

**Title**

Memory and Remembrance

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**Abstract**

The archaeological study of memory and remembrance depends upon an embodied and material perspective. It can draw upon the analysis of the relationships between people, landscape and material culture, but also on evidence for embodied performances. By studying changes to bodies, objects and places and the way in which they act as indices or traces of past actions we have the potential to understand the ways in which these changes were cited and recapitulated in the process of remembering.

**Keywords**

Memory, Remembrance, Material Culture, Dwelling, Agency, Embodiement

**Main Text**

Memory has been an intensively studied and theorized area within archaeology over the past 15 years. Out of this debate has come a variety of perspectives, drawing on a wide range of research in the natural and social sciences. These have, in turn, led to a range of different definitions of what we mean when we talk about memory and how we might usefully research memory in archaeology.

It is helpful to begin by offering some definitions. The archaeological study of memory has been concerned with the material manifestations of memory and remembrance. Theory around memory and remembrance in archaeology has also been predominantly concerned with the operation and creation of memories at a group or social level. Additionally, recent theory around memory has drawn on a wider concern within the social sciences on embodied (saseas0213) and experiential understandings of the self. These can be contrasted with another, equally valid, set of archaeological questions around memory.

How do the results of current archaeological research contribute to the construction of memory (saseas0370) in the present? Therefore, in this section, the aim is to discuss embodied theories of practice around memory. How did people in the past remember with material culture?

Classical philosophy on memory, from Plato's dialogues up to John Locke's concern with the 'self', can be characterized as being concerned with an inward-looking analysis of personal and individual memory. By contrast, phenomenological approaches to memory in the work of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Halbwachs made an explicit link between the creation of memory and the experience of living within a group of people. Borić (2010) provides a detailed exegesis of this distinction from an archaeological perspective, based on the work of Paul Ricoeur. This communalization of memory has

been an important influence in the way that social theory has discussed memory as an explicitly social phenomenon, a property of the group rather than of the individual.

From both phenomenological traditions of philosophy and studies in cognitive science we can discern the importance of habitual, physical encounters in creating memory. Andrew Jones (2007) draws on Andy Clark's work in cognitive science to describe the interaction between the brain, the human body and the world as one of overlapping 'fields of interaction'. The mind, and by extension, memory is created in the embodied interaction between the material world, the body and the brain. This kind of habitual memory is often unconscious and it can be regarded as the foundation for people's integration in their particular society; their habitus in Pierre Bourdieu's terms.

Therefore, in contrast to 'classical' philosophical and psychological examinations of memory, which treat memory as an internal property of individual identity, modern social theory has discussed memory, by definition, as a social phenomenon. The sub-set of this social theory which is concerned with embodied and material perspectives on memory is, for obvious reasons, the most relevant for archaeological enquiries into memory and remembrance. The foundations of the embodied social approach to memory were laid in Connerton's (1989) book *How Societies Remember*. In this work, Connerton treated memory as a cultural phenomenon and attempted to explore the ways in which group memories were transmitted in non-written ways. He showed the importance of ritual performances to inscribe social memory on the bodies of the participants. Connerton's work is also important for the connections it draws between the semi-unconscious habitual memory discussed above and other kinds of memory. For Connerton, habit-memory is one of three broad classes of memory claim, the other two of which are personal and cognitive memory claims. Personal memories 'take as their object one's life history'. Cognitive memory claims are memories of abstract knowledge, while habit-memory is the memory of how to perform an action physically. These last two kinds of memory claim share the characteristic that you do not need to remember when you learnt something to make use of it (Connerton 1989, 22).

At this point it is necessary to consider in rather more detail the way in which the passage of time is experienced by people to create different kinds of memory. In *The Perception of the Environment* Tim Ingold (2000) develops both a 'dwelling perspective' and the concept of 'temporality' to address precisely this issue: for Ingold, agency is developed through the experience of time and of memory. People dwell within environments made by previous human activity. Everything they do is structured by those pre-existing environments and in turn their actions create new kinds of environment. Ingold develops this theme of temporality by coining the neologism 'taskscape'. The 'taskscape' can be thought of as an array of temporally related activities which is analogous to 'landscape' as an array of spatially related features. Ingold (2000, 199) uses the phrase temporality to describe a conception of time, based on the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and which is therefore not dependent on particular models of human consciousness and which does not need to be calibrated to a scientific measurement of time. For Ingold, people make time pass when they do things: temporality is the time of the participant.

