was the case in the American Southwest, the depositional histories of different types of Maya architecture are behaviorally meaningful. They demonstrate ritual acts that transcend the domestic realm. Every construction sequence had accompanying rituals. At the household level, the local religious leader performed these rites. At the larger and more grand scale, rulers led the dedication, termination, renewal, and ancestor veneration ceremonies that incorporated their numerous subjects. Assessing these rituals dynamically, it is possible to envision how Maya leaders appropriated traditional rituals to practice "social alchemy" and promote "collective misrecognition" (see also Joyce, this volume).

Discussion

In both the Maya and Pueblo case studies, variability in depositional histories can be considered the material results of actors manipulating social contexts associated with traditional rituals. Such social alchemy in the prehistoric pueblos of the Southwest contributed to the removal of ritual activities from the household sphere into religious sodalities under the control of ritual specialists. From an agency perspective, it is not surprising that kivas developed out of pit houses and exhibit similar depositional histories. For example, more than 50 percent of all Anasazi pit houses were burned and often contained whole objects on their floors and in their fill (e.g., Cameron 1990; Wilshusen 1986). The creation and use of kivas had dramatic religious and political consequences, yet their development was possible only because sodality leaders co-opted the daily habitus of household ritual.

In the case of the Maya, rituals never left the home, but were appropriated by elites for political purposes. Incipient leaders replicated Maya household rituals, to acquire power and mask increasing economic differentiation through large-scale ceremonies that involved numerous households. These replicated pathways were first conducted at specialized elite structures, and later at temples, through the continued use (and manipulation) of dedication and termination rituals, renewal ceremonies, and ancestor veneration rites.

Although Maya and Southwest Pueblo political histories are obviously different, political agents in both societies used common ritual forms to gain specific ends. Archaeologists can glean this appropriation through life history studies. In our comparative examples, we have outlined an analytic method for the study of depositional histories – pathways – that allow us to identify the variable religious means agents employed not only to gain, but to justify and maintain, their power. In doing so, we have also illustrated the general utility of using the stratigraphic record to operationalize the study of agential behavior.

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