

# Studying Ritual in the Past

*Christine A. Hastorf*

The papers in this volume are written with the aim of taking a slightly new tack in the study of past cultures by forefronting ritual in political and daily practice. The authors begin with the tenet that ideas are crucial to re-create society and that rituals, reaffirming and creating these ideas, are important in all levels of social action. Although archaeologists tend to study the past through material culture, we are trying here to focus not just on objects. We try to avoid the nature-culture dichotomy that leads to the separation of objects from the beholder's ideas by being more explicit in the wedding of the meanings with their objects. Towards that end, in some settings, we see that ritual is a key to emerging power, through the use and insertion of particular ritual actions and agendas. By tracking a sequence of ritual activities and how they are enacted, we can see how memories associated with these events color the experience of a new enactment and aid in initiating political change (Kertzer 1988:12). Rites thus have both a conservative bias through the repetitive and structured ritual as well as the innovating potential of redirecting these events. Another level of understanding that emerges on our reconfiguring interpretations about past rituals comes with the assumption that such events and the objects that are associated with them merge domestic and ritual. This trajectory alters the regular principle that there is always a spatial separation of sacred and profane. We have found in our discussions and investigations that in some situations, temporal frames are more important in defining the sacred than are specific spatial locations. While more difficult to discuss and explain, it is important to place these ideas within this more murky interpretive framework. In many settings, sacredness comes from certain circumstances and times, from certain sequences and icons. Thus we begin with the idea that rituals were essential in social groups, to form and reform them. Such a baseline gives us a different standpoint from which to look at and understand the past.

The papers in this volume developed out of a 1997 seminar on ritual and the everyday. We spent time discussing the concept of ritual in its broadest sense. We then investigated in what settings rituals might have occurred, both in the past and in the present. While attempting to define the concept of ritual, we concluded that it did not include every social act as some previous critiques concluded (Goody 1977). Thus it could be something discrete that we could think about, look for, and study in cultures both present and past. We set out to reformulate this concept with archaeological settings in mind, and to think about ritual study methodologies that might help in reassessing our views of long-term human culture. In fact, it seemed increasingly clear that whatever else ritual is, it is value laden, strategic, and imagined

(Bell 1992). In fact, we became aware that it was one of the main links of meaning (signification) between things and people, between the physical and the symbolic. As all modern archaeologists know, artifacts are so much less without their context and associated meanings. It became clear in our discussions that social aspects like ritual further opened up the meaning systems of the past and therefore were a major force creating the lived world. Thus we had to find some new possibilities of seeing and including this realm in our discussions and interpretations.

In some ways, even remembering the processual archaeological agenda, it seems odd that ritual has been avoided for so long in archaeological study until recently (except in publications such as Fritz 1978; Renfrew 1985; Richards 1996). In the 1970's, archaeology turned eagerly to processual, materialist studies, which, while including ideas (the ideotechnic in Binford's [1962] epistemology of archaeology), did not allow them to be a major force in societal change. Throughout this amnesia in studies of the past, ritual was a strong subject within socio-cultural anthropology. However, within the study of ritual in social anthropology, there was an historical cycle of interest, with an increasing number of critiques, culminating with Goody's 1977 article. There, he states that ritual was considered to be inherent within every social action and therefore became meaningless analytically (Leach 1968; Staal 1975). This critique deadened discussion of ritual in socio-cultural anthropology for some time. Since then, post-modern, feminist, social, and interpretive theories have entered into the archaeological theoretical discussion, bringing with them the recognition of the importance of ideas and meaning in the past (e.g. Barrett 1994; Bender 1998; Hodder 1992a; Thomas 1991). It seems time to take another look at ideation and ritual as meaningful entities which were fully integrated into the past material world, as we know so clearly in our own lived world today. While such tenets of study may be difficult to implement, such analysis is not impossible, as the papers in this volume show. Many evocative meanings and images spring up in these papers, providing the reader glimpses of how rituals, and the ideas which are imbued within them, create meaning, cosmos, culture, and change.

