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The Pre-Classic Maya Compound as the Focus of Social Identity

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In this chapter I address the question of how social groups defined themselves and sustained that sense of identity in Pre-Hispanic Maya society, by looking at the basic social unit of production and reproduction, commonly referred to as the “household” (Ashmore and Wilk 1988), during its earliest appearance in the southern lowlands. Drawing on the limited but suggestive data on Middle Pre-Classic occupation, I explore how the pragmatics of daily life and the symbolic language of belief systems that serve to give meaning and value to social relations are reflected in the archaeological remains from residential, as opposed to public, space. I concentrate on the household because it has the longest history as a recognizable unit in the region and forms the basic element of larger and more inclusive social groups which play a prominent role in later time periods. Such groups, whether defined on the basis of kinship, residence, occupation, or ethnicity, are nevertheless made up of households and draw on many of the same kinds of symbols and relationships to sustain their sense of identity. To further our understanding of early Maya household dynamics, I use a comparative approach which draws on evidence for the organization of contemporaneous households in other parts of Mesoamerica such as the Oaxaca Valley and the Gulf Coast. This approach makes clear that Maya culture develops out of and elaborates on certain fundamental Mesoamerican themes centering on the social relations of production and religious ideology common to Formative communities (Grove and Gillespie 1992).

Although group identity may be explained as a set of normative rules based on kinship and descent, it is through practice that group identity is really formed and maintained. Practice, or the assigning of value to action (Bourdieu 1977), is

both material and symbolic, expressing the group's interdependence through complementary economic roles and shared rituals. Evon Vogt's ethnographic work on the Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas demonstrates how a practice-based definition adds significantly to our understanding of the importance of the household in Mesoamerica. According to Vogt (1969: 128), any particular Tzotzil household may be defined normatively "as a segment of a patrilineage. Patrilineal residence and patrilineal inheritance of land ideally construct domestic units . . . that are composed of fathers and their married sons" living together. But this ideal arrangement gives way to other combinations of kin and in-laws as part of the natural developmental cycle of the family or as a result of variation in family composition, as when a couple has no sons. At the time of Vogt's fieldwork, for example, almost 20 percent of married couples did not live with the husband's parents (Vogt 1969: table 3).

When Vogt looks to those practices considered by the Tzotzil themselves to be emblematic of a social unit, he finds an emphasis on shared residence (either a house or a set of houses in a compound), a shared maize supply, and shared allegiance to a wooden cross placed outside the main house. Concepts of social relations center on male-female pairs—exemplified by married couples but also found in other forms (such as widowed parent and opposite-sex child)—rather than lineally related male kin. The importance of the male-female pair grows out of a sexual division of labor in the production and processing of the shared maize supply and is validated by gendered symbols of male and female work (Vogt 1969: 127–129). Interdependent gendered roles in economic production and participation in household-level rituals that take place within the residential space are the practices that for the Tzotzil construct a household (see also Devereaux 1987).

The Tzotzil household is thus an example of a spatial, economic, and psychological entity with which people identify (McKinnon 1991). This entity has a physical location in the houses occupied by men and women who either claim a shared descent or are related by marriage. But it is the economic and ritual activities that the residents undertake to ensure the group's survival on both the mundane and spiritual levels that bind them together in their own minds and set their group apart from the others in a village. The key elements of Tzotzil household identity—joint living space, complementary economic tasks, and shared ritual action—draw on long-standing cultural traditions. The Tzotzil thus exemplify the importance of certain kinds of practices, even though their specific norms of descent, inheritance, and postmarital residence are not common to all Maya and are certainly not universal for Mesoamerica (see Thompson 1978; Joyce 1981).

The Tzotzil example also brings out two issues of import to the archaeological study of social identity: the importance of activities and the significance of domestic space as the setting for such action. Thus a concern with practice focuses our attention on what people did and where they did it. In trying to apply this approach to the Pre-Classic period, and especially the Middle Pre-Classic, one encounters two problems. The first is that occupation dating to this time period is often deeply buried beneath later construction and is thus more difficult to sample extensively. The second is the tendency to focus on public—that is, monumental ritual and administrative space—at the expense of the surrounding settlement when addressing the emergence of centralized systems of political control and of social hierarchies. Work on Classic period Maya domestic space has shown that it is the residential areas that are the setting for much of the material symbolism through which the Maya enacted their competition for prestige and made visible their control of economic and symbolic resources (Hendon 1991, 1992a; Gonlin 1993). The artifacts recovered from primary contexts, including burials, caches, and middens, in and around Late Pre-Classic houses at Cerros reveal that their residents were actively involved in this competition which was enacted through ritual and marked in costume, material culture, and architecture (Robertson 1983; Freidel 1986; Garber 1989). Our understanding of the bases of power in Maya society and of the transition from relative egalitarianism to relative complexity, then, will be substantially advanced by looking at what people did at home. The choices made in designing and constructing the built space, the kinds of economic and ritual activities carried out, and the use of symbols in material culture, understood as referents of a culturally shared ideology (Gillespie 1993), reflect how households forged competing group identities through which they negotiated economic, social, and political relations.

By emphasizing the Middle Pre-Classic over the Late, and the domestic over the public, I hope to highlight what data we do have on early household practice and how such data fit into the larger context of Formative period Mesoamerica. When I first began working on this chapter, I thought of Uaxactun because of its early deposits and well-described and illustrated artifact collection. In order to extract from the Uaxactun material the kind of information I needed, however, I found it necessary to combine the published information with unpublished materials from the Carnegie Institution of Washington's project in the archives of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of Harvard University. Because of its unpublished nature, the Uaxactun data are described in greatest depth here. I spend some time describing its history and discussing how I correlated the unpublished field notes and photographs with

the published reports to reconstruct the dating of certain structures and the provenience of some artifacts. I then consider the evidence for economic production and ritual action from several sites in the Maya area, including Uaxactun, Río Azul, Altar de Sacrificios, Nakbe, and Seibal in Guatemala, and Altun Ha, Cuello, Cerros, and Cahal Pech in Belize, with particular emphasis on the Middle Pre-Classic period. I compare this evidence to information from such sites as San José Mogote, Chalcatzingo, and La Venta.

