Three Terminal Classic Monuments from Caracol, Belize

ARLEN F. CHASE
University of Central Florida

NIKOLAI GRUBE
Universität Bonn

DIANE Z. CHASE
University of Central Florida

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS FROM THE END OF THE MAYA CLASSIC PERIOD indicate to us a non-uniform society in the midst of a revolutionary transition. While the Maya Postclassic Period has previously been portrayed as representing an almost total break with Classic Period patterns (Willey 1982; 1986:51), the archaeological records of sites such as Caracol, Belize, demonstrate instead a continuum. What have been thought of as "Postclassic Maya patterns"—trends toward: 1) perishable constructions of lower elevation (Chase & Rice 1985:4-5); 2) increased warfare (Ibid., 7); and 3) the spread of the same rituals throughout all levels of society (*see* Freidel & Sabloff 1984:184)—are evident in the archaeological record of the Late Classic Period, long before the occurrence of any "collapse." These trends come to the forefront during the Terminal Classic Period, defined here as between AD 790 and 889 or, in Maya Long Count terms, from 9.18.0.0.0 to 10.3.0.0.0, and presage what was to become the Maya Postclassic Period.

We see Late Classic Maya society as composed not of a patchwork of petty "city-states" (*see* Sanders & Webster 1988), but rather as a series of realms or provinces continually striving to attain some semblance of "empire" (for lack of a better term). Maya sites were not independent units unto themselves, but rather parts of a system of functionally differentiated
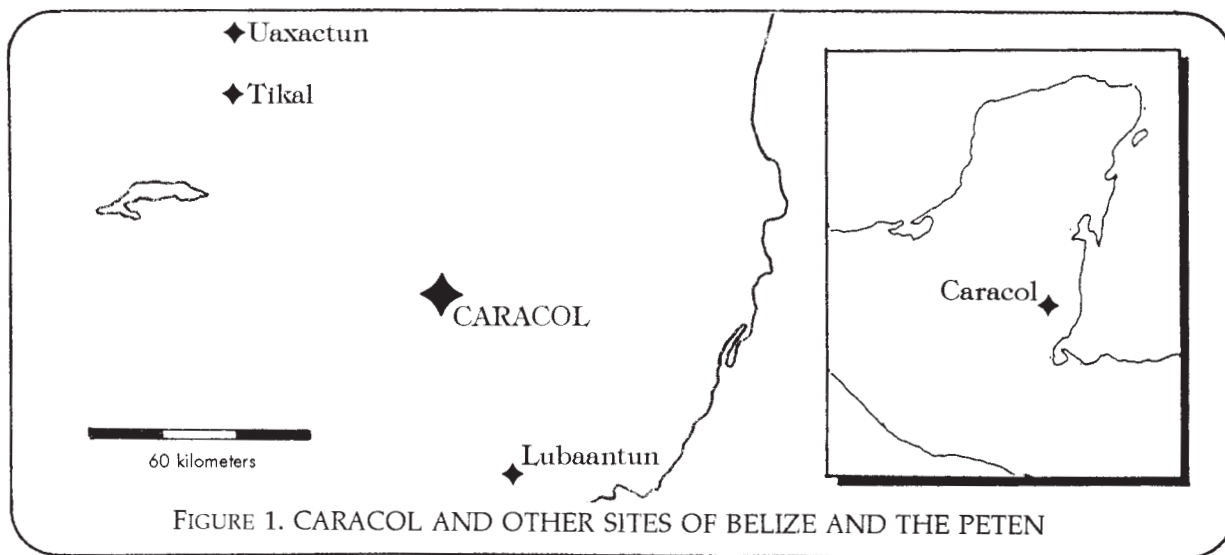