Based on our modern western worldview, which underlies processual archaeology, archaeologists have assumed that things of the mind were a secondary by-product, epiphenomenal to basic life. This has been common in archaeology; such thinking has become naturalized, solidifying the distance between mind and matter, of object and the thought associated with it. We do get to the past through the material that has been left behind in sites and landscapes, yet if we only think of the objects themselves as the past universe, we never get beyond this Cartesian separation of the mind and body (Heidegger 1962: Thomas 1996:18). We rarely get beyond categories for categories' sake in archaeology. Privileging the material essence of objects (rather than blending the material and its meaning) keeps us bound to the separation of the physical world from the cultural world, which in turn leads us to assume that there was a discreet separation of the domestic and the sacred. If we begin to envision the

meanings that people lived within and expressed themselves through, we might get closer to this union of ideas, material, and action; closer to understanding the symbols and expressions of other people. If ritual is an aspect of many actions, we need to focus on what people were trying to communicate in those actions (Lewis 1980:6).

We try here to interpret the evidence of these actions. This is why we look at the place and manner of ritual in past daily lives. Some of this task is simply envisioning rituals and rites, thinking of meaningful and significant actions which could have been taking place. Some of this task is seeking ritual in the material record and consciously going beyond what is normally assumed from the data, and some of it is replacing old models of past societies with new ones that assume all objects people used had a series of meanings that included rituals. As has been noted, meaning links objects and dispersed acts to each other, not in an arbitrary way but in chains of motivated relationships (Hodder 1992b). Abstract symbolic meanings associated with, or referring to, certain artifacts may resonate on many different levels, but they are charged and directed by the experiential world with purpose and significance, with a range of particular qualities. This experiential world in turn emerges from signification and ritual action. This is not a linguistic point, but rather an integrated materiality of concepts and practice.

The study of meaning, ritual and the everyday in the 1990's has some of us returning to earlier scholarship to reassess major themes and visions of culture and society. Specifically we have looked at the study of ritual (rite), the sacred, myth, and expression. We turn to Durkheim (1915), Turner (1966), Douglas (1970), and Levi-Strauss (1982). In part, we are realizing that, at least in archaeology, we might have given up some of the important pathways to an understanding of past actions and their meanings by ignoring ritual and the ideological realms that accompany it. These realms are ambiguous, obscure and easily confused, yet by restricting the definition of ritual to objects that have "no overt function," or ignoring it altogether, we are not getting closer to understanding the past and the people who took strength from and gave evocative power to their ritual performances (Lewis 1980:9). To begin to redress this here, we are looking at some ways that ritual and ideological meaning can be approached archaeologically. By doing so we hope to begin to see these actions in the past. Just like those we study, we turn to our ancestors to link together the different domains of life and society, to try to define ritual, to try with fresh eyes to view archaeological ritual acts.

## **Studying Ritual**

Rituals are worth studying because they orient and shape other social practices (Gose 1994:4). Their qualities guide us as to where to concentrate our interpretations. Archaeologists are looking for the binding elements of past actions and thought that link the meaning and sense to the objects of past groups. Myths and

rituals are created, which in turn perpetuate cultural groups through their resilience, with codes woven together by metaphors (Tilley 1999:10). Religious performances can change the way people feel about and see their daily world, realigning their thoughts as they draw attention to things that hold special significance (Connerton 1989:44). Such events can be large and evident as in moving through a landscape or architectural structure. Or they can be small and offertory as in libations or prayers before a midday meal. Archaeologists and anthropologists tend to focus on the larger end of this range, primarily due to the materiality of public and civic events and to the assumption that this is where the experience of a new enactment initiates political change.

Our goal in this volume is to explain and interpret what we see in the material record through different ways of understanding. In these exercises, we are trying to enter the past through a different door. We are trying to make sense of the past by remembering and incorporating the ritualistic side of human life and the resonating meanings and beliefs that create these events through obscure and uncertain meanings as well as bodily-experience. We must turn not just to the overtly sacred and the special event, but also to the metaphorical linkages in daily practice that link people in their society and give meaning to their world.