RECONSTRUCTING UAXACTUN'S MIDDLE-LATE PRE-CLASSIC OCCUPATION

Uaxactun was the first site excavated in the Southern Maya Lowlands. Work there was instrumental in revealing the richness of Maya sites and establishing the basic chronological framework for the region (Smith 1955; Smith 1973). The Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW) project of mapping and excavation at Uaxactun from 1926 to 1937 revealed that the central part of the site consists of a series of discrete groups of monumental and elite residential architecture ("palaces") built on hills that were shaped and in some cases increased in height to accommodate the buildings. The CIW identified eight such groups, designated A–H (Smith 1950), and in the process defined the standard form of a Maya political center. The abundance of "house mounds," believed to represent the remains of nonelite residences, was demonstrated by Oliver Ricketson's survey and Robert Wauchope's excavations (O. Ricketson 1937; Wauchope 1934). The excavations in Group E carried out by Ricketson from 1926 to 1931 are discussed in depth in the 1937 publications by him and Edith Ricketson. The project excavated in the remaining groups from 1931 to 1937, with most emphasis placed on Groups A and B (Smith 1950; Smith 1955; Kidder 1947). Guatemalan archaeologists began new excavations at the site in 1983 concentrating on Groups A and H (Valdés 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991).

The CIW's work produced the first evidence of Pre-Classic period occupation in the lowlands, the most famous of which is the platform known as Str. E-VII-Sub. A pyramid with a staircase on each of its four sides and decorated with large stucco masks, it supported a perishable building of ceremonial function. Str. E-VII-Sub is the first reported example of what is now recognized to be a well-established type of Late Pre-Classic monumental architecture (O. Ricketson 1937; Freidel and Schele 1988). Valdés' more recent excavations have revealed an earlier construction phase of Str. E-VII that appears to lack masks (Valdés 1988, 1991). Both E-VII-1, as Valdés labels this phase, and E-VII-Sub¹ date to the Late

¹ Valdés (1991: 9) appears to have renamed Str. E-VII-Sub, calling it Str. E-VII-2.

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Pre-Classic period (Chicanel phase). Valdés (1991) has also found other examples of Chicanel phase monumental stucco masks in Group H, where they decorate both temples and vaulted palaces.

The Nature of the Middle Pre-Classic Midden Deposits: Pits E-4 and E-18

Excavation of Groups E and A revealed deeply buried buildings, burials, and extensive midden deposits indicative of Middle and Late Pre-Classic residential occupation. Evidence of this occupation comes as well from Groups C, D, and H (Valdés 1986, 1988, 1991; O. Ricketson 1937; Smith 1950: 62–63). But it is Ricketson's work in Group E which gathered the most information about the Middle Pre-Classic period (Mamom phase). In order to use this information in my study of Pre-Classic social identity, however, I first had to resolve, as best I could, certain problems with provenience and dating.

The published reports of the CIW excavations (e.g., O. Ricketson 1929, 1937; E. Ricketson 1937; Smith 1950; Smith 1937, 1955; Kidder 1947) contain thorough descriptions of architectural form and stratigraphy, ceramic classification, artifact types, and burials, but lack information on the dating and associations of specific artifacts or on the probable stratigraphic relationship of early structures from Group E. The initial chronological framework developed by Edith Ricketson was subsumed by Robert Smith's work (1955), which does not always make clear how specific deposits analyzed by Ricketson fit into his framework.

In an attempt to find more information, I consulted materials from the Uaxactun project in the Peabody Museum archives. Included in the collection were carbon copies of the typed reports written by Oliver Ricketson for the 1929 and 1930 field seasons, as well as carbons of some of his handwritten field notes from the 1930 season (Ricketson n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c). The reports for both seasons include photographs and drawings. Parts of the text of these reports and some of the illustrations were published in the CIW *Yearbooks* and the Group E monograph (O. Ricketson 1929, 1937; E. Ricketson 1937). The manuscript versions, however, record provenience information for artifacts and deposits that was edited out of the published report. More detailed descriptions of the early deposits, with measurements and artifact associations, are also included.

Correlating this information with the artifact descriptions in Edith Ricketson's published analysis allowed me to determine the provenience of many of the artifacts in her report. Midden deposits, associated with pits dug into the underlying limestone bedrock and low wall lines, were found below the first stucco plaza floor of Group E (Floor I) (O. Ricketson 1937: 136, figs. 72, 73). These deposits, described as "vegetal and organic débris" (O. Ricketson 1937: 136)

and “typical midden material” (E. Ricketson 1937: 224), contained many artifacts and were, by virtue of their stratigraphic position below Floor I, early in date. I therefore concentrated on identifying artifacts found in these midden deposits and especially from two pits labeled E-4 and E-18. Edith Ricketson assigned the artifacts from these deposits to her earliest period, 1a. Robert Smith (1955: 3) later equated Period 1a with his Mamom phase, or the Middle Pre-Classic period.

The differences between the published and unpublished description of Pit E-18 exemplify what I found. In the 1929 field season report, Oliver Ricketson notes one of the midden deposits referred to as having a charcoal- and ash-rich matrix and occurring at 5 ft. 2 in. below the top of the pit.² He includes a profile of the pit showing the stratigraphic relationship between the plaza floors and the midden layer (Ricketson n.d.a: 9, fig. 51). This profile is reproduced as figure 97 in his 1937 publication. In both instances, the profile is the same. What differs is how it is labeled. Ricketson gives the catalogue numbers of artifacts found in the layer (205–214) in the unpublished version (n.d.a: fig. 51) but not in the published one (1937: fig. 97). The same is true for the profile of Pit E-4 (n.d.a: fig. 50 vs. 1937: fig. 78). Photographs of artifacts in the unpublished reports include catalogue numbers and notes on provenience in their captions, making it possible to identify objects from the two pits and, more generally, from the midden deposits below Plaza Floor I. Figure 20 of the 1929 report, for example, refers to several photographic prints containing twelve artifacts, including these from Pit E-18: a bone awl (208), a bone needle (209), a fragment of carved bone (210), and a shell ring with a scalloped edge (213).

E. Ricketson used some of these same photographs to illustrate her report. Her plate 68c, for example, shows a bone awl and needle. Comparison of that photo with O. Ricketson’s figure 20 establishes that they are two prints from the same negative and thus reconnects the artifacts with their provenience—they came from the early midden deposit in Pit E-18. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the artifact information I extracted from the reports. These lists are incomplete because, at the very least, they do not include the sherds recovered. Oliver Ricketson notes large quantities of potsherds from the pits and the Middle Pre-Classic midden deposits as a whole—at least one wheelbarrow load was collected from Pit E-4—but does not record specifics (see E. Ricketson 1937: 230–242 for a description of Period 1a pottery). Nor is all the shell described. On the other hand, comparing the information in the tables with Edith

² Measurements in the field notes and reports are in feet, while measurements in the 1937 publication are in meters.