FIGURE 1. CARACOL AND OTHER SITES OF BELIZE AND THE PETEN

and hierarchically ordered settlements, the whole controlled by a highly organized and administratively nucleated society (*see* Chase, Chase & Haviland 1990). A single capital city such as Tikal or Caracol usually dictated events for an extremely broad area or realm (Fig. 1).
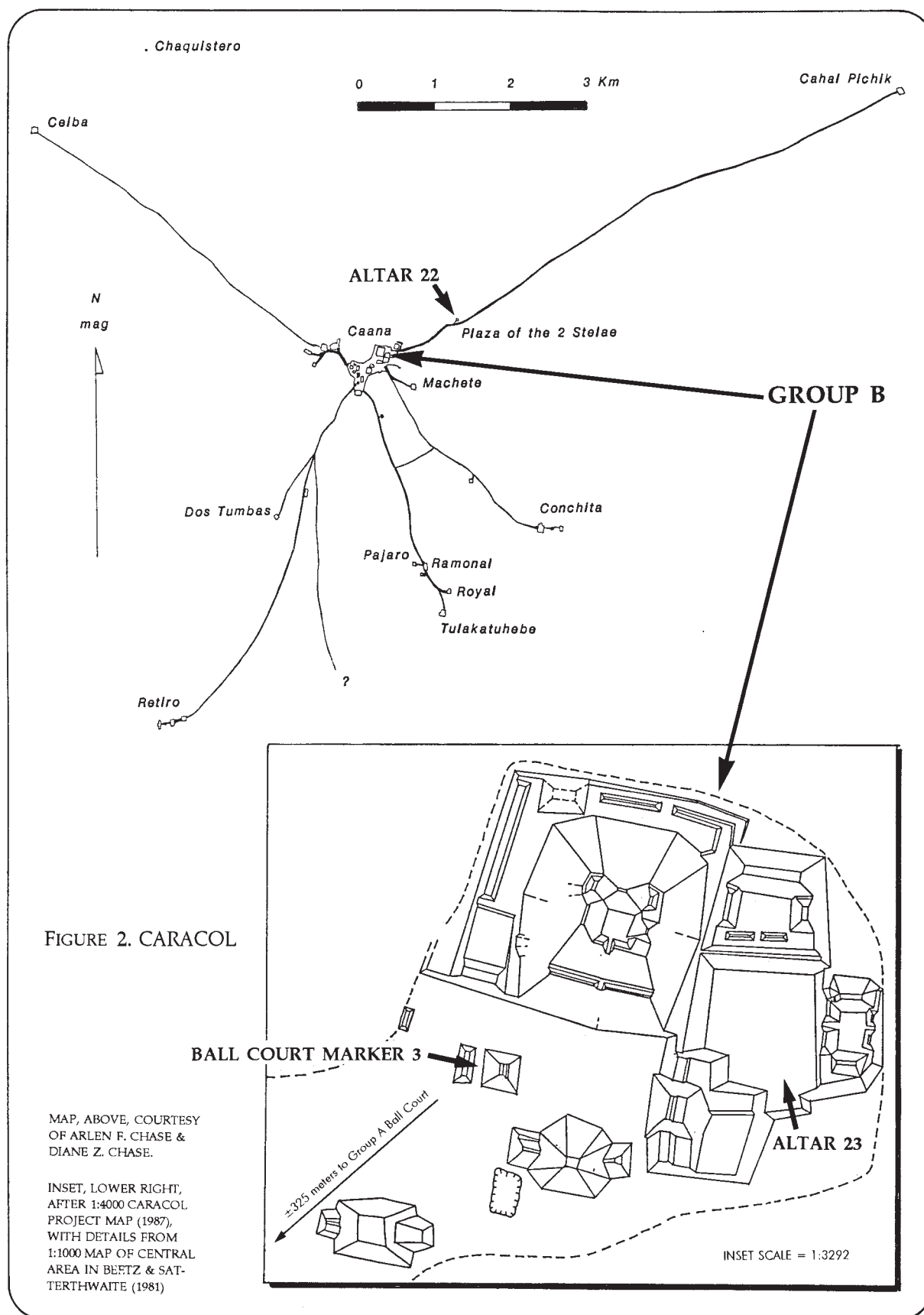
The Late Classic Period witnessed the development of an expanding and powerful level of society that was required to administer and control the larger system (Chase, in press). Initially, such individuals were appeased with titles that had previously been restricted to the ruler and his or her immediate family. Later, new titles and other traditionally "elite" items were conferred to ever-increasing numbers of people, especially if a realm prospered. This led to the eventual breakdown of divine kingship during the Late Classic Period at certain sites and the institution of new patterns of administration and control which effectively changed Maya society. These transitions are evident at Caracol in the archaeological record of the Late Classic (*see* A. Chase & D. Chase 1991) and in the monumental record of the Terminal Classic Period. It has been suggested that changes in warfare provided the final catalyst that pushed the Terminal Classic Maya into the Postclassic Period (A. Chase & D. Chase, in press).

CARACOL

RECENT INVESTIGATIONS at Caracol have shown the large and densely populated site to have had a complicated evolution (A. Chase & D. Chase 1987; Chase, Chase & Haviland 1990). During the Early Classic Period, the place was relatively small in areal extent, competing in fact with the nearby sites of Hatzcap Ceel and Cahal Pichik, and others (Pajaro-Ramonal/Tulakatuhebe) that were later incorporated into Caracol itself (Fig. 2). For whatever reasons, the site emerged as the dominant center in the Vaca Plateau of Belize and, following its defeat of Tikal in AD 562, Caracol found itself in a position of prominence (A. Chase 1990). By the time Caracol defeated Naranjo in AD 631, the site—now apparently fully aware of its power—witnessed a program of building and expansion (A. Chase & D. Chase 1989). Before AD 700, the site mushroomed in size to eclipse Tikal in terms of the numbers of buildings and people (Chase, Chase & Haviland 1990:502). Importantly, this was a planned expansion fueled by successful warfare (A. Chase & D. Chase 1989). Successful warfare, in its associated widespread distribution of the benefits or spoils of war, may also have played a part in the diminution of the role of the dynastic king after AD 690 at Caracol, as the archaeological record bespeaks the success of the site, while the monumental record is largely silent until about AD 790.

At the beginning of the Terminal Classic Period, Caracol again began a program of monument erection, but one that was quite different from that found earlier. Whereas paired stelae and altars were erected in both periods, those of the earlier period consisted of a stela paired with a giant *ahau* altar. All giant ahau altars at Caracol appear to date prior to 9.13.0.0.0 (AD 692) in spite of arguments by Beetz and Satterthwaite (1981:110-111) to the contrary. Between 9.13.0.0.0 and 9.18.0.0.0, no altars are known from the site, perhaps because it was no longer iconographically necessary to enforce the vision of the ruler standing dominant over cyclical time and the cosmos.

Toward the end of Late Classic times, Maya warfare entered new arenas, and new weaponry and techniques of sacrifice were introduced on a wide scale basis (A. Chase & D. Chase, in press), although common Maya practices involving the sacrifice of neighboring elite continued—as indicated in the beheading of a divine lord of Tikal recorded on Caracol Altar 12 (in glyph blocks A18-A24), dated 9.19.10.0.0. It will be suggested later that Terminal Classic warfare was taking place at an ethnic level, the most violent kind of conflict (*see* Otterbein 1973). At Caracol, the response to these troubled times was reflected in the introduction of new iconographic forms (*see* A. Chase 1985). Although unusual iconographic themes were noted on many of the very late Caracol monuments, particularly altars, these could not be

FIGURE 2. CARACOL

MAP, ABOVE, COURTESY
OF ARLEN F. CHASE &
DIANE Z. CHASE.

INSET, LOWER RIGHT,
AFTER 1:4000 CARACOL
PROJECT MAP (1987),
WITH DETAILS FROM
1:1000 MAP OF CENTRAL
AREA IN BEETZ & SAT-
TERTHWAITE (1981)

placed into proper archaeological context prior to the start of the Caracol Archaeological Project.[1]

Excavations at Caracol from 1985 through 1990 have provided a general milieu for better understanding the previously recorded Terminal Classic monuments of Caracol. The specific findings have also helped to fill in the beginning portion of the iconographic and epigraphic sequence for this period and to contribute useful archaeological information in terms of both context and association. Three newly found monuments, the primary subjects of the present work, are of particular importance for understanding the Terminal Classic Period at Caracol. Descriptions of these three monuments are presented below, after which their implications for our interpretation of Caracol in particular and Maya society in general at the end of the Classic Period are discussed.

