Remembering Mayapán: Petén Kowoj Architecture as Social Metaphor and Power

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16. Remembering Mayapán: Kowoj Domestic Architecture as Social Metaphor and Power

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Abstract: Among migrant populations, collective identity is in part based on collective memory defining a place of origin. Origin myths provide group members with a common history and shared social knowledge. Commemorative performances and architecture are ways that social origins are collectively remembered and transmitted and emphasize continuity between history and the social present. The Kowoj of Petén, Guatemala, claimed to have migrated from Mayapán, Yucatán, Mexico. The site of Zacpetén has ceremonial assemblages nearly identical to those of Mayapán, and one large residential group was constructed in the form of a Mayapán temple assemblage. I argue that temple assemblages are part of the Kowoj collective memory of their origins and migration from Mayapán. The elite family that constructed its residence as a temple assemblage dressed themselves in the guise of the collective memory, placing themselves in a closer relationship with ancestors.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, elites at Zacpetén, Petén, Guatemala (Figures 16-1, 16-2, and 16-3), appropriated architectural symbols of power in their efforts, literally, to construct fields of social relationships. These constructions involved the creation of continuity between the elite at Zacpetén and the symbolically powerful site of Mayapán, Yucatán, Mexico. At this time, a social group known as the Kowoj, who claimed to have migrated from Mayapán, occupied Zacpetén (Jones 1998:16–19). By creating a household in the image of ritual assemblages of Mayapán, elites at Zacpetén both associated themselves with ancestors who had migrated from the Yucatecan site sometime after the fall of Mayapán in the fifteenth century and advertised the ritual knowledge that they had obtained from the city, thereby staking inalienable claims to prestige. Furthermore, the construction of a residential group in the form of a ceremonial center placed the elite family in the...
exemplary center of Zacpetén. Even the everyday lives of these individuals took place in the mediate area between Zacpetén and Mayapán, between humans and the ancestors and gods, and at the very foundation of Kowoj social identity. Identity politics at Zacpetén shed light on how displaced populations strategically utilize collective memory of "place" as a basis of collective identity.

**Place, Identity, and Power**

The study of how migrants and other displaced populations construct a sense of collective identity has been ignored until relatively recently.
(see Breckenridge and Appadurai 1989; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Leonard 1997; Malkki 1997). Modern nation-states and their apparently immobile "national cultures" were considered natural and functionally sound and hence worthy of serious study, while migrants were characterized as anomalous, dangerous, dysfunctional, and without foundation because their very existence threatened the physical and social boundaries and, therefore, the ideological underpinnings of the nation-state (Malkki 1997:61-64). This mischaracterization also found its way into archaeological thought as migrations have been slighted in favor of closed, processualist systems (Anthony 1990:896 -897). This was certainly not the case for the seventh- through sixteenth-century Maya, as indigenous historical documents describe frequent migra-
Figure 16-3. Seventeenth-century ethnic territories in the Petén lakes region (adapted from Jones [1998:Map 3]; copyright 1999 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University).

tions (Schele and Mathews 1998:203–204). The “spatial incarceration” (following Malkki [1997:58]) of the modern Maya seems more the product of colonial forced resettlement than of indigenous preference.

"Place" is a nearly universal means through which groups create social boundaries. The concept of place might appear to be more natural and fixed than history, but it is just as actively constructed and involved in power relations (Foucault 1980:149). The emergence of the modern nation-state and the corresponding construction of national cultures have naturalized the connection between identity and spatial boundaries (Boyarin 1994:15–20). The naturalization of political identity and place is brought about by arguing for an autochthonous bond—that the national culture was “born” in the mother/fatherland in deep mythic time. However, while place is frequently used as a grounding metaphor for social identity, the grounding place need not be the one that the group in question presently occupies (Malkki 1997:70–72). Thus, place is part of the foundation myth strategically used to create social identity. The spatial metaphor of interest here is place of origin.

Place of origin is part of the collective memory that underlies collective identity (Boyarin 1994:25). Places of origin and promised lands, whether real or imagined, are also instrumental in unifying people and providing part of the basis for a common identity (Malkki 1997:70–72; Rushdie 1991:9–21; Smith 1992:438–452). Sacred geographies, which unify social history and territory and might appear rigidly to tie the community to their land, are often trans-
planted or reinvented as groups move into new locations. For example, Japanese immigrants in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century appropriated Chinese rather than Japanese landscapes because they were symbolically more powerful (Leonard 1997:123).