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Table 1. Mamom Phase Artifacts from Pit E-18, Group E, Uxaxctun

Artifact and Catalogue Number*	O. Ricketson (n.d.a)	O. Ricketson (n.d.b)	E. Ricketson (1937)
Shell ring with scalloped edge (213)	Figure 20		Page 201; Figure 132a
Pieces of conch and clam shells	Figure 26		
Bone awl (208)	Figure 20		Plate 68c
Bone needle (209)	Figure 20		Plate 68c
Piece of carved bone (210)	Figure 20		Plate 68c
Pieces of bone	Figure 27		
Flint spear head (319)		Figure 78	
Polishing stone (206)	Figure 22		
Grooved stone (436)		Figure 78	
Figurine head (427)		Figure 74	
Figurine (428)		Figure 74	
Figurines (478, 480)		Figure 76	
Figurine (276)		Figure 79	
Figurines (429, 430, 454)		Figure 80	

*As described by O. Ricketson.

Ricketson's discussion of the Uxaxctun artifacts suggests that Tables 1 and 2, although not exhaustive, are representative of the types of artifacts encountered.

Buildings That Antedate Str. E-VII-Sub

Oliver Ricketson was not able to make much sense of the walls he found in the lowest levels of Group E. He found two groups of more substantial and better preserved buildings which date either to the late Middle Pre-Classic or beginnings of the Late Pre-Classic. In one group, three platforms, labeled Strs. A, B, and D, were built on Plaza Floor I. Str. D is more than 25 m long, with retaining walls made of cut stone and traces of a superstructure (Ricketson 1929: 318–320). Built in front of (east) and below Str. E-VII-Sub, Str. A is a smaller, somewhat squarer platform with an outset terrace or step on its north and east sides. Ricketson infers two more such outsets to give Str. A a cruciform plan, although his reconstruction in figure 98 shows only the north and east

Table 2. Mamom Phase Artifacts from Pit E-4, Group E, Uxaxctun

Artifact and Catalogue Number *	O. Ricketson (n.d.a)	O. Ricketson (n.d.b)	E. Ricketson (1937)
Drilled marine shell (222)	Figure 12		Page 199
Pieces of conch and clam shells	Figure 26		
Shell objects		Figure 44	
Cut long bone (419)		Figure 74	
Flint tools including large bifaces	Figure 13		
Flint spear head	Figure 25		
Flint spear head (405)		Figure 78	
Polishing stone (206)	Figure 22		
Grooved stone (406)		Figure 78	Figure 121c
Large quantity of sherds	Page 11		
Pottery cylinder (228)	Figure 12		
Pottery fragment (254)		Figure 74	
Pottery stamp (383)		Figure 79	Plate 78a7; Figure 145b
Pottery spindle whorl (323)		Figure 74	Probably Plate 78i
Miniature vessel with animal head decoration (411)		Figure 77	Plate 78h
Bird-shaped whistle (250)		Figure 77	
Figurines (571, 572, 567, 569)		Figure 76	
Figurine head (220)	Figure 11		Figure 158; Plate 73b1, Plate 73b5
Figurines (221, 223, 230)	Figure 12		
Figurines or whistles (344, 346, 347, 382, 412)		Figure 79	
Figurines (271, 274, 279, 349, 350, 351, 352, 384, 400, 409, 410, 437)		Figure 80	

*As described by O. Ricketson.

ones (O. Ricketson 1937: 109–113, fig. 98b, pl. 40a). Robert Smith (1955: 3) implies that these platforms date to the Chicanel phase (E. Ricketson's Period 1b) but Edith Ricketson (1937: 230–231) suggests that they date to Period 1a (Mamom), an attribution supported by Valdés (1988). All three platforms are partially covered by the next plaza floor, Floor II, and are completely buried by Floor III. At any rate, their stratigraphic position establishes that Strs. A, B, and D, as well as the unknown number of platforms implied by the wall lines found near Pit E-4, predate the Chicanel phase construction of both Strs. E-VII-Sub and E-VII-1 and the development of monumental religious architecture there (Valdés 1988).

The dating of the second group of three structures is less clear. These structures, labeled E, F, and G, were covered up by Group E's third plaza floor but were not built on either of the two earlier floors. They rest on a stratigraphically isolated plaster surface slightly lower in elevation than the second plaza floor. A later wall built on that plaza floor partially destroyed Str. F (see O. Ricketson 1937: figs. 73, 75). Neither Oliver Ricketson nor Robert Smith (1955: 3) provides direct evidence to date these structures, but the fact that the third plaza floor covered them establishes that they were built in the Pre-Classic period. Ricketson's construction sequence (1937: 136–137, fig. 98) has them appearing after Strs. A, B, and D but before Floor II, the plaza surface on which Str. E-VII-Sub was built. This stratigraphy makes E, F, and G either late Mamom or early Chicanel.

These three structures also look quite different from others in Group E. Strs. E and F each consist of a round, low (ca. 30 cm high for Str. E) platform, between 5 and 6 m in diameter, to which is attached a small and roughly rectangular addition. Both constructions have a hard stucco coating and no evidence of a superstructure. Str. G is made of two circular platforms, again covered in stucco, which are connected by a straight stucco platform or paving³ (O. Ricketson 1937: 114–117).

The published and unpublished information combines to suggest the following sequence, illustrated in Table 3. First is a Middle Pre-Classic domestic occupation that produced the rich midden deposits, artificial pits, wall lines, probably from houses built directly on the ground surface, and some burials.

³ It is not clear how high this connecting section was. Although Ricketson calls it a "bar," which suggests to me that it was elevated, his photograph in the unpublished field report makes it appear to be essentially at ground level (O. Ricketson 1937: 117, pl. 144a; n.d.b: photo 88-1-30). It is interesting to note that the quality of the print in the unpublished field report is much better than the one reproduced as plate 144a of the 1937 monograph.