As Lewis notes, there is difficulty in defining ritual. Ritual can become “the expressive aspect of any action” (1980:7). Such an approach assumes that significant acts are special and charged with meaning, even if the meanings differ for each viewer. Most can agree that certain performances are rituals. But what of viewing social actions without knowing the rules of observance or the conventions? This is where a ritual’s boundaries become less definable. This in essence is the archaeologist’s dilemma: knowing it is there yet not knowing its extent. We can begin by speaking about what a ritual entails. It is performative, expressive, and communicative. It is mutable and evokes power. It is rule governed. It includes particular kinds of action which can be public or private, but tends to be social in nature and often focuses on the body (ies). Like much of material culture, ritual communicates meaning, but more opaquely than language, for each ritual expression contains ambiguity and multiple meanings.

At the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük for example, Mellaart found clay human figurines in a series of different contexts, the most evocative of which were seven figures placed around a hearth (Hamilton 1996:218). Are these the remains of a ritual? Do they make the hearth sacred? Were they placed there at the end of the hearth’s life? Were they always there? Were they added gradually? Were they associated with the women working at the hearth or the food being prepared there, or men flaking tools there? All or none of these could have been the reason for this “ritual” positioning of figurines. Whichever the reason, the figurines were

symbolically significant, and therefore their placement at the hearth would be considered a ritual by Lewis (1980).

Rituals are tolerant of interpretation on many levels (Lewis 1980:19). A ritual is like a metaphor – each viewer can have a different sense of the event but each one is significant, the ultimate phenomenological experience. What is important is its complete embeddedness in and re-confirmation of a culture. It is the essence of meaning and a propagator of ideas within society. And these meanings are always personal. No matter how large the rituals are that are studied, like the Maya of Lopiparo's paper or the smaller figurines of Twiss's Levantine analysis in her paper, rituals are experienced by individuals, not by some abstract body. Starting from this working assumption, we see how rituals can provide us with a link to individuals and groups in the past. It is a nexus of significant social action on both an individual and a large scale. Despite this ambiguous, multiscale location of ritual within society, rituals are still important for us to consider if we want to understand the past. They have material aspects to their performance.

An interesting example of such ritual signification and creation of society is seen in the current Christian-Jewish, Wiccan, and Druidic religions that are emerging throughout Europe and North America, building on pre-modern northern European rites. Each new sect creates cultural conventions through the rituals that they adopt from the past histories adapted for the modern world. As they form their conventions and give meaning to material and codes, sects have an interest in the religious past by harkening back in time to the ritual evidence that can be gained from archaeology. Linking to memories associated with earlier ritual experiences help create the new enactment of rites. Rituals thus have both a conservatism that gives them strength and an innovating potential that adapts them to the current setting (Kertzer 1988: 12). Such rituals can become more important in political change because of these conservative properties and historical resonances. Time and again, new political systems borrow legitimacy from the old by resurrecting the old ritual forms, redirected to new purposes. In this way, current religious groups are looking to the past for meaning and structure for their lives as well as using the power of long term rituals to validate their newly formed structures. Thus ritual knowledge goes both ways; the present archaeological study is being used to understand the past and the archaeological past is being used to create the present religious orders. This interest in past rituals and their place within the past is an example of how reflexive and central rituals are in the re-creation of a group, as they re-use and re-form older significations, let alone justifying archaeological practice itself.

### **Ideology and Power**

One cannot speak of ritual without including ideas and ideology. There is an ephemeral nature to the power behind and within the symbols that resonate in the

rituals of a society. There are always underlying, unexpressed, yet debated goals that legitimize a position or an opinion. Ideological messages are entwined in the meanings of objects that are part of human society (Hodder 1992b:207). Given that some items, especially when encountered in specific settings, can evoke certain actions, important and powerful meanings can be hidden and at work without being consciously recognized by the participants. This is the heart of advertising today. Praxis and enactment become part of power.

Power is an idea, a force of ideas that can activate change (Foucault 1980). It is ideation. Power forms social life through its energy and its enabling. Because power is not intrinsic to things, the power within objects operates due to the ideas and meanings attributed to them by people and the actions objects are associated with. Because power can shift, power is illusive in its location, making it difficult to maintain without reenactment. Strategic rituals can be made more important by incorporating familiar and traditional ritual beliefs and practice into more elaborate ritual forms. In this way strategic rituals can play a core part in retaining and increasing social power. Routines perpetuate belief systems and so praxis is part of social continuation. Power and the signification of events (and rituals) become the essence of ideologies and their legitimation. Power through action, through praxis, is part of this mix of ideas driving social life. Out of that power come control and coercion, but also negotiation and resistance (Miller and Tilley 1984; Miller, Rowlands and Tilley 1989; Salamini 1981). Practical knowledge of daily events empowers people and enculturates all who live in a particular setting. Such praxis and control are based on worldviews, just as assumptions in our model-driven archaeological research craft the picture we create and test. Power, ideas, praxis, and ritual all have a strong element of ideology, of meaning systems working within a culture to create and change them.