Most social constructions involve collective memory of social origins. Collective memory is not manifest as a discrete phenomenon but as part of individual memory, which in turn does not exist without the former (Connerton 1989:37). Collective memories do not exist as tangible phenomena; however, collective remembering does. Commemorative ritual is one of the more common forms of collective remembering (1989:40). Such rituals re-create events that brought the collective identity into being and allow social-foundation events to be reexperienced or remembered and internalized by group members (1989:61). The rites tend to recur cyclically and often evoke social or cosmic death, interstitial chaos, and rebirth. The ritual cyclicity highlights continuity between the reenactment and the original event (1989:45–69).

Commemorative performances often recur within the context of commemorative places. Unlike bodily performances, commemorative places are relatively permanent. Because of their permanence, such places constantly evoke social memory. While lasting, they are also linked to the original events through cyclicity in the form of periodic reconstruction and use. The importance of these places to the social group is emphasized by their monumentality and central placement. Monuments represent powerful historical events that brought the social group into being and are part of the ideological framework underlying the society (Boyarin 1994:20; Lincoln 1989:21–22). They symbolize solidarity and represent the whole group (Barthes 1979:3–4), as well as all of its social relations. Monuments are nexuses that help tie society together, the foundations of the symbolic system (Lefebvre 1991:222–225). As symbols of the foundation of society, their destruction can also symbolize the destruction of the society itself (Lefebvre 1991:221; Lincoln 1989:116–127). Hence, actions on monuments are powerful performances symbolizing and possibly affecting actions on society.

Because monuments are the stages for reenactments of socially relevant events, they represent scenarios or the events themselves. They re-create the place of collectively important events. Through replication or appropriation, "the representation shares in or takes power from the represented" (Taussig 1993:2) and establishes continuities through time and space despite obvious differences (Stafford 1999:9). The legitimate appropriation of a visual analogy establishes a relationship between the appropriator and the appropriated. For example, the use of Roman architecture, language, and symbols by the United States and by European governments is a means of creating metaphors of continuity affecting legitimacy and power. Monuments and other images of the center are often constructed to resemble origin events, which are cyclically commemorated (Sullivan 1988:134–138). These constructions and the performances within them are part of the collective remembering of events and places crucial to the collective identity. They evoke a sense of continuity with the past and solidarity.

Given the vast amount of variation between groups in how place is used to
construct collective identity, it is impossible to predict exactly how migrants will react to their displaced situation. It seems crucial therefore that archaeologists have some knowledge concerning which aspects of the collective memory a group emphasized in the construction of social identity before speculating about material correlates of the construction of such memory. Given that collective remembering occurs in commemorative performances, communal ritual seems an appropriate place to begin archaeological inquiries into collective memory. The Kowoj of Petén, Guatemala, emphasized their migration from Mayapán, Mexico, as a basis of their collective identity. As I argue here, monumental constructions at the site of Zacpetén, Petén, Guatemala, were intended to resemble those of Mayapán and were representations of the place of collective origin.

**Zacpetén**

Zacpetén is located on a peninsula on Lake Salpetén in Petén, Guatemala (Figure 16-2). The site was occupied primarily in the Middle Preclassic, Terminal Classic, and Late Postclassic through Contact periods. It was also occupied during intermediate periods but not continuously. In Petén, the Late Postclassic period extends from A.D. 1250 to 1540 and the Contact period from A.D. 1540 to 1697. The Late Postclassic Kowoj occupation of Zacpetén may have begun somewhat late, in the early fifteenth century. This occupation is characterized by densely settled residential groups surrounding two ceremonial groups, Groups A and C, and two elite residential groups, Groups D and E (Rice 1988:236–238). The two ceremonial groups experienced a major reconstruction in the early to mid fifteenth century, and this event likely marks the arrival of the Kowoj (Pugh 1999). During the Contact period, the Kowoj controlled the area surrounding Zacpetén on the eastern side of Lake Petén Itzá (Figure 16-3; Jones 1998:17–19). The enemies of the Kowoj, the Itza, controlled the majority of the remaining portion of the Petén lakes. The Itza were the most powerful group in Petén during the Contact period and had their island capital at Nojpetén, modern Flores, Guatemala. The conquest of Nojpetén in A.D. 1697 ended the independence of the Petén Maya.