Table 3. Pre-Classic Period Constructon Sequence for Group E, Uxaxctun^a

Time Period	What was built, deposited, or destroyed
Mamom Phase ^b	<p>Wall lines, possibly from houses built at ground level, pits dug in the bedrock, and midden deposits, including the charcoal- and ash-rich midden deposits in Pits E-4 and E-18. Burials found in the pits.</p> <p>Main Plaza Floor I.</p> <p>Strs. A, B, and D built on Main Plaza Floor I. Strs. B and D are rectangular platforms. Str. A lies under Str. E-VII-Sub and may have had a cruciform plan.^c</p> <p>Strs. E, F, and G built on a separate plaster surface.</p> <p>Ricketson suggests they are built after Strs. A, B, and D but before Main Plaza Floor II.</p>
Mamom/Chicanel Phase	<p>Main Plaza Floor II which partially covers Strs. A, B, and D. Wall enclosing Strs. E, F, and G built on Floor II, partially destroying Str. F in the process.</p>
Chicanel	<p>Str. E-VII-1.</p> <p>Str. E-VII-Sub.</p> <p>Main Plaza Floor III which buries Strs. A, B, D, E, F, and G. Expansion of Str. E-VII-Sub and associated buildings.</p>

^aBased on O. Ricketson (1937: fig. 98) and Valdés (1988).

^bThe Mamom phase is the equivalent of Ricketson's Period 1a (E. Ricketson 1937; Smith 1955).

^cMamom dating is based on E. Ricketson (1937: 230–231) and Valdés (1988).

These remains lie on top of the limestone bedrock but are below Floor I. This combination of features is reminiscent of the earliest deposits at Cuello, Altar de Sacrificios, Seibal, and Nakbe, where ground-level houses predominate in the Middle Pre-Classic (Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey 1991; Hansen 1992; Smith 1972; Willey 1973, 1990). The next event at Uxaxctun is the construction of Floor I in the late Mamom or early Chicanel phase on which were built Strs. A, B, and D. The building of Strs. E, F, and G in their separate enclosure may have occurred next. This was followed by the construction of Floor II in late Mamom or early Chicanel, and of Str. E-VII-1, and then by that of Str. E-VII-Sub in the Late Pre-Classic. With Floor III, Strs. A, B, and D–G disappear.

EVIDENCE FOR MIDDLE PRE-CLASSIC ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The Uaxactun Group E midden deposits, like those from other Middle Pre-Classic sites, contain artifacts made of stone, bone, and clay for food preparation, cooking, and farming (Ricketson n.d.a: figs. 13, 23; Willey 1965: 429–440, 1973, 1990; Hammond 1991; Kosakowsky and Hammond 1991; McSwain 1991a). The Uaxactun materials also yield evidence of household-level involvement in craft production. Ornaments or other objects made from shell occur frequently in Pre-Classic period middens, burials, and cache deposits from a number of Maya sites, including Uaxactun (O. Ricketson 1937: 139–153), Cuello (Robin and Hammond 1991; Hammond 1991), Cerros (Garber 1989), Altun Ha (Pendergast 1982: 172–200), and Nakbe (Hansen 1992).⁴ The role of shell objects as valuable and symbolically important costume elements or offerings gives significance to the abundance of shell found in the Group E Middle Pre-Classic midden deposits. Oliver Ricketson (n.d.b) comments on the occurrence of perforated shells in Pit E-4 and reports finding a burial in the pit, Burial 8, with a shell mask and trumpet among its offerings (illustrated by E. Ricketson 1937: pls. 69a–c, 177b). He illustrates 43 shell objects from Pit E-4 that show a range of modification (n.d.b: fig. 44). Edith Ricketson notes “great quantities of perforated shells and fragments” (1937: 199) from the same midden context or contemporaneous burials worked into tinklers, beads, rings, as well as the mask and trumpet from Burial 8. Counts of shell given by E. Ricketson (1937: 198) indicate that there were 449 unworked shells, 620 perforated shells (not including beads or pendants), and 128 worked shells. Although there is no way to figure out how many of these items are associated with the Middle Pre-Classic deposits, Oliver Ricketson’s field notes (n.d.c) and Edith Ricketson’s discussion (1937: 199–201) make it clear that they found shell in far greater quantities than jade or any other imported materials. Moreover, they note the occurrence of both finished and unfinished or partially worked objects. According to Edith Ricketson, the Middle Pre-Classic occupants of Group E had access to a number of different Caribbean species and a smaller number of freshwater species. Not all pieces could be identified, but of those that could, the unworked shell is mostly *Strombus pugilis*, *Oliva*, and “pearly fresh-water mussel.”

⁴ The emphasis on shell as a preferred material for ornaments at these sites contrasts with the relative lack of interest in shell displayed in Middle Pre-Classic Barton Ramie, Altar de Sacrificios, and Seibal, even though the presence of obsidian and jade indicates the existence of long-distance trade at these sites (Willey 1965: 528; 1973: 22–31; 1990: 235–244).

Tools for textile production come from the Middle Pre-Classic deposits in Pits E-4 and E-18 (see Tables 1 and 2). Ricketson found bone awls (which may have served as weaving picks [Hendon 1992b]) and long, blunt needles in the charcoal- and ash-rich layer in Pit E-18 (Ricketson n.d.a: 9). Spindle whorls made from circular drilled potsherds were a common feature in the Group E excavations (E. Ricketson 1937: 219), and some of them came from Pit E-4. A flat stamp, possibly used in textile design, was found in the same level in the pit.

The artifacts from Group E suggest that during the Middle Pre-Classic, early residents worked imported shells into a variety of costume elements, at least some of which were sufficiently valued to end up in burials and caches. Their occurrence in a midden resulting from residential occupation provides early evidence for the importance of economic production at the household level. Artifacts related to textile production, which is gendered as female work in Mesoamerica, come from these deposits as well. Spindle whorls made from perforated discs and bone tools like the Uaxactun ones occur in Middle to early Late Pre-Classic deposits at other sites, including Seibal, Altar de Sacrificios, Barton Ramie, and Cuello (Willey 1965, 1973, 1990; Hammond 1991). Evidence of textiles is rarer but not unknown. In his field notes, Oliver Ricketson mentions finding traces of a red painted textile that occurred in association with Burial 8 in Pit E-4 (Ricketson n.d.c: Notebook II, pp. 70–71). Despite Ricketson's best efforts, he was unable to recover any of this textile. One of the chultuns dug into the bedrock below Group E contained a "small heap of crystalline substance . . . produced . . . by the disintegration of a palm-fiber mat, the weave-pattern of which could just be distinguished" (E. Ricketson 1937: 207–208). Edith Ricketson (1937: 207) also records net impressions on pottery. At Seibal, Willey (1990: 239–241) reports finding a burned piece of a basket covered with a piece of woven cloth.