THE MONUMENTS

DURING THE 1989 AND 1990 FIELD SEASONS, three Terminal Classic stone monuments with hieroglyphic inscriptions were found by the Caracol Project. At the beginning of the 1989 season, Altar 22, a small carved limestone monument, was uncovered in a foot path that crossed in front of two uncarved stelae in an outlying residential area known as the "Plaza of the Two Stelae" (A. Chase & D. Chase 1987:36, 68). This area lies approximately 1 kilometer northeast of the "B Plaza" and is connected to it by means of a causeway and via (see Figure 2).

Another altar was discovered during the same field season in the "B Plaza" west of Structure B28 by Benjamin Panti, a Caracol caretaker. Altar 23 is much better preserved than Altar 22, though both monuments were covered only by a thin layer of soil.

In February 1990, Arlen Chase discovered a ball court marker associated with the ball court comprised by Structures B8 and B9. This ball court had been excavated during the 1986 field season (A. Chase & D. Chase 1987:31-33), producing a central, axial ball court marker. An out-of-context, iconographically similar monument of the same size was also located in 1986 southeast of the A Group ball court. Neither of these "ball court markers" had associated texts. Rather, both are carved with a scene showing an anthropomorphic head combined with an animal head, in one case that of a deer and in the other case that of a rodent-like animal, possibly a rabbit (A. Chase & D. Chase 1987:Figs. 24 and 26). The presence of presumably two markers from the B ball court suggested the existence of a third monument; however, all efforts to find such a marker were unsuccessful. It was not until February 1990 that a large rounded stone was discovered about two meters northwest of the central axis of the B Group ballcourt. It proved to be the third marker. Ball Court Marker 3 was apparently moved by the Maya and purposely reset face down at the location where it was discovered. The fact that the monument was inverted helped to protect its finely incised inscription. Ball Court Marker 3 is the smallest of the monuments discussed here and the only one which is all-glyphic. The dimensions of the newly discovered Altars 22 and 23 and Ball Court Marker 3 can be summarized as follows:

Monument	Diameter	Thickness	Relief Depth
Altar 22	0.95m	0.37m	0.7cm
Altar 23	2.04m	0.25m	1.1cm
Ball Court Marker 3	0.52m	0.48m	0.2cm

All three monuments were placed deeply into the ground. The butts of Altars 22 and 23 both reach approximately 25 cms below the associated floor levels. Altars 22 and 23 were

probably found in their original positions. The upside-down Ball Court Marker 3, however, had clearly been moved.

BALL COURT MARKER 3

BALL COURT MARKER 3 is an all-glyphic monument. The entire top surface is covered by a hieroglyphic text consisting of 24 distinct blocks. These glyphs were arranged in a cruciform pattern to fit onto the monument's circular face (Fig. 3). As on most monuments, the text is read in double columns. The columns to the left and to the right are shorter than the central double column. Thus, the text begins in B2 and continues through A3, B3, A4, B4 to B5. Then the text continues in the central double column (C-D) and finally ends with the last glyph in the third double column in position E5.

A long Distance Number, which occurs at C1-D2, divides the text into two parts. The Distance Number counts forward from an event far in the past to the current Calendar Round Date of 9 Muluc 7 Muan. Even though there are no period ending glyphs, the Calendar Round date can be securely placed into the Long Count. The text mentions Lord *K'inich Hok'*
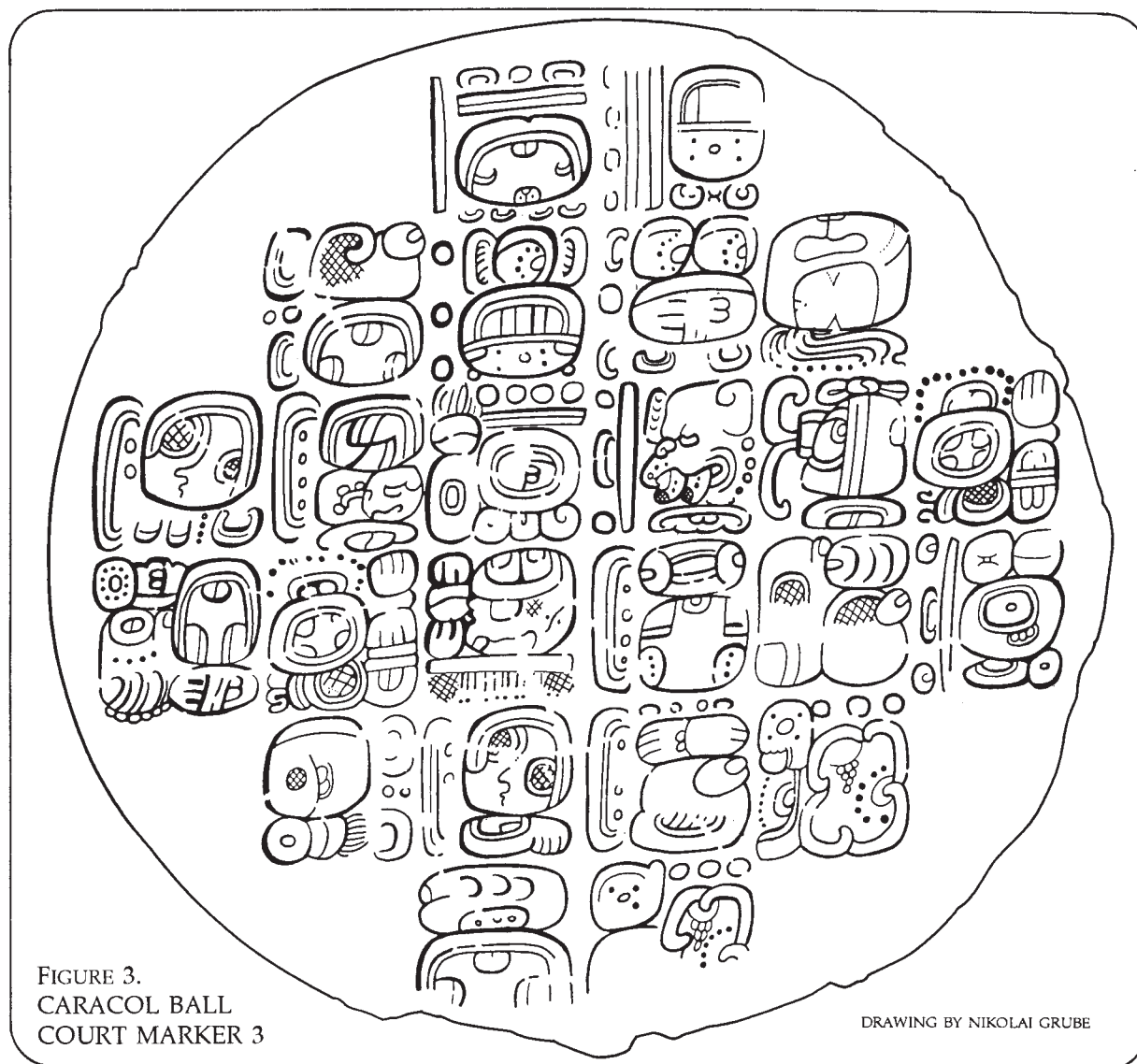