We know little about the Kowoj because they kept their distance from the Spaniards; however, they claimed to have migrated from Mayapán in Yucatán, Mexico, and occupied “castles and fortresses” (Jones 1998:16, 325). A legitimate claim to have migrated from Mayapán was prestigious. Mayapán was the most prominent Lowland Maya ceremonial center during the Late Postclassic period (Figure 16-1). While the extent of its political power is debated, it was the seat of religious authority throughout the lowlands (Roys 1962:43). Its trade networks were far-reaching, extending at least to Honduras (1962:48), approximately 600 km to the southwest. Mayapán was ruled by the *multepal*, a council of elites from various subordinate provinces who lived within the city. This council was headed by the *jalach winik*, the highest ruler in the land. In the sixteenth century, Bishop Diego de Landa (1941:98) recorded that elite families regarded Mayapán descent as prestigious and recorded
the locations of former family estates in the city as proof of descent (Tozzer 1941:98). After the fall of the city, many of the elites who had formed the multepeal left Mayapán for their home provinces with codices in hand and built ceremonial buildings upon their arrival (Herrera y Tordesillas 1941:216).

Archaeological research has revealed that sites in the Kowoj area have defensive systems or easily defensible terrain, such as islands and peninsulas; therefore, Kowoj centers tended to be "fortresses." Zacpetén is located on a peninsula, at the origin of which is a defensive system composed of walls, a ditch and parapets, a canal, and possibly a perishable wall. Muralla de Leon, another Kowoj site, located 4 km to the east, was similarly protected (Rice and Rice 1981:275), and Topoxté, located 25 km east of Zacpetén, was built on three islands. All hypothesized Kowoj sites were constructed in defensive positions.

The Kowoj area differs from other Late Postclassic and Contact period areas so far surveyed in Petén because its sites have temples, while ceremonial groups in sites in other areas tend to be focused on lineage halls, which were the locations of lineage ritual and administration. It is possible that these temple pyramids were the castillos described by the Spaniards. Temples in the Kowoj area were arranged with other buildings in ceremonial assemblages nearly identical to those of Mayapán (Pugh and Rice 1997:521-526; Rice et al. 1998:229-230).

The settlement characteristics encountered by archaeologists in areas believed to have been occupied by the Kowoj support the traits described of the Kowoj in historic documents: they were defensive, had temples, and exhibited architectural forms that clearly tied them to Mayapán. These characteristics distinguish sites in the northeastern part of the lakes from those in the rest of the Petén lakes because the latter were not organized in this manner. As a result, these traits were socially specific attributes. In addition, since it was well known among the colonial Maya that migrants from Mayapán constructed "temples" when returning to their provinces, I suggest that the ceremonial groups that were constructed to resemble those of Mayapán were also monuments of origins from that city.

Temple Assemblages

The ceremonial groups of Mayapán mimicked at Zacpetén are called temple assemblages (Figure 16-4; Proskouriakoff 1962a:91). Temple assemblages include a temple that faces east or west as the central building. The temple generally rests on a multiterraced platform, making it the tallest building in a given group. In each of the temples in the assemblages at Mayapán were found fragments of image censers of pottery depicting deities. The modern Lacandon Maya of Chiapas, Mexico, used similar "god pots" to communicate with and make offerings to the deities that they represent. The Lacandon kept god pots in special private buildings called god houses (Davis 1978:55-77). God houses are common throughout the Maya area and are places where the gods lived and slept (Taube 1998:427-428). The temples in Mayapán assemblages were communal god houses. At conquest, both temples and god
pots were renovated according to yearly and larger ceremonial cycles (Tozzer 1941:151), and rituals associated with these cycles replicated cosmogony (Taube 1988:8, 310–311).

In front of the temple of the assemblage rests a low rectangular platform called a statue shrine, which generally supported stucco statues (Proskouriakoff 1962a:91). A raised shrine is centered on and faces into the temple. Raised shrines often contained multiple burials (1962a:108) and may have been used for ancestor veneration. To the right of (“bodily” right is used here because temple direction varies) and facing the same direction as the temple is an oratorio. Oratorios seem to have been small temples and are C-shaped, benched structures containing a medial niche or altar. Finally, there is an open hall at a right angle to the temple. Open halls are long structures with a C-shaped bench, in the center of which lies a medial niche or shrine. These buildings are believed to have been lineage administration buildings (Carmack 1981:287–290; Rice 1988:240–241).