Studies of the distribution of artifacts from Middle-Late Pre-Classic domestic contexts at Cuello and from Late Pre-Classic ones at Cerros provide additional insight into the economic role of the household. Production, whether to fulfill subsistence needs or for exchange, is firmly embedded in the household. Furthermore, little evidence exists for the differentiation of households by occupation. Evidence for subsistence or specialized production is dispersed throughout the residential area and on a relatively small scale. This pattern applies to the manufacture of stone tools, pottery vessels, paper (as inferred from the presence of barkbeaters), and shell and bone objects (Hammond 1991; Kosakowsky and Hammond 1991; Lewenstein 1987; McSwain 1991a, 1991b). Scale of production and greater degree of specialization seem to increase only in those cases where residents of a site have ready access to a valued raw material, such as the

high-quality chert from northern Belize which was worked with such intensity at Colha and neighboring settlements during the Late Pre-Classic period (Black and Suhler 1986; Shafer and Hester 1983). But even here the actual production takes place in and around people's houses.

The occurrence of such craft activities as shell-working or textile production in Middle Pre-Classic Maya houses serves to align them with the growing evidence from the Early-Middle Formative period from other parts of Mesoamerica for specialized production of various prized materials in residential areas. Artifacts recovered from house floors and storage pits at Oaxaca Valley sites give us a more detailed picture of the way that Early to Middle Formative period households engaged in specialized and domestic production (Flannery and Winter 1976). Among these activities are food preparation and making stone tools. Bone needles and pierced sherd discs are interpreted as evidence of spinning, weaving, or sewing. Flannery and Winter suggest that part-time specialized production of certain types of stone tools, bone tools, celts, shell ornaments, feather-working, and magnetite mirrors is indicated by concentrations of tools, raw materials, and objects in the process of manufacture found on house floors or on exterior surfaces, or in bell-shaped pits used for storage (see also Winter 1976). Flannery and Winter (1976: 41–43, fig. 2.15) interpret the artifacts from the floor of House 2 in Area C of San José Mogote, for example, as evidence of a shell-working area, with both remains of the material being worked and of the tools used to work the shell. The occurrence of artifacts indicative of these activities in and around houses shows that household space was used for a variety of tasks by members of the household. The distribution of these activities across the houses making up such communities as Tierras Largas and San José Mogote suggests that, unlike the Maya, households living in the same part of a village, or in the same village, may have shared the same part-time specialization (Marcus 1989).

A comparable range of basic and specialized activities emerges from excavation of Middle Formative houses at Chalcatzingo, Morelos. Household space as a combination of residence and workshop continues to be the pattern. In addition to food preparation, cooking, and obsidian knapping, households made red pigment from iron ore, worked jade or jadelike stone, and engaged in spinning and weaving (Prindiville and Grove 1987; Grove 1987a, 1987b). Recent work around La Venta indicates that Middle Formative Olmec households were also involved in craft production. Rust (1992) reports that houses with serpentine-working areas occupy the same hill on which the well-known public architecture was built. An illustration of one such house platform shows grinding stones, jade beads, and celts on the room floor, suggesting again the mingling of daily domestic chores with small-scale specialized production (Sharer 1994: fig. 2.3).

PRE-CLASSIC DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

Research at Cuello offers the best-documented sequence of Middle Pre-Classic houses and related structures. Excavation underneath the large Late Pre-Classic Platform 34 and in the surrounding areas of the site revealed domestic occupation dating to the beginning of the Middle Pre-Classic period (Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey 1991; Gerhardt and Hammond 1991; Wilk and Wilhite 1991). The earliest traces of this occupation, like that at Uaxactun, Seibal, and Altar de Sacrificios, suggest that houses were built directly on the ground. Low platforms, serving as the foundations for perishable houses, appear soon after, however, and establish one of the basic patterns of Maya domestic architecture. Pits containing trash and fire pits that occur in association with these platforms confirm their use as houses or outbuildings. The introduction of raised foundations for some houses, however, does not result in the cessation of ground-level construction, but rather in a greater contrast in types of house construction.

The Cuello platforms under Platform 34, the plaster surfaces of which are frequently refreshed, are periodically rebuilt. The earliest platforms have curved sides and are either round or oval in shape. Toward the end of the Middle Pre-Classic, the shape shifts to apsidal, to having straight sides and curved ends. One of the apsidal platforms (Str. 315) has a terrace and supports the first stone superstructure at the site, although it is replaced by a wooden one. In the subsequent construction phase, which marks the beginning of the Late Pre-Classic period, the house platforms are destroyed in the termination ritual (Garber 1989: 9) that prepares the way for the building of Platform 34.

Despite the many renovations and replacement of platforms during the Middle Pre-Classic, the Cuello houses below Platform 34 display a remarkable consistency in location and arrangement. Gerhardt and Hammond (1991: 98) note that the houses are “tightly clustered around a patio less than 20 m across” throughout their existence. By testing mounds and open areas of the site, Wilk and Wilhite are able to show that traces of Middle Pre-Classic occupation occur more frequently underneath Late Pre-Classic platforms, suggesting “that the same sites [are] preferentially reoccupied and built over in the Late Pre-Classic” (Wilk and Wilhite 1991: 126). Powis (1993a) sees evidence for a similar process in the Tolok Group at Cahal Pech where domestic occupation also lasts into the Classic period.

Both rectangular and rounded house platforms, ranging from oval to apsidal, occur in the Late Pre-Classic at Cuello and other sites. House Platform a from Group A of Uaxactun consists of a rough oval with an attached rectangular step (Smith 1950: figs. 10b, 58b). This variation in shape continues into the Early

Classic (Smith 1950: 18–19, fig. 58c; Valdés 1989). At Río Azul/BA-20, a Chicanel house (Op. 206 Str. 3) lacks a platform but has an overall rectangular shape (Hendon 1989). The earliest occupation at Cerros, although dating only from the beginnings of the Late Pre-Classic period, mirrors that of Middle Pre-Classic Cuello, Uaxactun, Seibal, and Altar de Sacrificios in consisting of perishable houses built on clay platforms without retaining walls, trash pits, burials, and middens. Stone-walled rectangular platforms appear later (Cliff 1986).