FIGURE 3.
CARACOL BALL
COURT MARKER 3

DRAWING BY NIKOLAI GRUBE

K'awil ("Sun-faced Knot-God K")[2] as the contemporary ruler of Caracol. He also dedicated Stela 11 in the Group A ball court as well as Altar 23 (see below). The dates associated with this personage cover the time span between 9.18.0.0.0 and 9.19.0.0.0. Thus, these other monuments and their dates provide a chronological frame within which the CR date on Ball Court Marker 3 should fall. Given these parameters, the date can only be 9.18.8.3.9 9 Muluc 7 Muan (Nov. 7, 798).[3] The Distance Number on the altar of 1.3.14.11.5 leads back to a supressed date of 8.14.13.10.4:

Date B	(9.18. 8. 3. 9)	9 Muluc 7 Muan	(Nov. 3, 798)
DN	[-] 1. 3.14.11. 5		
Date A	(8.14.13.10. 4)	(3 Kan 2 Mac)	(Jan. 14, 331)

Apparently the scribe who carved Ball Court Marker 3 wanted to connect a current event to a very early event in the history of Caracol.

The first glyph in the text is a verb. It refers to the event associated with the early date. Interestingly, the same glyph also occurs in a still opaque verbal phrase on the newly discovered Stela 22 of Caracol. The first sign in this verbal glyph is the syllable *ya*. Obviously this sign provides the third person singular pronoun necessary in a number of verbal expressions. The *ya* sign shows that the verbal stem begins in the *a-* vowel, so that the prevocalic set of pronouns has to be employed. The glyph next to it is an auxiliary verb whose exact translation is not yet known, though it is very likely that it is used to highlight the subjects of sentences.[4] Here it introduces the three following glyphs which together form a nominal phrase. The first glyph in the nominal phrase is a so-called *hel* glyph. The main sign and the T21 suffix read *ts'akab*, "generation, succession" (Grube 1987). The *li* suffix and the *u* pronoun indicate that the glyph here is a possessed noun. A translation "the generation of" or "his succession" seems to be the most appropriate. The actual subject of the first sentence is named in the next glyph. The name glyph is composed of four signs. The two final signs substitute for the portrait glyph of God I of the Palenque Triad (Grube 1989). It is possible that the name of God I was *Chak*, since the portrait glyph occasionally has a *ki* suffix functioning as a phonetic complement. This suggests that the main sign of the syllabic version of the name—Thompson's T520 (Thompson 1962:122)—has the syllabic reading *cha*. Of the two signs preceding the possible *Chak* name, only the main sign can be read. It represents the word *k'ab*, "hand". The *ba* syllable infixed into the hand functions as a phonetic complement to the word *k'ab*. The fact that the name glyph is followed by the Caracol emblem glyph confirms that *K'ab Chak* is the name of a Caracol lord. He probably was the first lord or the founder of the lineage of Caracol, as indicated by the glyph reading "in the succession of" which precedes his name, as well as by the early date.

Glyph B5 is the *uti*, "it came to occur," verb which introduces the long Distance Number that leads to the contemporary date of 9 Muluc 7 Muan, or 9.18.8.3.9, in C3-D3. The first glyph after the Calendar Round date has to be a verb. Unfortunately, the reading of the verb is not yet securely known. The next glyph is preceded by a pronoun *u-*. The glyph therefore is either a possessed noun or another verb. The underlying word consists of the syllable *ko* and the "dotted uinal" sign which forms part of accession phrases in Palenque (Schele & Miller 1983:36). Glyphic phrases similar to the two glyphs following the Calender Round Date occur at Naranjo (St. 35) and Palenque (Temple 18 jambs), but, again, in badly understood contexts. Another *u kab* agency expression after the predicative phrase introduces the subject of the sentence which is represented by the three glyphs that terminate the central column. The first of these three glyphs is prefixed by an *u-* pronoun and consists of the numeral *ka*, "two," and the syllables *su-lu*. A similar glyph reading *ah sul* is found on one of the Tableritos from the subterranean galleries of the palace at Palenque (Schele & Mathews 1979:36). Here the glyph