The temple assemblage arrangement is precisely repeated three times at Mayapán. A fourth group has a minor variation, with the raised shrine moved out of the central position and facing perpendicular to the medial axis formed by the temple and statue shrine. This variation of the Mayapán temple assemblage is also found at Zacpetén.

In Group A at Zacpetén (Figure 16-5), a west-facing temple (Str. 602) faces a
long, low platform with an altar at its end (Str. 607). To the right of the temple is an oratorio (Str. 605), which faces in the same direction as the temple, and at a right angle to the temple and the oratorio is an open hall (Str. 606a). On the western side of the open hall are two masonry tables or altars. On the south side of the plaza is a raised shrine (Str. 601) that faces into the open hall in the direction of the masonry tables. The same layout is repeated in Group C (Figure 16-6) except that the open hall (Str. 767) is in the south and the raised shrine (Str. 765) is in the north. Both of these assemblages were replicas of the temple assemblages of Mayapán.

Not only was the layout of the two temple assemblages at Zacpetén the same, but each set of corresponding buildings had nearly identical activity areas (Pugh 1999). Activity areas are central to this chapter because they dem-
onstrate that the ceremonial groups looked the same and contained nearly identical ritual performances. Both temples and oratories were god houses. Each of the temples contained numerous large Patojo Modeled image censers of various male and female deities. Structure 605, the oratorio in Group A, contained a smaller Kultur Modeled image censer depicting a single deity not seen in the temples. We do not know the identity of this deity, but it has pointed teeth, small boltlike objects in his mouth, braided hair, and a reptile headdress. It wears a loincloth rather than a huipil; therefore, it is male. The reason for separating this deity from the others is uncertain, but the modern Lacandon Maya separate the underworld gods from celestial beings (Tozzer 1907:Figure 95). Hence, the oratorio god pot may depict the underworld deity or another denizen of that plane, such as an ancestor. The open halls at

Figure 16-6. Group C, Zacpetén.
Zacpetén were very clean, but tiny divination crystals, hematite mirror fragments, and stone phalli were found in situ. Raised shrines included paired non-image censers. The long, low shrines in front of the temples had sparse censer sherds and human remains on their south sides. Since activity areas in the two temple assemblages correspond, one may conclude that the two groups are not simply recurrent assemblages of buildings but that they replicated configurations of interrelated ritual settings (Pugh 1999). While Groups A and C were civic-ceremonial groups, a late-seventeenth- or early-eighteenth-century domestic group replicated their layout.

Group 719

On the saddle between the two ceremonial groups at Zacpetén is Group 719, an elite domestic group (Figure 16-7). The primary building of this group is the residence, Structure 719. The group also includes a small temple (Str. 721) and statue shrine (Str. 720). The essential form of Structure 719 is the same as the other residences at Zacpetén, but it is much larger and better constructed. The residential structures at the site are tandem structures, meaning that they have both a front and a back room with a doorway between them. The front rooms are open on one side and have L-shaped or straight benches. The bench and floors of the front room are usually covered by plaster and seem to have been swept, as they were very clean. The back rooms of houses are enclosed, have dirt floors, and are full of artifacts that indicate various activities. For the most part, the back room is devoid of architectural features.

The bench of Structure 719 is different from the rest of the benches at Zacpetén because it has dividers made of soft cut limestone borrowed from Classic period constructions. These dividers formed 9 or 10 niches or seats. The front face of the bench of Structure 719 was painted with red curvilinear designs, the altar with black and red lines and dots. No other house excavated at Zacpetén was painted.

The form of the residential structures at Zacpetén resembles those of Mayapán. Nearly all of the approximately 2,100 houses at Mayapán were tandem structures with a bench in the front room (Freidel 1981:315–316; Smith 1962: 217). In addition to matching the houses of Mayapán, those of Zacpetén correspond with houses described in colonial documents (Landa 1941:85–87). Colonial houses in Yucatán had thatched roofs and a wall dividing the house lengthwise. The occupants slept in the back room, and the front room was covered with plaster and used as a social area and sleeping place for guests. The houses of elites were better constructed and built by communal labor, and the plastered front rooms of such houses were elaborately painted. The Spaniards in Petén likewise described the residence of the Itza ruler, Ajaw Kan Ek'; he had a plastered anteroom for the reception of visitors on the front of his house (Jones 1998:71). While describing houses in Yucatán and in the Itza region of Petén, the Spaniards could just as easily have been describing Structure 719.