One useful contribution to thinking around the role of material culture in the transmission of memory is provided by the concept of the 'index' used by Alfred Gell (1998) in *Art and Agency*. For Gell, the artist and the artwork are inseparably linked in time, in Ingold's terms, the artwork is part of the taskscape of the artist. In addition, all artworks reference earlier works. They would not be comprehensible as art without this connection and through this link they connect the artist and the viewer to those earlier artworks. As they are making the artwork the artist is physically incorporating their bodily actions into the object. Gell (1998: 236–237) does not claim that objects themselves experience memory, or even that they work as an external store for human memories. Instead he borrows the term 'abduction' from

semiotics to describe the way they permit people to make ‘causal inferences’ about things which happened in the past. From the embodied perspective described above, then we can see physical changes to artefacts and landscapes as evidence for the creation of memory in the past. This can potentially provide archaeologists with a methodology to investigate memory claims of all three types identified by Connerton.

Andrew Jones (2007) has analyzed the role of material culture in memory by drawing on the Actor Network Theory of Bruno Latour and colleagues. His focus is on the act of remembering, which he would see as both an embodied and social process, people require both other people and things in order to remember. Jones takes from Latour the insight that we do not need to give priority to either brains, bodies or artefacts in this process. He refers instead to the act of remembering arising from the relationships between a ‘company of actors’. Therefore, for Jones, it makes little sense to make distinctions between internally or externally stored memories, or even between social and individual memories. Rather we need to think about material culture (broadly defined) and the way it acts to permit the practice of remembering. Objects can act as metaphors which crystalize and index short term events. Monuments can index events which have taken place. However, they also have the properties of permitting or blocking certain kinds of physical activity. This is particularly important when it comes to the role of large scale commemorative ceremonies, social remembering practices which are aimed at creating a particular kind of memory.

In his review of the role of memory studies in archaeology Dušan Borić (2010) follows Jones in arguing that distinctions between different kinds of memory-claim, while analytically useful within philosophy, are less helpful in archaeology. He proposes that archaeological analysis is better served by a temporal focus on the processes of memory, for which he draws on Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective. The first of these is the trace, the physical imprint of past actions. Borić points to the problematic status of the ‘trace’ as something that has been treated as both a conceptual tool but also as a metaphor. However, for the purposes of this argument ‘trace’ can be thought of the embodied, materialized evidence of past actions, directly equivalent to Gell’s (1998) ‘index’. For Borić ‘trace’ leads to ‘citation’. When people respond to traces they do so within a new temporal framework. So, rather than inferring past agency from indices, in the way suggested by Gell, Borić argues that people ‘cite’ these traces in a new contemporary set of relationships. Remembering is a process which takes place in the present, drawing on the presently available ‘company of actors’. However, the same traces and citations can be drawn upon in more than one present, which leads Borić to the third of his analytical categories, ‘recapitulation’. By repeating practices in the same places, traces can be cited in ways which are both traditional and innovative. Therefore, material culture and landscape can be deployed to create and modify memories as well as to ‘preserve’ them.

The importance of bodily performance is clear in all these accounts of the practice of remembrance. Formal bodily performance was also an important part of Connerton’s analysis of the creation and managing of collective social memory, in his case focused on the large scale rituals of organized religion and nation states. Peterson (2013) has reviewed the specific importance of embodied performance at all scales of analysis. Following Jones in focusing on practices of remembering, it can be argued that even small-scale habit-memories require an embodied performance. Bodily skills, for example learning to work stone, are learnt from a combination of feedback from the material being worked with approbation from an experienced audience. What is being created in this case are indexing traces on the landscape, the artefact and the body, all of which will be drawn on in future citations. As well as the stone tool and the production site, the lithic worker has created the kind of body that knows how to work stone. The citation and repetition involved in these performances is another instance of the continuity of practices

of remembering across the scales from personal habit memory to large scale commemorative performance.

Therefore, building on the literature discussed above, the archaeological study of memory and remembrance is characterized by the analysis of a number of important topics. These include: the relationships between people, landscape and material culture; evidence for embodied performances; transformations to bodies, objects and places which act as indices or traces; and the ways in which these changes are cited and recapitulated in subsequent times.