We participate in this shaping of power construction when we privilege certain cultural systems. This is experienced today in the current dominance of economic forces in the explanation of most events in the modern world. Even the president of the World Bank recently noted that such narrow models are not universally successful in every project. A nice example unveiling such a lack of fit is presented by Twiss in her study of Levantine PPNA and PPNB clay figurines. As she discusses, these Neolithic figurines are much more likely to reflect other aspects of life than the traditionally assumed economic uses, as in symbols of increased economic value of certain taxa. She arrives at this conclusion from looking at the bone evidence for these animals at the PPNA and PPNB sites. At these sites, the figurine frequency does not in fact parallel the animals' faunal presence (and economic use). She goes further to conclude that the earliest cattle at such settlements were most likely there for ritual uses, not economic purposes. She then discusses further evidence for the ritualistic possibilities of their presence at a series of sites.

Here we see an interpretation that forefronts ritual, providing a different interpretation and fit to the data.

Ideologies are unstable. To make them acceptable they must be continually made understandable to members of the community. This usually means rites must in some way be practical and performative. They must be restated, reenacted, and renewed. There is a reciprocal level of consent when people participate in a ritual, even if it is performed by external powers and people do not understand all of the nuances the authorities wish them too. Rituals integrate and differentiate communities, allowing governments to renegotiate their positions with the populace (Bell 1992:125; Kertzer 1988). Such reenactments allow the authorities to naturalize power relations through cosmological structures that people live with in their daily lives. In this way rituals can be a locus of power, especially as they (re-)create a social order. Ideology is powerful therefore through ritualization. The performance of social relations on many levels entwines friendly ideologies or agnostic ideas about social life to the living, naturalizing differences and confirming integration. Acceptance becomes implied in participation, and in some ways ideas become acceptable through enactment.

The direction now becomes how to see these past rituals and their meanings. How can we see their involvement with change in the past? One entry into the past discussed in the seminar was through the ideological ideas of Gramsci (Salamini 1981). He was a revolutionary Marxist who placed all basis for political action and legitimization within the domain of ideology. He suggested that societal change must occur first in the ideological realm before change could occur within the material, the economic or the political realms. By privileging the role of ideas and meanings in social structures and events, Gramsci believed that political change emanated from ideation and belief, rather than from the modes or means of production. He wrote that the worldview of a group directed political and economic change. This ideational approach has been picked up by several of the papers in this volume.

Ideology is not only at work in these models of ritual enactment that are being discussed here, but it is also laced throughout our more economically driven archaeological models, as Lopiparo so astutely points out. She unpacks and critiques the traditional models of the political rise and fall of the Maya, noting that the authors of most models believe that these events occurred due to economic forces. In essence, these theories suggest that all change was driven by the means of production. She lays out how the economic cases and data are presented in the literature. When taking a critical look at this evidence and how it is presented, the models in fact suggest that ideological changes and associated tensions initiated more elaborate ritual enactments that led to the collapse of the Maya religion and therefore caused the economic system to falter. She notes that the controlling power nexus of the Maya were all built upon their religious ideology: exotic ritual goods, esoteric knowledge and exchange

of ritual paraphernalia. In this way she invokes the Gramscian notion that societal change grows out of ideological tensions, that then leads to a host of other societal alterations. While actions may be materially manifested, these material changes cannot occur without first an ideological change, without first a change of mind and heart. Through such ideological change, we can see the non-arbitrary nature of the meanings of objects and how these meanings participate in naturalizing and enforcing the ideological message. The objects and their conceived powers participate in political change. The rise of the Maya is a powerful example of how ideas, religion and ritual are visible in the archaeological record and how a close reading of these reveal their impact on historical events.