Structure 719 seems to have been quickly abandoned: numerous artifacts were left in situ on the floors, benches, altars, and shrines. These artifacts re-
veal patterning in human behavior that suggest activity areas. Utilitarian ceramic sherds, including numerous reconstructible vessels, were primarily concentrated in the back room. Ceramic jars were stored against the interior wall. Two of the jars, containing maize kernels, were embedded into the floor. A maize sample from this area produced an accelerator mass spectrometry date (Beta—107791) with a conventional age of 200 ± 40 B.P., cal A.D. 1650–1700 and A.D. 1720–1820 (2-sigma, 95% probability), with intercepts of radiocarbon age with the calibration curve at A.D. 1670 and 1780. The final construction and occupation of Structure 719 dates significantly later (>200 years) than the initial Kowoj reconstruction of Groups A and C. The back room of Structure 719 also contained a red-paint production area with pigment stones, fired gypsum, and fine manos and metates with red stains. Concentrations of hammerstones, obsidian cores, and numerous other domestic artifact types lay in the back room as well.

The front room was relatively clean of domestic refuse but full of censers and other ritual artifacts. Several non-image censers were resting on the di-
vider wall to the east of the door when the ceiling of the house collapsed after abandonment. In addition to censer sherds, a copper axe head and a quartz crystal were found in this area. In the interior shrine of the front room lay an in situ smaller Kulut Modeled image censer (Figure 16-8) depicting the same deity—with sharp teeth, braided hair, and bolts in his mouth—as described above from Structure 605, the oratorio in Group A. Associated with this censer was a small ceramic offering cup. That this censer was in situ with an offering cup suggests that this structure was abandoned during an important ritual. Near the image censer was half of a tapir mandible. The Lacandon kept animal mandibles in the ceilings of ceremonial buildings as sacrificial markers (Tozzer 1907:115). In the colonial period, tapirs and jaguars were considered powerful animals. The killing of a large tapir was a heroic act, and families passed preserved portions of its body through generations as a commemoration (Landa 1941:203); therefore, these objects were memorials to ancestral heroics. Upon the altar to the east of the interior shrine rested a pair of non-image censers. The area in front of the L-shaped bench was relatively clean of artifacts and may have been swept.

The social area occurs in space separated from the domestic area. The front room is open and is a zone intermediate between the inside and the outside. The area surrounding the doorway to the back room is highly ritualized, with altars, a shrine, and numerous censers. Evidence of cleanliness in the front room may indicate the intentional maintenance of social boundaries. Among the modern Yucatecan Maya, sweeping is an important act that symbolizes the re-creation of social space and boundaries (Hanks 1990:364). The doorway mediates between social space and domestic space, and ritual activities in Structure 719 were concentrated around this feature. Given the distinction of the social area from the domestic area and the intermediate quality of the front room, and given that it was a ritual activity area, it would appear that household visitations among the Kowoj were highly ritualized. A similar pattern has been described for the northern Lacandon Maya (Boremanse 1998:20).

The front room is the social area of the house, and it appears to have been replicated in the open halls of the temple assemblages. Two of the three halls have C-shaped benches that are broken by a medial niche leading nowhere. This niche is essentially a vestigial remnant of the doorway leading from the front room to the back room in the residences. One might speculate that it leads to the domestic space of the lineage ancestors. Like the front room in a residence, halls at Zacpetén were very clean. Open halls are believed to have been lineage houses—the social area of the lineage. They appear to have been constructed to resemble the front room of houses or vice versa—not the houses of Zacpetén but of Mayapán. The residences at Zacpetén have L-shaped benches, which do not correspond with the C-shaped benches of open halls. At Mayapán, residences had both C-shaped and L-shaped benches (see Smith 1962:Figure 2-10). Hence, the connection between the lineage hall and the front room of the house could have been established at Mayapán or possibly at an even earlier site.