A specific example of these processes being used to deliberately creating lasting memories can be seen in Howard Williams' (2001) application of the archaeology of memory to the study of early medieval funerary rites at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, UK. This site is a royal barrow cemetery dating to the 6th and 7th centuries AD which, alongside the famous ship burial, contains other high status inhumation and cremation burials beneath nineteen large barrows. The site itself is on a prominent location above the Debden estuary, which is likely to have lain on the contemporary route to the East Anglian royal site at Rendlesham. Williams argues that funerary performances at Sutton Hoo would have replicated the route from the sea to the cemetery taken by the ship in mound 1 before burial. Funerary processions therefore would be both citing earlier processions and would be making the dead visible by creating traces or indices to commemorate them in the landscape.

The most obvious of these traces would be the barrows which cover the graves. Williams analyzes the way that these barrows are structured by the indices of earlier activity and recapitulate and cite each other. He argues that the large complex barrows, which contain complex assemblages of material culture and evidence for animal sacrifice, are the physical traces of large funerals. They are widely spaced; which Williams argues is the result of each barrow being carefully sited in relation to existing monuments. This is interpreted as a way of deliberately creating physical indices of the dynastic connections between the different occupants of the barrows. Although there are no prehistoric barrows at Sutton Hoo, Williams cites other early medieval burials which cluster around pre-existing Bronze Age monuments, to suggest that the overall form of the pagan Saxon barrow is itself a citation of the deep past.

Williams analyses the transformations around the inhumation burial in mound 17 to bring out how the ritual performance both cites earlier funerals and allows the incorporation of unique elements for that particular individual. Funerary performance would have focused around the deep oval pit at what would become the center of the mound. A complex assemblage of grave goods was used to create a particular identity for the dead. The first artefacts placed in the pit were spears and above them was a group of cauldrons, a bucket, shield, bowl, a bag and horse harness fittings. Once these items were in the grave the coffin, containing the body of an adult male accompanied by a sword and a purse, was lowered on top of them. A comb was placed on top of the coffin before attention shifted away from the main grave. A horse was sacrificed and buried in a second pit around one meter away. After this event the main mound was constructed to cover both pits. Thus, the mound 17 funeral would have involved a complex set of performances around the structured display and concealment of the body and artefacts with the process being indexed by the construction of the mound.

The preceding discussion has concentrated on the 'positive' aspects of memory. However, memory can also be a problematic experience. Borić (2010) has noted the personal and social costs of remembering traumatic events. In particular, he has noted the difficulties in dealing with the excess of historical memory in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Jones (2007) also considers this point, drawing on the work of Michael Stewart, he points out how strategies for dealing with traumatic social memories can vary dramatically from group to group. Both the Jews and the Roma experienced the Holocaust. In contrast to the well-documented commemorative practices around Holocaust memory in Jewish culture,

the Roma do not explicitly ‘commemorate’ the events. Rather, Stewart argues, Roma groups externalize these difficult memories by situating them in their interactions with wider society. Therefore, these memories are physically indexed by a whole suite of material culture associated with the boundaries between Roma and non-Roma society.

Memories can also be deliberately suppressed, at both a personal and group level. There are good archaeological examples of this process, particularly around the role of iconoclasm in the deliberate erasure of memory. The Roman tetrapylon, or four-way triumphal arch, which stood at the center of the legionary fortress in Caerleon, Monmouthshire, UK, survived, along with the fortress bath-house, as an intact structure into the medieval period. Ray Howell (2000) has shown that by the early 13th century these monuments had become directly associated with the growing literature around King Arthur. He argues that the simultaneous demolition of both of these structures was a deliberate act of iconoclasm arising from the disputes between Welsh and English lordships over the control of Caerleon. Pamela Graves (2008) provides a detailed archaeological analysis of the process of iconoclasm in 16th and 17th century England. This allows us to see deliberate practices of (enforced) forgetting, which closely parallel the practices of remembering we discussed earlier. Graves demonstrates how iconoclasts in early modern England had an embodied and material understanding of how certain ‘indices’ in religious artworks acted within memory practices around traditional Catholic worship. The heads and hands of religious images were the most important trace or index in this process and, therefore, they were purposefully targeted by the iconoclasts. These fragmented images were then deliberately left on display. The images then functioned as a, literally, reformed index. Anyone encountering these images would then have been able to draw on both the original traces, their citation and rewriting by the iconoclasts, and the recapitulation of the original acts of devotion as an act of destruction. The reformed images would have been central to the new understandings of the past and the changing religious orthodoxy promoted by the iconoclasts.

An embodied and material approach to archaeologies of memory and remembrance can therefore be seen to be applicable at both a group and personal level, to cover both practices of remembering and of forgetting, and all of the postulated ‘levels’ of memory from unconscious habit-memory to the most complex and discursive accounts of the past.

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