Small also bases her study on Gramsci's notions of ideation by looking at the shifting meanings within rituals as essential to social and political change. She approaches this at the Early Horizon site of Chavín de Huantar in the central Andes of Perú. In this paper she builds a new interpretive model for the development of the political and religious evidence seen at the site. In essence, she interprets the images depicted of the major deities to be based on shamans and their supernatural powers. Through the rituals that they would have enacted for residents and visitors, she suggests that political change as well as the site's construction would have occurred. Thus, she puts forward not only a cohesive religious basis for the site, but also a new ideational interpretation for the changes seen in the architectural features. These changes all gravitate around the reformulation of previous rituals and the shifting ideas that accompany them. The new political system would continue to have borrowed legitimacy from the previous ones by nurturing the old ritual forms. The ideational core of this evolving religion is based on shamans and their powers gained from the supernatural during their drug-induced journeys. These people were probably believed to have healed as well as predicted the future, hence maintaining authority through these ritual acts. These beliefs and their associated shamanic images elaborated in the rituals and on the beautifully built structures, such as the Maya architecture, display the power and central place of ritual in this society.

## **Rituals**

Beginning with the assumption that ritual and meaning are central to state construction, Doutriaux links the power of a state to the use of ritual and memory. From this vantage point she claims that we can begin to get closer to identifying the historical memories and how they were represented and passed down through the generations before written history. A social memory is conveyed in ritual acts. By building state rituals on local rites and associated deities, a conquering state uses the historical knowledge of the residents to create membership of a larger order. Such strategic rituals have more impact when they incorporate familiar tradition and practice into more elaborate ritual forms. Through such finesse local authority is directed towards the increase of state social power. Her example concerns the Inca



state in the Andean region and their use of the agricultural planting ritual to incorporate local groups. She begins with the Gramscian notion that power begins with ideas and tracks its use in non-violent conquest. Assuming that governments cannot rule without ideas and ideologies that provide a social sense to the conquered for being members of the new system, she begins with outlining how the Inca attempted to realign the conquered. This was done in part by incorporating local rituals into Inca state functions. The Inca cleverly built upon already extant pan-Andean beliefs and then restructured local religious pantheons to include an Inca deity. Thus, they appropriated already extant rituals by elaborating them, so that the populace could find memories of their own rituals within them and in this way participate in the Inca rituals and in turn in the state. The state rituals occurred in parallel with the local cults. This allowed the local people to remain connected with their past but also to participate in the state through the obligatory rituals. Doutriaux makes an important point in her interpretation of the way the Inca state worked, arguing that it was through ritual, its performative qualities, reciprocity, participation and strong evocative meanings, more than state ideology per se that had the most impact on gaining peoples' participation in the state. In Inca rituals, the state presented inequalities as well as naturalized them. Through these rituals, in addition to the reciprocity of food gifts and blessings from the deities, the state gained an operative level of compliance. In this paper, Doutriaux shifts the locus of sustaining power from ideology or material strength to ritual and memory. This has a practical side in the recurring resonance of obedience and labor within the Inca planting ritual. Through these meanings, the conquered work force maintains the fields of the Inca state. This is a clever twist on the Inca's part, for it allows for the mobilization of energy through the rituals of the pan-Andean earth deities. It further links the daily household deities with the cosmic realms of state power through a form of ritualized labor. Surely the participants believed in the earth deities to participate fully. In this way the deities were honored at the same time as the Inca lords. It was one short step to make the head Inca a god.

Turning to a more everyday orientation of households and "domestic" rituals, we see the paper by Dean and Kojan grappling with the interweaving of living spaces and the rituals that occur within them. The authors begin with the point that rituals are not only ceremonies in special places and times, but they also occur at special times in everyday contexts. The production of a place is the mediation and the outcome of human action. Thus, the ritual *place* is created by a combination of location and time. A house can be a regularly used domestic locale but when it is time for a burial, or a re-roofing, or a blessing in the annual cycle, the spot becomes charged with special meanings and rituals occur there. The authors develop a "blurred" model of the domestic and the ritual through discussing archaeological examples, both regionally and globally, in addition to Amazonian ethnographic examples. Through a critical reassessment of what ritual might mean in these daily locations, they unveil probably the most common misconception in household archaeology - that of spatially