MIDDLE TO LATE PRE-CLASSIC RITUAL PRACTICE

Both architectural and artifact data from living areas allow us to consider household-level ritual practice. Figurines, another major part of the artifact inventory from Uaxactun's Pits E-4 and E-18, are one of our best indicators of household-level ritual activity at Middle Pre-Classic Maya sites (Hammond 1991; E. Ricketson 1937: 210–217; O. Ricketson 1937: 139–149; Willey 1965: 393–394; 1973, 1990; see Drennan 1976 for a discussion of the ritual function of figurines). By the end of the Middle Pre-Classic or beginning of the Late Pre-Classic, special ritual structures appear at a number of Maya sites. Some of these structures seem to be antecedent to the Classic period temples and shrines found in residential compounds, while others develop into the monumental architecture of the centers or at any rate occupy the same place and are covered over by later, more clearly public works.

One of the earliest known examples comes from below Platform 34 at Cuello where an early Middle Pre-Classic (Bladen phase) round platform, Str. 324, was built in the center of the patio (Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey 1991; Gerhardt and Hammond 1991: table 5.1). Round platforms without a superstructure constitute one form of ceremonial architecture for the time period. These platforms are sometimes embellished by the addition of a small rectangular or trapezoidal terrace or step. This addition, seen in Strs. E and F of Uaxactun, makes them resemble a “keyhole” (Glass 1965: 52).⁵ I excavated another example at the site of Río Azul. A residential zone with significant Pre-Classic occupation known as BA-20 lies northeast of the main center (Adams 1990). Here I excavated Strs. 1 and 2 of Op. 206 (Hendon 1989). While Op. 206 Str. 1 dates from the Early Classic, Str. 2, its predecessor, is Late Pre-Classic in date. At Altun Ha, Str. C-13-3rd (and probably its predecessor, C-13-4th), located in a residential area, also takes this form (Pendergast 1982: 184–187, fig. 97).

⁵ After some debate as to their function (Ricketson n.d.c: Notebook II, pp. 39–40), Ricketson and A. Ledyard Smith decided to call Strs. E, F, and G “ceremonial platforms” designed for ritual use (Smith 1950: 73; 1973: 27).

Several round platforms have been found in Middle Pre-Classic residential contexts at Cahal Pech (Aimers and Awe n.d.; Powis 1993a). Str. G at Uaxactun, with its two circular platforms linked by a stucco “bar,” may also be considered another variant on this pattern. Keyhole-shaped structures continue to be built in the Early Classic at some sites but eventually disappear (Glass 1965: 51–59; Hendon 1989; Powis 1993b).

The keyhole or round ritual platforms do not necessarily differ markedly in form or size from contemporary residences. Nevertheless, several special features set the ceremonial platforms apart. These features include quality of construction, location, lack of a superstructure,⁶ and the presence of associated ritual deposits. The circular platform of these ritual structures is generally quite regular in outline and usually plastered (Aimers and Awe n.d.; Hendon 1989; Powis 1993a). At Uaxactun, the plaster surfaces of Strs. E and F are harder and better prepared than those covering the house platforms, to the point of making them difficult to excavate (Ricketson n.d.c: Notebook III, p. 18; Smith 1950: 17). At Río Azul/BA-20, an associated house was built of unplastered cobbles, while the keyhole platform, Str. 2, was not only plastered but painted red on its exterior (Hendon 1989).

Energetic investment, decoration, and lack of a superstructure point to these round platforms as having a different purpose from houses. This purpose has been broadly labeled ritual. But specific features of these platforms suggest something about the nature of the ritual activity associated with them, namely, that the activity was meant to be open to view (Aimers and Awe n.d.) and that its performance did not involve large groups of people. These inferences stem from the height of the platform and its lack of superstructure, which make it like a stage, and from its relatively small size, which limits the number of people the stage could hold.

Although all the keyhole-shaped or round ritual structures discussed here are built in residential areas, they are sometimes marked as special or different from adjacent houses by location as well as by the sorts of formal features discussed above. Strs. E, F, and G provide the most striking example of this. Their location at the edge of the main plaza floor makes them seem peripheral, although this impression may be misleading in that we have a poor understanding of just how many Middle Pre-Classic houses existed and where they were located. Strs. E–G, however, are segregated from the more central part of Group

⁶ In my 1989 report I suggested that Op. 206 Strs. 1 and 2 had a superstructure, but I have since reconsidered the data and feel that the stuccoed wall lines found represent the remains of a platform.

E where Strs. A, B, and D were located, by a wall. Despite the fact that this wall destroyed part of Str. F and the uncertainty of the stratigraphic connections between floors, it does seem that Strs. E and G, and possibly even F, continued in use after the wall's construction. At the very least, all four platforms remained visible during this phase of Group E (O. Ricketson 1937: 134–136).

Elevation separates the residential and ritual structures at Río Azul/BA-20. Op. 206 Str. 2 is built on higher ground than the house, Str. 3. Since both structures date from the same phase of occupation, this difference in location may reflect a desire to give greater physical prominence to the building where ritual practices related to the creation of a group identity for the residents of the area took place (Hendon 1989). Although we lack data on residences from Zone C at Altun Ha which would be contemporary with Strs. C-13-4th or 3rd, it is possible that the marked spatial separation of Str. C-13 during the Classic period may have first emerged during the Pre-Classic period (Pendergast 1982: 170).

In some cases, these areas continue to be residential rather than public into the Classic period. As noted above, the Río Azul/BA-20 Late Pre-Classic platform is rebuilt and used in the Early Classic period, the peak period of occupation of the site. The Tolok Group at Cahal Pech, a four-structure Late Classic patio group, illustrates even longer use (Powis 1993a). Underlying all four structures of the group are remains of Late Pre-Classic occupation and Middle Pre-Classic floors, walls, and midden deposits surrounding a round platform found below the Late Classic patio floor. The importance of domestic space as the center of group identity may be indicated by the ceremonial use of this platform by the Late Classic household which placed four burials on the Middle Pre-Classic platform. At Altun Ha, both the construction of Str. C-13-3rd and its replacement by a four-sided temple platform were occasions for the deposition of caches and burials (Pendergast 1982: 188–190). The replacement of a round platform by a temple platform is also found in the Zotz Group of Cahal Pech (Aimers and Awe n.d.) and at early Late Pre-Classic Cuello (Gerhardt and Hammond 1991). These examples underscore the continued importance of ritual practice to households, although the change in building shape may indicate that the kinds of rituals carried out changed.