Structure 719 does not occur alone but in a domestic group and stands at a right angle to Structure 721. Structure 721 faces west toward a low, rectangu-
lar platform with several smaller rectangular additions. Only four of the other buildings excavated at Zacpetén face west, and all are either temples or oratorios, both of which are god houses. Structure 721 has a medial altar or bench and a long interior altar, which is the same basic layout as the two temples at Zacpetén. In addition, this structure contained numerous in situ Patojo Modelled image censers, which were only encountered in situ in primary refuse of temples at Zacpetén. Structure 721 is a god house containing multiple deities.

Structure 721, then, is a temple with a long, low platform in front of it and with a residence (Str. 719) at a right angle to it. I suggest that this layout replicated the temple-long structure shrine of the temple assemblages, as well as their activity areas (Table 16-1). Structure 721, like Structure 602 of Group A and 764 of Group C, is a west-facing building that contained large god pots depicting multiple deities (Table 16-1). The directionality of the buildings was important because only god houses face west at Zacpetén. These are also the only buildings in which large god pots were found as primary refuse at Zacpetén.
Table 16-1. Tabulation and Comparison of Temple Assemblage and Domestic Activity Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group C</th>
<th>Group 719</th>
<th>Other Excavated Domestic Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple-Deity Worship</td>
<td>Multiple god pots of various deities</td>
<td>Str. 602</td>
<td>Str. 764</td>
<td>Str. 721</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Deity Worship</td>
<td>One god pot of a specific deity</td>
<td>Str. 605</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Str. 719, interior shrine</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue Shrines</td>
<td>Long, low platform</td>
<td>Str. 607</td>
<td>Str. 766</td>
<td>Str. 721</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Boundary Maintenance</td>
<td>Ritualized cleaning</td>
<td>Str. 606</td>
<td>Str. 767</td>
<td>Str. 719, front room, west side</td>
<td>Present, front room (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divination</td>
<td>Crystals and hematite mirror fragments</td>
<td>Str. 606</td>
<td>Str. 767</td>
<td>Str. 719, front room</td>
<td>Present, location varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Ancestor Worship</td>
<td>Paired, spiked non-image censers</td>
<td>Str. 601</td>
<td>Str. 765</td>
<td>Str. 719, interior altar</td>
<td>Present, interior shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Production</td>
<td>Multiple activity areas oriented toward production</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Back room</td>
<td>Present, back room (all)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In front of each of the god houses in all three groups was a long, low platform. At Mayapán, these platforms often held stucco statues. No such statues were recovered at Zacpetén, but they could have been made of wood or destroyed by the Spaniards. Whatever the case, the shape and the position of these buildings correlate with the statue shrines of Mayapán.

Structure 606 in Group A, Structure 767 in Group C, and the front room of Structure 719 were all open halls. Each area was largely clean of artifacts. Cleanliness does not imply a lack of activity, as small artifacts, such as small quartz crystals, were recovered (Table 16-1). These objects are still used by the Maya for divination, curing, and other practices (Brady and Prufer 1999:130-132). While sweeping and cleaning might be considered “work,” among the Maya they were also symbolic acts defining social space. Sweeping that occurred in the front room of a house may have defined family space, and in a lineage hall, lineage space. In Structure 719, it may have defined both.

To have a complete temple assemblage, an oratorio and raised shrine should be present, but they appear absent in Group 719. The oratorio of Group C was unexcavated, but that of Group A, Structure 605, contained a single specific deity (Table 16-1). This same deity was encountered in the interior shrine of Structure 719. While Structure 605 was a distinct west-facing building, its activities matched those of the interior shrine of Structure 719. The smaller size of the shrine within Structure 719 may have been a matter of economy or spatial restrictions. Whichever the case, these two ritual areas operationally corresponded.

Structure 601 and Structure 765 are raised shrines in Group A and Group C, respectively. Each building contained a pair of spiked non-image censers in front of its altar (Table 16-1). The “altar” in the front room of Structure 719 also contained a pair of spiked non-image censers. Paired non-image censers were also found in the interior shrine of Structure 732, another domestic structure. Raised shrines seem to have been used for ancestor veneration at Mayapán, but there is no solid evidence of ancestor veneration at Zacpetén, as no human remains were found buried beneath the shrines.