separating ritual from domestic. Dean and Kojan begin their discussion by presenting their theoretical approaches centering on agency, structuration, and structuralism. Trying to wed the symbolically meaningful with daily practice, they hope to place ritual in the daily life of the past. Noting that architecture plays an important part in the structuring of society, as does the role of memory and ancestors in this case, they focus on an area of a site that they have excavated in Bolivia, the Santiago area at the site of Chiripa. There is an intriguing sequence here. Early on we learn of an outside use surface, with perhaps some associated ephemeral walled structures. Within over a meter of use layers of floors and rubbish, a large 14 x 14 meter semi-subterranean enclosure is built. After that was in use for at least 200 years, kept remarkably clean, it was filled in with trash. In the final use-phase of the area, burials were dug through the upper deposits. The memory of the sacred seems to have lingered there as it was used for different rituals. The authors present a series of excavated data from this area that illustrate the complexity of domestic places directly associated with ritual. Here we get a specific example of ritual and the everyday. Building on the archaeological data and some excellent ethnographic information, they suggest that our understanding of merging ritual and domestic must remain blurred and ambiguous. Our job now is to keep our minds' eye on two things at once when we try to make sense of such a site. Perhaps this merging will yield some understanding and placement of the sacred and profane in different and past societies. We can begin this task by assuming that people thought that their daily, periodic tasks are part of the recreation of the cosmos. The objects and their distributions, the lifecycles of an area, are the hints of these multiple uses and ritual acts in the domestic context.

### **Memory and Materiality**

Beliefs, meanings and worldviews completely intertwine with the objects and spaces people live in. We who are studying the past must envision possible contingent cultural and spiritual worlds in order to understand anything about past groups. The materiality of ritual and the sacred include a wide range of things: sacred offerings, ceremonial trash, special paraphernalia, bounded or unbounded ceremonial spaces, access and movements, everyday objects in new settings or combinations, an abundance of things (feasting), dancing and song. As Dean and Kojan present in their archaeological data, the sacred can include the everyday items in everyday locales, cooking utensils, woodworking, and rubbish. Such everyday settings are thorny to unravel in terms of rituals, but a close reading of the data and their distributions in multiple places help us gain a sense of their shifting significance.

The easiest form of ritual that can be found materially, in addition to civic architecture, burials, and texts, is what is called ceremonial trash (Walker 1995). Most common is the deposit of objects that have completed their use as sacred and are still visible in the record. While I disagree with Walker that one can study ritual objects without concerning oneself with the associated belief systems, his mention of

this simple form of deposit is useful for us to begin to consider the range of symbolically and ritually charged objects that enter the archaeological record. He defines such pits and their contents as past their use-life, and thus without operative sacredness; such objects were sacred and were worn out and not useful for their purpose anymore. This situation requires a burial and in some cases these objects are buried in cemeteries. This behavioral model proposes that these pits are no longer sacred, but reflect a past sacredness due to the past use of the objects; the essence of those things as well as their meanings have altered and their meanings are now dead. Cache pits are found fairly regularly in archaeology. But it seems unlikely that they have lost their significance to those who used them. The act of burying special objects charges the objects as well as the location with special meaning; like any lived experience in a landscape they continue to communicate to those who know about them (Thomas 1991). As religious performances can change the way people feel about and see their daily world, realigning their thoughts as they draw attention to things that hold special significance, how can the special significance be wiped away if the memory is still there (Connerton 1989)? I would think the modern examples we have of the powerful meanings long buried objects have for Native Americans uncovered by archaeologists, for example, display how long term the sacredness of some objects can be.

In these cases, the act of burying, as well as the objects that are buried, are ritually charged and therefore their existence continues to hold meaning. The placement of the pit and the objects it contains sanctify the place as long as the place is remembered. Offerings in the foundations of new houses are another good example. Their continued existence helps maintain the home and link them to the ancestors, even if not seen for many years. Items in agricultural fields (Malinowski 1935) or piles of rocks at mountain passes reflect the continuing life and non-verbal expression of meaning in the lived landscape (Thomas 1991). These things are disposed of yet they continue to participate through their meanings. Historic buildings, too, have such significance, even if not used for the same purposes through time. Even with such types of sacred offering examples, Walker cannot escape the continuing hermeneutic link between meaning and belief.