is part of a title phrase which also includes *ah k'una*, a title for royal courtiers. The title *ah sul* is also found on a small stone from Palenque Temple IV (Ruz 1958:219) preceding two unknown names. The pairing of *ah sul* with *ah k'una* on the Tableritos suggests that *ah sul* is one of the many titles for subordinate lords which can be detected in Classic Maya insciptions. It is possible that the Yucatec verb *sulik* provides the linguistic background for the title, since it translates as "to depend on somebody" (Barrera Vásquez 1980:742). A person who bears the title *ah sul* thus seems to be somebody who depends on the ruler. On the Ball Court Marker the *sul* title not only is prefixed by the number two, but is also possessed. The glyph reads "the second *sul* of" or "the second dependent of," and is one of the many possessed titles by which subordinate persons are related to their ruler. This interpretation of the glyph on the ball court marker implies that the main event on the monument was executed not by *Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil* himself, but by a subordinate noble, whose names are probably mentioned in the next two glyphs. The first consists of two signs: a penis and the sign which we have already analyzed as a possible *cha* syllable in the context of the God I-*Chak* substitution. If the penis sign is a logogram for *ach*, the Yucatec word for "penis," the *cha* syllable under it could be a phonetic complement to distinguish the Yucatec word from the Cholan *at (Kaufman & Norman 1984:116). The "penis" nominal is followed by a glyph which can be identified as the name of a location, since it contains the sign for *wits*, "mountain". This location is repeated in the last glyph of the inscription and is also found on other Caracol monuments (St. 10, A4; St. 17, C3). It probably reads *ah ox wits*, "he of the three mountains". It is possible that the three mountains represent a certain feature at Caracol, perhaps the three "temples" (Structures B18, B19, and B20) that crown Caana, the most massive central building complex at the site.

The six final glyphs of the text refer to *Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil*, who ruled over Caracol when Ball Court Marker 3 was carved. The *mah k'ina* glyph (T74-183) which usually precedes his name is replaced in this instance by a glyph reading *k'in-ni-chi*, a well-known substitution. Lord Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil is associated with the Caracol emblem glyph. A glyph with unknown meaning follows the emblem glyph. The three signs of the glyph spell *k'a-le-l(u)*. The next glyph is a title, *27 ahau*. The most likely interpretation of this title is that it addresses Lord Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil as the 27th king in the royal dynasty of Caracol. If this interpretation holds true, and if the event associated with the first date really is the founding of the city or the founding of the dynasty, then Lord Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil should be the 27th king after that date. Indeed, the approximately 470 years between the "founding" date and the contemporary date could well have witnessed 27 kings in succession. Given these parameters, the average duration of a reign at Caracol would have been between 17.4 and 18 years (given the uncertainty of the position of the later date relative to the reign of Hok' K'awil), well within the biologically possible range. The final glyph in the text records the location already discussed above.

Thus, Ball Court Marker 3 connects the event of the founding of the dynasty with another, still unknown, event which took place during the reign of Lord Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil. The main event recorded on the marker obviously was executed by someone other than the king. This indicates that by 9.18.8.3.9 minor lords had already come into prominence at Caracol and were allowed to carry out important acts in the epicenter of the site.

ALTAR 23

ALTAR 23 was erected about two years later than Ball Court Marker 3, on the date 10 Ahau 8 Zac, or 9.18.10.0.0 (August 15, 800). Unlike Ball Court Marker 3, both Altars 23 and 22 portray two bound prisoners along with hieroglyphic texts (Fig. 4). The prisoners on both of these monuments are shown sitting on pedestals which consist of large Cauac signs set on two smaller Cauac signs. As used in iconography, Cauac signs generally

FIGURE 4. CARACOL ALTAR 23

DRAWING BY ARLEN CHASE, DIANE CHASE, AND NIKOLAI GRUBE
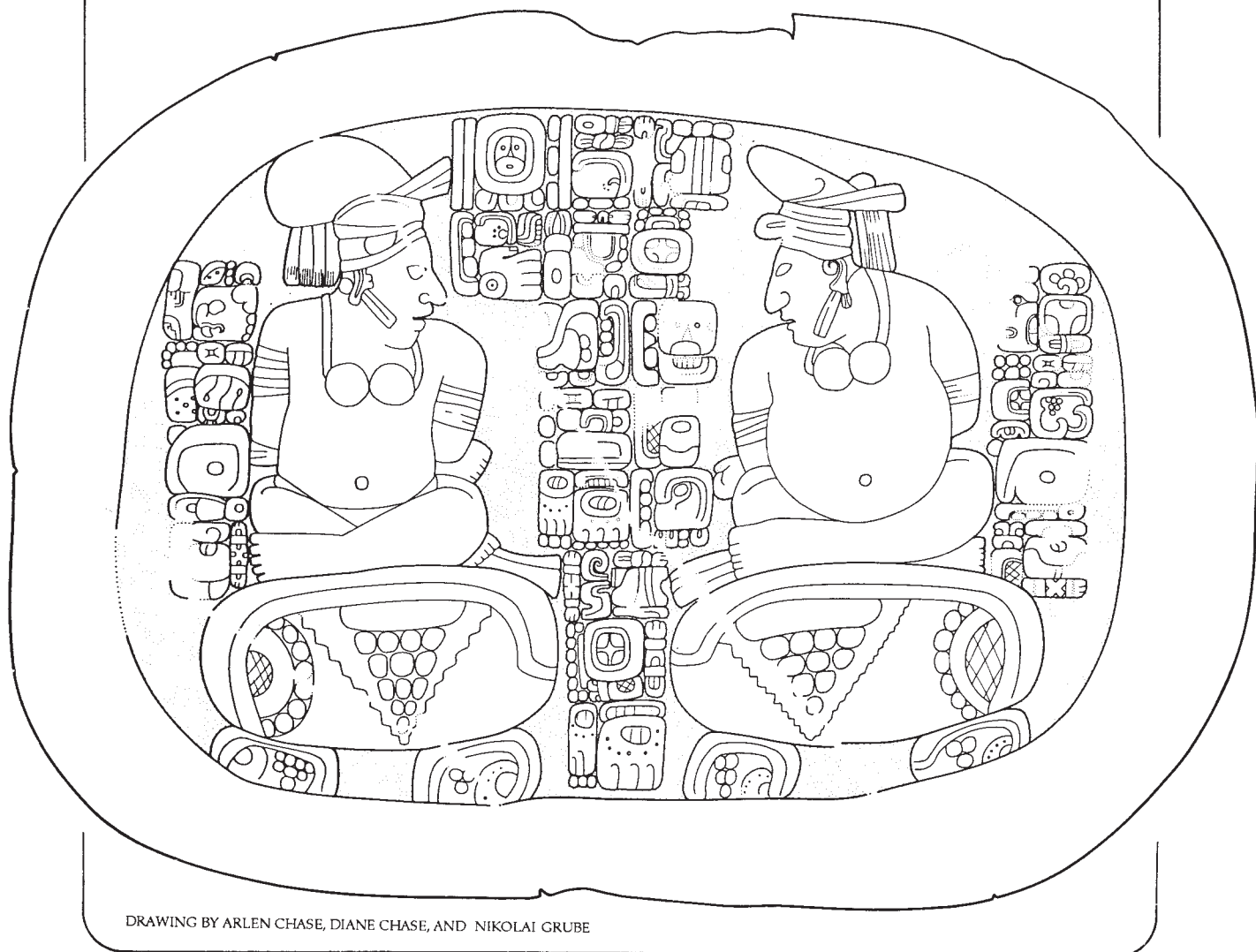
represent stones. Thus, it is very likely that the prisoners on the altars are shown sitting on stone pedestals or altars. The large Cauac signs which form the actual seats for the prisoners have a prominent V-shaped stepped design in their middles; the meaning of this is not yet known.