EMERGING SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Ornaments of shell or other materials and deliberate alteration of the body in the form of dental inlays or filed teeth (Hansen 1992; Willey 1973: 28; Tourtellot 1990: table 1) hint that the Middle Pre-Classic Maya shared the Formative Mesoamerican emphasis on personal adornment and alteration of

the body that Joyce (following Munn) has called beautification. Beautification, while aimed at differentiating individuals and related to the acquisition of prestige, is not inherently or necessarily productive of hierarchical or permanent differences (Joyce 1996; see also Adams 1975). During this same time period, variation in Maya domestic architecture also appears. Greater size and the use of architectural decoration not only reflect greater access to labor and other resources but also associate the household with the symbolic language of authority. The domestic built environment, rather than the individual body, provides a way for households to differentiate themselves, as a group, from other households. This emphasis on establishing the importance of the group and the means used—energetic investment and manipulation of symbolism—signal the emergence of more permanent hierarchical differences that underlie the consolidation of centralized political authority during the Late Pre-Classic period.

Examples of domestic elaboration come from Cuello, Uaxactun, and Altar de Sacrificios. We have already noted the appearance at Cuello in the Middle Pre-Classic of Str. 315 with a stone superstructure. A comparable shift from clay to stone-walled platforms occurs at Cerros during the Late Pre-Classic period, which Cliff (1986) has suggested may mark the emergence of social differences among residents of the area. More generally, Middle Pre-Classic settlement at Cuello encompasses both raised and ground-level construction which requires different energetic investments. The trend toward greater differences in energetic investment becomes more marked at Cuello in the Late Pre-Classic period. Platform 34, built over the Middle Pre-Classic patio group, serves as the foundation for a number of buildings, most of which have their own individual substructures. Despite the large-scale, even monumental, nature of Platform 34, however, its construction does not mark an immediate shift in the function of the area. In other words, the platform supports houses, outbuildings, and a ritual structure which together form a patio unit. These structures are rebuilt many times but maintain a consistent association between function and location, with the ritual structures on the west side and the residences on the north. At some point in the Late Pre-Classic occupation of Platform 34, its residents introduce boundary walls and use differences in elevation to restrict access to the northern part of the platform. This suggests that during the early Late Pre-Classic the entire area of Platform 34 was, like the Middle Pre-Classic patio it covered, domestic space for the use of a single group or household. The walls and differences in floor height that appear in the late Late Pre-Classic suggest that use of the ritual structure on the west side, now a terraced pyramid supporting a small temple, became more public, or suprahousehold (Gerhardt and Hammond 1991). Wilk and Wilhite (1991) identify several other contemporaneous examples of

large platforms supporting a complex of ritual and relatively larger houses and point to similar constructions at Nohmul, Cerros, and Seibal.

Although the data are less complete from Altar de Sacrificios, a similar pattern may be seen (Smith 1972; Willey 1973). The earliest occupation is early Middle Pre-Classic and consists of perishable houses built directly on the ground in association with domestic refuse, food remains, figurines, and burials. In the latter part of the Middle Pre-Classic, the construction of some houses becomes more substantial. Raised platforms, some with stone facings, appear. Evidence from Group B, one of several monumental plazas that make up the civic-ceremonial core of the site in the Classic period, shows a continued elaboration in construction. By the Middle to Late Pre-Classic transition, red-painted plaster and platforms faced with lime-encrusted shells set in mud mortar are built. The size, decoration, and location of the platforms, which surround an open patio, imply a greater control of labor and of the desire for visual display. Although Smith (1972: 118–120) assumes that these structures are ceremonial, Willey (1973: 27–31) points to the occurrence of manos, metates, and mortars to suggest that they may be elite residences rather than public buildings.⁷ Like Platform 34 at Cuello, then, Middle to Late Pre-Classic Group B continues to be living space where both quotidian and ritual action takes place but whose inhabitants would seem to belong to an emerging (or consolidating) elite. Public buildings, in the form of tall temple pyramids decorated with paint and molded stucco, replace these elite residences during the Protoclassic to Early Classic period.

⁷ Smith's interpretation conflates function and social structure. This conflation, common in analyses of Maya architecture, fails to keep separate the use of a structure from the social status of its users. Willey's interpretation, by considering both architectural and artifact information, is more convincing. His analysis also exemplifies the problems in studying deeply buried early deposits at Maya sites. Willey (1973: 29) writes:

Other ground stone artifacts . . . were also encountered in connection with the San Felix [Middle Pre-Classic] B Group platforms. These are metates, . . . mortars, and . . . mano stones. Here we run into a problem of provenience and association. Are these . . . items *in situ* . . . domestic debris or fill inclusions? The metates and mortars were fragments, as were most of the manos. Our exposures were not large enough to clear sufficient floor areas of these early platforms so that we could be absolutely certain that we were dealing with *in situ* floor finds; however, on balance, and considering the amounts of living detritus found on and around these B Group platform levels, I am of the opinion that these various milling stone implements were probably once in use in B Group buildings. Such an interpretation would see domestic and ceremonial functions carried on within the same immediate precincts and, perhaps, within the same buildings.

These examples help us understand Uaxactun's Group E sequence. The data are more equivocal, but I think they do support a similar transition at Uaxactun, based on my interpretation of the function of Strs. A, B, and D and of the meaning of the replacement in Group E of Str. A by Str. E-VII-Sub. Ricketson could not decide if Strs. A, B, and D remained in use after the construction of Floor II, but he felt that B and D were at least visible. His construction sequence for Group E, however, has Str. E-VII-Sub replacing Str. A (O. Ricketson 1937: fig. 98b–c).⁸ Ricketson does not discuss the function of these mounds, although figure 98 shows Strs. B, D, and A forming three sides of a plaza with Str. A looking very much like a temple because of its markedly smaller size and squarer shape. As shown in the figure, Ricketson hypothesized the presence of a fourth structure, labeled C, on the east side of the plaza opposite Str. A, but found no archaeological evidence of such a platform. He appears to have assumed that these early structures would have followed the same four-sided arrangement found in the later, monumental phase of Group E (illustrated in parts d–f of fig. 98).