Group 719 is similar in shape and had all of the major ritual activity areas of a temple assemblage. The other excavated domestic groups did not contain evidence of many of the activities of the temple assemblage, most notably the use of large, deity-effigy censers, and were not constructed similar to these ceremonial groups. Therefore, Group 719 is likely a temple assemblage, but a domestic one, with the front room of the house standing as the lineage hall and the oratorio and shrine contained within the front room as well. However, this assemblage differed from the others at Zacpetén because it contained domestic space in the back room of Structure 719. Domestic space does not correlate with female space: both male and female activities, such as food preparation, sleeping, tool manufacture, pigment production, and so on, took place there. Group 719 was not superficially constructed in the form of a temple assemblage but acted as both a temple assemblage and a residential group. The form and activities of the two distinct domains were brought together as one in Group 719.

I should point out that the relationship between the temple assemblage and
the domestic temple assemblage might be an old one, as is evident in the relationship between the front room of the house and the open halls. Both architecture forms may have descended from Plaza Plan 2, a residential pattern defined at Tikal (Becker 1971, 1999), a major Classic period site approximately 25 km north of Zacpetén. The most consistent quality of Plaza Plan 2 is the presence of a ceremonial building on the eastern side of the plaza, which differs from others in the group in that it is taller and has a square base. The eastern building and the domestic oratorios at Mayapán may correspond (Becker 1971:178–181). Plaza Plan 2 seems to be related to twin pyramid complexes (Becker 1971:183), which in turn seem to be predecessors of Mayapán temple assemblages (Prudence M. Rice, personal communication 1999). While Group 719 certainly resembles Plaza Plan 2, it seems to do so by virtue of its relationship to temple assemblages because its ritual activity areas match those of temple assemblages. Thus, while both Plaza Plan 2 and Group 719 were residential, the influence of the former led to the latter via twin pyramid complexes and then temple assemblages. Despite the obvious interrelationship between civic-ceremonial and domestic groups, the two are generally constructed as distinct places; however, Group 719 is an exception.

**Discussion**

Public ritual space is separated from domestic space, but some constructions incorporate both elements. Residential groups usually have ceremonial areas, but they are generally clearly demarcated. Group 719 differs from such household ritual spaces because, instead of having clearly demarcated sacred space within mundane space, domestic activity occurs within the context of sacred monumental space. Such muddling of domesticity and monumentality has been referred to as spatial chaos and often occurs when the homes of the elite are “dressed up in monumental signs” (Lefebvre 1991:223). Public architecture at Zacpetén had been appropriated by private persons. The elite had literally “moved into” a temple assemblage. Not only had the monuments as symbolically loaded objects been appropriated but the rituals associated with the monumental space were taken as well (Table 16-1). Therefore, the true hostages were not the façades of stone, soil, and plaster composing the buildings but the processes of collective remembering.

A displaced group often bases its identity on a place never physically visited—an ancestral, promised, or mythic land—or a land the group left or from which it was cast out (Malkki 1997:70–72; Rushdie 1991:9–21; Smith 1992:438–452). The history of the Kowoj demonstrates that, at various times, they were a mobile group moving in the face of Late Postclassic and Contact period politics and epidemics. However, to ground themselves with a stable and powerful social datum, the Kowoj advertised their ties with their former homeland, Mayapán. Mayapán ancestry was the foundation myth binding the Kowoj together as a group and differentiated them from the Itza, who claimed to have migrated from Chich’en Itza. While Mayapán and Chich’en Itza were linked in cyclical time, they were historically and mythically different places. Furthermore, each was a ceremonial hub of the Maya Lowlands at a different
time, with Chich'en Itza preceding Mayapán. The precedence of Chich'en Itza imbued it with primacy, thereby adding to the status of the Itza. The time-space of origin was, therefore, paradoxically both a dividing practice and a point of commonality between the Kowoj and Itza.

The Kowoj and Itza are also similar in that neither claimed to be autochthonous, which is somewhat surprising, as the Itza had existed in Petén since the Terminal Classic period (Boot 1995:333–335; Schele and Mathews 1998:187). Similar migratory origin myths were found among the Itza of Yucatán (Schele and Mathews 1998:202–204), the Quiché of the Guatemalan highlands (Tedlock 1985:171), and the Aztec of central Mexico (Boone 1991:121–148). To the early people of Mesoamerica, migration, along with its trials and tribulations, seems to have been just as important a basis of social identity as autochthonous development is for modern national identities.