Interestingly, the "triple Cauac" glyph, a cluster of one large and two small Cauac signs, occurs in hieroglyphic texts in close association with glyphs for pyramids (Fig. 5). On Step 61 of the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Copán the triple Cauac glyph and a glyphic icon of a pyramid are paired. Both glyphs have a T173 *mi* superfix which probably spells an adjective. The same combination, without the *mi-* superfixes, is found on Tikal Stela 26. Here the pyramid is depicted in unusually realistic form. Finally, a less obvious example of the pyramid-triple Cauac complex occurs in the Paris Codex (the triple Cauac glyph has some additional signs). These examples demonstrate that the triple Cauac glyph, like the pyramid, represents a real feature—perhaps a stone platform or a large altar on stone pedestals.

On Altars 22 and 23 the prisoners are seated in cross-legged positions and face each other. Their arms are bound behind their backs. The dress of each is reduced to a small loincloth, some kind of necklace, and headdresses. The prisoners on Altar 23 are shown with paper

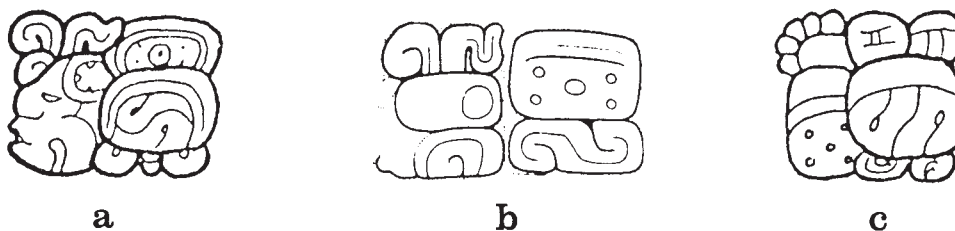FIGURE 5. THE *CAUAC* COLLOCATION AND THE "TEMPLE" GLYPH

a **b** **c**
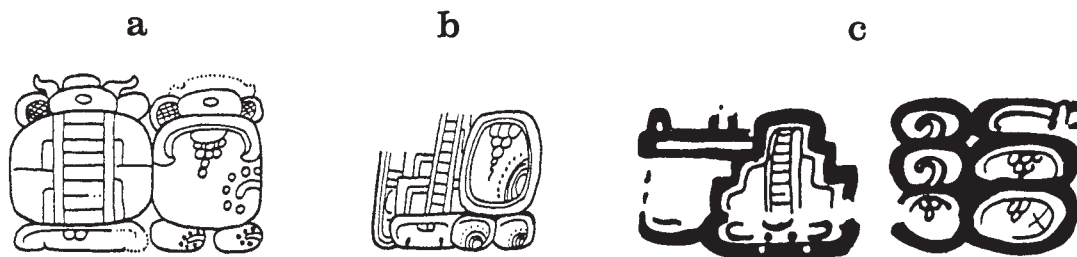
DRAWINGS BY NIKOLAI GRUBE

a: CPN Great HS, Step 61 (after drawing by Barbara Fash)
b: TIK Stela 26, yB2 (after Jones & Satterthwaite 1982: Fig. 45)
c: PARIS, 8 (after Treiber 1987)

FIGURE 6. THE *BITAL* LOCATION: EXAMPLES FROM CARACOL AND NARANJO

DRAWINGS BY NIKOLAI GRUBE

a **b** **c**

a: NAR Stela 22, F18 (after Graham & Von Euw 1975 [CMHI 2:56])
b: NAR Stela 13, H15-G16 (after Graham & Von Euw 1975 [CMHI 2:38])
c: CRC Altar 23, D2

strips through their ears, a typical attribute of prisoners who are going to be sacrificed. The headdresses are the only garment elements which show individual differences. Both prisoners on Altar 23 wear small headdresses which look like turbans. The headdress of the left prisoner from Altar 22 is almost totally eroded, while the individual on the right seems to wear a kind of hat with a twisted rope coming out of its top.