Although Ricketson does not address the issue of the function of these platforms directly, his construction sequence in figure 98 suggests that he saw Strs. A, B, and D as precursors to the monumental ritual structures of Group E. As the Altar de Sacrificios Group B sequence demonstrates, however, location underneath later monumental architecture does not necessarily mean continuity in function. The replacement of Middle to early Late Pre-Classic houses by large, nonresidential buildings that serve as the Late Pre-Classic nucleus of the emerging civic-ceremonial center, documented at such sites as Cuello, Seibal, and Altar de Sacrificios (and later at Cerros), appears to be part of the transition to a more centralized political structure in the Maya Lowlands (Cliff 1986; Willey 1973, 1990). The differences in building material of these final houses from their predecessors or contemporaries suggest that differences in status were becoming fixed enough to achieve expression in architectural design and materials. Such differences are not as strongly marked as in the Late Classic period, but the way of embodying these differences through the built environment is like the later time period. Returning to Uaxactun, the shape and size of Strs. B and D suggest to me that they were residential platforms of a larger and more permanent construction than others from that time period. Str. A, I would

⁸ I am ignoring the earlier phase of Str. E-VII found by Valdés, Str. E-VII-1, to make my discussion comparable with Ricketson's. The presence of this earlier phase of Str. E-VII does not affect my argument since it is also monumental in scale. It is, of course, *its* construction which would result in the disappearance of Str. A. Readers may therefore substitute E-VII-1 for E-VII-Sub in the discussion.

suggest, was a ritual structure for the use of the residents of Str. B and D. Str. A was thus part of household-focused religious practice for a household commanding significantly greater resources than its neighbors. It is only with the appearance of Str. E-VII-Sub (or 1) that we see the appearance of a ritual construction that transcends any particular household and thus the shift in function from residential to public.

At least two different types of ritual structures were built in the Pre-Classic period. To a certain extent, we may discern a trend for the replacement over time of open round or keyhole platforms by perishable temples on top of tall pyramidal substructures. Based on their form, it has been suggested that the round or keyhole platforms served as open stages for the performance of rituals. In contrast, the temples are enclosed small spaces made more remote by being raised above eye level.

A similar shift occurs in the Oaxaca Valley, where cleared areas, bounded by walls but unroofed, are replaced by small single-roomed temples (Drennan 1983a, 1983b; Marcus 1989). Drennan presents an interpretation of this change which applies equally well to the Maya case. He argues that the open areas, found first in the Preceramic period at the site of Gheo-Shih but continuing into the Early Formative at San José Mogote, served as dance floors for community rituals. These open areas are demarcated by boundary walls. At San José Mogote, a row of posts and stone slabs sets the space apart from the houses (Flannery and Marcus 1976). The temples not only restrict the number of participants but also limit the number of onlookers to those people who are actually inside the sacred space of the room. These factors suggest in turn that a different kind of ritual celebration took place.

In the Maya area, we have both temples integrated into the household compound and temples as part of an elite controlled civic/ceremonial core. The decision by Maya households to replace their round platforms by temples which continue to be associated with a specific set of houses, the precursors of the Classic period patio units, occurs in the context of the development of a ritual and administrative center and of more permanent social differences. These two developments may mark a shift not only in the nature of ritual space and the kinds of rituals carried out but also in the degree of integration such rituals achieve. Although ritual action by the ruling elite living at the center may be intended to represent the community as a whole, its increasing spatial and social remoteness may have led households at all levels of society to feel a greater, rather than lesser, need to emphasize their own ritual practices as part of the continuing validation of their identity as a social group and, for the elite, of their social status.

IDENTIFICATION AND DIFFERENTIATION THROUGH ECONOMIC
PRODUCTION AND RITUAL

The activities discussed at the beginning of this chapter as key elements in the creation of household identity in Mesoamerica, gendered economic production and household-level ritual practice, have been shown to have a long history in the Maya area. The data presented here are less complete than those available for the Classic period, especially with respect to the spatial distribution of activities, but they are sufficient to establish the existence of these activities and their residential associations. Economic production, to some extent gendered, and household ritual practice situated in the residential compound represent a basic element of Pre-Hispanic Maya society. The economic and political import of these activities extends far beyond the living space where the production and ritual practice take place. Control of the labor, resources, or products of the economic production represents an important potential source of political power and therefore an area of conflict between different groups. The fact that this production is not detached from its residential location suggests that it remained embedded in the social space and control of the household and was only indirectly available to the centralizing political authority as a source of income and power (see Ball 1993).

Middle Pre-Classic figurines, caches, and burials show that people engaged in ritual behavior in their residential compounds before and during the emergence of formal structures dedicated to such behavior. Like much of Mesoamerica, economic production and ritual practice as activities and as constructors of social identity in the Maya Lowlands precede and develop in tandem with public architecture and monumental art.

Investment in monumental architecture is accompanied, as one moves into the Classic period, by an increased emphasis, in both visual representation and the content of texts, on individual political elites. The iconography of Maya rulership attempts to create a social identity for the ruling elite that monopolizes ritual action, totalizes gender categories, and naturalizes power relations (Joyce 1992). The ruler becomes a central figure uniquely equipped to carry out ritual action (Demarest 1992; Gillespie 1993). Depictions of economic production in other media, such as figurines (Joyce 1993), and the archaeological evidence from residential areas (Hendon 1991, 1992b) create a counterpoint to this identity by highlighting one based on complementary gender roles and the centrality of household-based ritual practice. The effort to monopolize ritual action, and hence the intangible resources controlled through these rituals, may result from the ruler's inability to detach completely control over economic production from subordinate households, a failure that stems in part from the

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fundamental link in Maya society between productive and ritual action and group social identity.

The decision to devote resources to the construction of keyhole-shaped or round ritual structures reflects the formalization of group ritual practice in the Middle to Late Pre-Classic periods. This change parallels the formalization of religious practice and symbolism by the ruling elite expressed through the architectural and iconographic elaboration of the monumental space of the centers. People living in the surrounding residential compounds effected changes in their ritual practice and made use of some of the same material symbolism, such as plaster and red paint, not in imitation of the center but as a response to the actions of the ruler. Such a response may challenge as much as it supports the ruler's desire to be the central axis of political power. Over time, rituals carried out in the residential compounds, separate from those of the center, grow more, rather than less, important to the maintenance of the social identity of the residential group as its members contend with the economic and social consequences of political centralization.

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