Examples of sacred rubbish are regularly created in the community where I am currently working in Bolivia and they continue to hold meaning long after their creation. At Chiripa, residents have ceremonies to bless important events. A series of objects are collected together, representing a range of life forms and regions. These items are laid out in a sequence with many prayers, libations, and incantations. Throughout, much drinking and libating occurs. The transformation of the ritual leaders as well as the participants through coca chewing and alcohol drinking is important (Allen 1988). Coca leaves are thrown regularly in order to see if there will be good fortune in the upcoming events. Once all of the steps of the ritual have been completed inside, all participants have been included and all offerings made, the

deposition of these things is of great consideration. This is the climax of the ceremony. Again the leaves are thrown and the spirit of mother earth, *Pacha Mama*, is requested to suggest a time and place for this sacred deposition. Once the appointed hour has come, the whole group goes with the offerings on a blanket that is placed in the selected spot. This location can be on the archaeological mound, still a locus of spirit and ritual. There, a pit is dug and individuals are chosen to light the fire, which then receives the items. The objects are laid in the pit in a special manner as incense is placed on the offerings by selected ranked-people. It is particularly important for the earth spirits to smell and see the fire, to receive and accept the offerings. Once these offerings are given, everyone in the group makes an incantation and departs. It is important at that point in the ritual not to turn back and look at the fire, nor to see it again aflame. It must be only for the earth. If you do turn around, you run the risk of being consumed into the earth as well, as part of the offering.

Thus, the material is given to the earth, as it burns in the pit. It is not a trash dump but is itself an offering. The spot must be covered up in the dawn by one of the ritual specialists so that no one can see it, again making sure the earth spirit receives it. The place contains ceremonial things, but the act and placement of burial is as important as the material that is present. These places remain in people's memories as the blessing of the event lingers for weeks and months on all who know about it. The choice of the burial spot is clearly important and linked to past rituals, present in peoples' memories. These events also connect to past rituals, some thousand years ago. Such is the cycle of recurring meanings in houses and outside at Chiripa. As Bell (1992) notes, ritual is value laden, strategic and imagined. Many people, all who participate in the ritual, try to communicate their value in the actions of the event (Lewis 1980:6). The ritual specialists have a different sense and placement of these rituals than the receivers, viewers or the assistants, but all take away the memory and participate in the blurring of sacred and profane. While each person takes away their own significance of the event, all are altered and also brought into the group through the experience.

In this example, we see how individuals of different positions and even worlds participate in a ritual that provides multiple meanings for the viewers. In addition, these ritual events occurred within the domestic spaces, yet, like Wiccan ceremonies with their drawing of the circles or the Druids who go to Stonehenge, a Heritage site in England, the sacred is created in both time and space. So, too the burials of these objects in the community link these events to the earth as well as to the memories of the participants. The burned offerings we experience every field season are much like the offerings and ritual deposits Dean and Kojan encountered at Santiago, sacred things that continued to participate and make the area sacred long after the offerings were buried. And yet, these areas also were the place of daily life practices.

## Conclusion

There are many forms of ritual, some very subtle and not materially manifest like the one just presented. Other rituals, by way of closely reading the archaeological data, are more evident, as with the Maya. Sacredness and ceremony may sometimes be clear in the archaeological record but not always. We must remember the pervasive existence ritual and meaning had in the past in order to begin to see them in the archaeological record. How might we tell the difference between “normal” domestic rubbish and special or sacred trash? This diversity and ambiguous nature of contextual identity and concrete meaning is, in part, what the authors in this book are trying to confront. How can we get closer to the understanding and interpretation of meaning structures in the past, assuming that sacredness and ritual were essential aspects of all levels of society? Where do we draw the line between the very special and the everyday? How different must the patterning be to call it a ceremony or a ritual? Without places such as Stonehenge or European churches, we must look for other constructions of meaning to place ritual in the past lives of the people we are studying. The examples and thoughts presented here begin a way into this murky world of meaning, symbol, memory and ritual and allow us to envision this very rich part of human existence.

## Acknowledgments

Without the people of Chiripa, this orientation to the past would never have happened. Thanks go to the KAS editors of the volume for their help, and of course the wonderful students in the seminar.

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