The necklaces worn by the prisoners on Altar 23, and possibly Altar 22, are unusual for the Southern Lowlands and are only known from Chichén Itzá and Uxmal (Proskouriakoff 1970:464). The composition of the scenes on both altars is typical for the eastern Petén region during the Late and Terminal Classic Periods. Similar round altars which depict bound prisoners and have short hieroglyphic texts are known from Tikal (Altar 8), Ucanal (Altar 1 and the altar of Stela 3), Hatzcap Ceel (Altar 1) and an unprovenienced monument in the Tikal Bodega (Mayer 1989: Cat. No. 25). This particular composition was first used in Tikal and probably was invented there. Thus, the Caracol rulers who erected Altars 22 and 23 were using programs that were already in vogue. However, the mode of execution—with two opposing individuals—is characteristic only of Caracol.

Altar 23 presents three areas of hieroglyphic texts. The emphasized information is recorded

in the central panel, while the left and the right panels are associated with the prisoners. The smaller panels not only share the same semantic structure, but also the two final glyphs. The first glyph in both of the panels is the name glyph for each prisoner. The name of the left prisoner contains the sign *balam*, "jaguar", and two other signs (the personified mirror and T128) which may contribute an attribute of the jaguar. The name glyph is followed by a full emblem glyph of a hitherto unidentified polity. The variable part of the emblem glyph consists of two signs, the syllable **bi** and the logogram TAL. Read together, these signs spell *bital* (Fig. 6), a toponym which is also mentioned on Naranjo Stelae 13 and 22 (Stephen Houston, personal communication to Grube, Nov. 1990). On the Naranjo stelae the *bital* toponym occurs after a "smoking head" war verb. The first smoking head war event against the *bital* place occurs on Naranjo Stela 22 and was carried out by Smoking Squirrel in 9.13.1.13.14. The second smoking head war event against the *bital* place is recorded on Naranjo Stela 13 and was presumably carried out by Smoking Batab in 9.17.4.4.10. The implications of these war events are that *bital* is a toponym that was later used as an emblem sign, and that the *bital* location was somewhere between Naranjo and Caracol in a border area of continuous tensions—a situation similar to the one found at Ucanal. Unfortunately, the exact location of *Bital* is not yet known. It is possible that the toponym refers to one of the many poorly known sites in the border region of Belize and Guatemala, south of the modern town of Melchor de Mencos.

The right prisoner, whose name glyph contains the syllabic spelling for God I, is a divine lord from the polity of Ucanal in the eastern Peten of Guatemala. Ucanal is situated relatively close to Caracol, the distance between the two cities being approximately 26 kilometers as the crow flies. Throughout its history Ucanal enjoyed only a few short periods of independence. Sandwiched between Caracol, Naranjo, and Tikal, Ucanal witnessed many wars and conquests (Mathews & Grube n.d.). The fact that the right prisoner was a divine lord from Ucanal indicates some form of bellicose act between Caracol and Ucanal before the date of the erection of Altar 23 (9.18.10.0.0). Ucanal continued to exist after the captive was taken and erected at least one more monument, Stela 4, at 10.1.0.0.0. It may be, therefore, that Caracol's sway over this site was supplanted in some way within 50 years after taking this Ucanal lord.

The two final glyphs are the same in both captions. They constitute a glyph which spells *ye-te* and a name or title composed of the signs *tu*, *mu*(?), *wa* and the *k'inich/mah k'ina* title. The glyph reading *yete* is also found on monuments from Yaxchilán and Toniná between the names of captives and the persons who took them. David Stuart (personal communication to N. Grube) suggested that this glyph be interpreted as an agency expression or as the Yucatec conjunction *yetel*, "by" or "with." On Altar 23 this glyph clearly is set in between the name of the captive and the name or title of a sublord who took the captive for his king.

The main text forms the center of the monument and separates the figures of the prisoners. The fifteen glyphs in the main text begin with the Calender Round Date 10 Ahau 8 Zac, corresponding to 9.18.10.0.0 (August 15, 800). The Calender Round Date can be securely placed into the Long Count because of the "tun-in-hand" verb in A2 and the glyph for "Half Period" in B2. The two glyphs in C1 and C2 refer to Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil of Caracol as the agent of the tun-in-hand verb. Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil was the current king of Caracol when Altar 23 was placed. The same date is also recorded on Stela 11,[5] which is the only known stela erected by him.

The glyphs following the Caracol emblem provide pivotal information. The first glyph of the main sentence is the *chukah* verb which translates as "he was captured." Most likely the next four glyphs provide names and titles of the person that was captured. The names and titles include the *u*-"ahau"-*ka* glyph which is a very common captive's title in Yaxchilán, the title "3 Katun Lord," another name or title, and the well-known *bakab* title. The glyph preceding the *bakab* title is eroded to a certain degree, but seems to share some features with

the final glyphs of the two captions associated with the prisoners. In the prisoners' texts this glyph can be identified as the name or title of the person who took the captives. In the main text, this glyph is related to the prisoner. This glyph is used, therefore, by different historical individuals of high rank who probably were members of the elite and were allowed to take captives for the king.

The title phrase is followed by the *u kab* verb which introduces subjects of sentences. The subject again is Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil, king of Caracol and bearer of the *bakab* title.