To commemorate and communicate their roots in Mayapán, the displaced Kowoj constructed ceremonial groups identical to those of that city. Indigenous histories describe migrants from Mayapán constructing temples upon arrival in their home provinces. Through visual analogy in their public architecture, the Kowoj demonstrated a connection between themselves and the Yucatecan city and appropriated part of the power of Mayapán. The Mayapán-style temple assemblages established proof of descent and ritual continuity and established a link, perhaps embedded in cyclical time, with Mayapán. Since Mayapán was the place of the apical Kowoj ancestors, the assemblages, which evoked the ancestral homeland, were foundations of Kowoj identity. By emphasizing their Mayapán ancestry, the Kowoj clearly differentiated themselves from the Itza, who claimed to have migrated from Chich'en Itza. They also forcefully declared that, while they were latecomers to Petén, their lineage was substantial and worthy of elite status.

Mayapán ancestry was a source of social status, and elite families kept records of exactly where within the city their families lived. As with the ability to construct Mayapán ceremonial assemblages, these records established a genealogical connection with the city. One elite Kowoj family constructed their residential group as a Mayapán-style temple assemblage, and its activity areas demonstrate that this group also functioned as such an assemblage. They had constructed their residence in the robes of the past and of social power.

The explanation of Group 719 as an attempt by an elite household to accentuate its status and power is admittedly a top-down argument. At present, we do not know how subordinates would have accepted the elites' appropriation of the temple assemblage plan, nor do we know how these elites used the power they had co-opted. It is possible, though decidedly speculative, that this case study is not exceptional but part of the larger social processes of the Contact to early colonial Maya Lowlands. Population movements, epidemics, and political upheavals brought about by the Spanish incursion might have weakened social linkages and boundaries of kin-based societies, such as lineages, resulting in configurations similar to "house societies." House societies are corporate groups in which noble houses are the central institutions, foun-
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Itza time and a thoso the \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\text{\textasteriskquotes}}}} \), Schele lands 8). To tributary as placed ngene- upon archived the Mayan, ntop. \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\text{\textasteriskquotes}}}} \), Gillespie 1955:20; Gillespie 2000:475-478; Lévi-Strauss 1982:163-187). Both descent and affinal ties provide bases for membership, and other unrelated individuals within the “corporate residential group,” who may take the group name, are also included in the group (Gillespie 2000:470). The fact that the word Kowoj, the patronymic of its leader, referred to the entire group lends some credence to the existence of this social formation. One might speculate that Group 719 reflects a new social arrangement in which corporate groups, unified by a central elite house rather than a lineage, were the primary elements of social organization after the extended or nuclear family. If this were the case, the replacement of the lineage hall with an elite residence would reflect the local manifestation of a larger, more widespread structure of power. I reiterate, however, that these thoughts are speculative, and I do not advocate replacing the term \textit{lineage} with \textit{house} among the Maya (see Gillespie 2000:477); I feel the situation is far more complex and varied.

Domestic groups at other Late Postclassic sites appear to have been constructed in the form of those at Mayapán to establish a prestigious connection with the city (Freidel and Sabloff 1984:158-159). However, Group 719 at Zacpetén differed from the groups at other sites because 719 was created as a visual analogy of a Mayapán temple assemblage. The construction of Mayapán-style domestic groups might simply have been the re-creation of stylistic traditions; however, the construction of a house in the form of a ceremonial assemblage was a conscious improvisation of place. This was the only such residential group at the site, and the ability to muddle the boundary between domestic and public architecture was an obvious statement of organizational power. The elites living in Group 719 clearly had the ability to use and manipulate public symbols.

The domestic group’s mimicry of Mayapán temple assemblages coexisted with the obvious fact that this was not purely a ceremonial group but a domestic group. The juxtaposition of the domestic group and the ceremonial group, of family and communal ancestors, wove the two together. This combination was not a façade: the activities within the Mayapán-style groups was mimicked as well; therefore, life within the group was interwoven with commemorative performance. The family living in the temple assemblage had closer ties to Mayapán because they virtually lived there. Since Mayapán was the place of the ancestors, these elites were living in the space of the ancestors; therefore, the spatial chaos of the muddling of monumentality and domesticity also created a bend in social time and space. These elites were bonded with the apical Kowoj ancestors who had migrated from Mayapán. By \textit{becoming} the ancestors, they placed themselves at the foundation of Kowoj identity—in the space of the lineage homeland. Through the appropriation of public visual analogies and performances of collective memory, the elites had woven themselves into the foundation of the social nexus of Zacpetén and tapped the power of the past.
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