The main text of Altar 23, then, gives an account of the capture of a very important noble from an unknown site. This noble held not only the same title as sublords from Caracol, but also was of *bakab* rank and, thus, on the same level as the Caracol king himself. The capture event recorded on Altar 23 must have been extremely important for Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil since it provides the focus for one of the largest altars at Caracol.
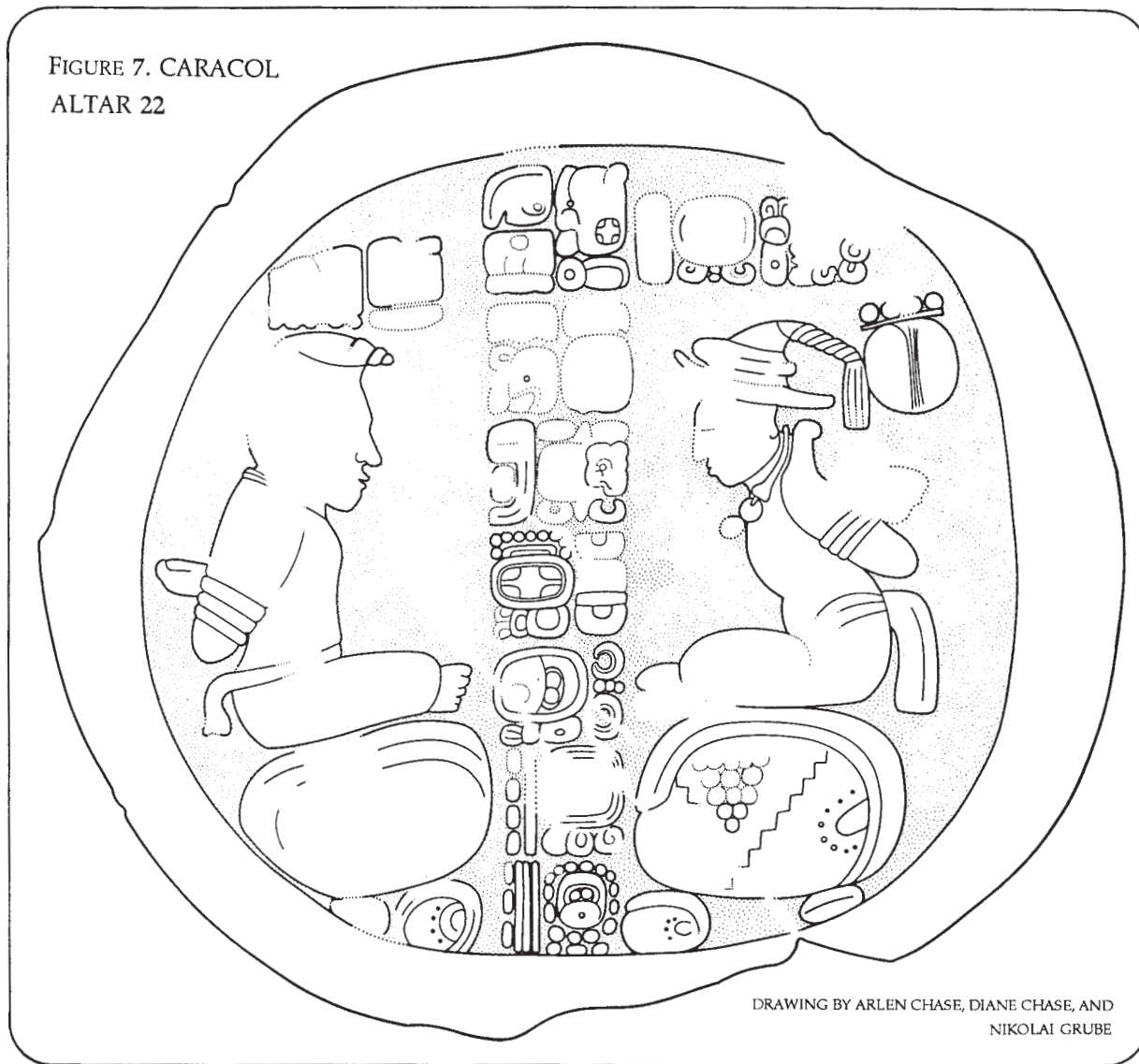
ALTAR 22

ALTAR 22, associated with two plain stelae, is located in a group approximately one kilometer distant from the B Plaza. This monument is smaller and less well preserved than Altar 23 and most of its hieroglyphic text is either completely lost or badly eroded (Fig. 7). The iconography of the altar is basically the same as on Altar 23, with two bound prisoners sitting on stone pedestals of the shape already discussed. Both the iconography and the glyphic text repeat the layout of Altar 23. Two short glyphic captions are associated with the prisoners; these contain their names and titles. The nominal glyphs of the captives have suffered heavily from erosion, but judging purely from their outlines, they do not seem to contain emblem glyphs.

The main information is provided in the central column of seven glyphs. The first glyph of the main text certainly provides the verb, which unfortunately cannot be read. The right half of the block is the *bate* title which in Dos Pilas, Yaxchilán, and other sites occurs in contexts suggestive of the ball game. In Dos Pilas it is very often paired with the *pits*, "ball player," title. The *bate* title also shows up in Chichén Itzá where lords are displayed playing the ball game (Grube 1990). The association between the *bate* title and ball game is supported on Altar 22 by the ball with superfixed numbers that is visible behind the head of the right prisoner. Numbered balls are an icon which is widely used in the Maya lowlands as a reference to the ball game. The association of bound captives with the ball game on Altar 22 refers to the fact that captives were often depicted as balls, named as balls, and perhaps even rolled down the stairs of a ball court like the ball in the ball game (Schele & Grube 1990). The captives on Altar 22 certainly had the same destination. The second glyph block is almost totally gone. The third glyph block should provide us with the name of the protagonist, since it precedes the Caracol emblem glyph. The name, however, is different from all royal names known for Terminal Classic Caracol. This, and the fact that Altar 22 is found outside of the epicenter, can be taken as evidence that the name preceding the emblem is not that of the current king of Caracol, but of one of the sublords who resided in an outlying residential area. Thus, the use of the Caracol emblem glyph was not restricted to the king alone. In this respect the Caracol emblem glyph is different from emblem glyphs of other sites which have the canonical "water group" *ben-ich* prefix defined by Berlin (1958). The Caracol glyph appears to have had a wider distribution during the Terminal Classic and to have been used as a title by several local lords at the same time. The same may be true for other "problematic emblem glyphs" (Houston 1985).

The protagonist of Altar 22 not only used the same titles as the king of Caracol, who at 9.19.0.0.0 was Mah K'ina Hok' K'awil (Stela 11) or hiss successor (Stela 18), but also used the same means to express his political power. He employed the same iconography as Mah K'ina

FIGURE 7. CARACOL
ALTAR 22

DRAWING BY ARLEN CHASE, DIANE CHASE, AND
NIKOLAI GRUBE

Hok' K'awil did when he erected Altar 23 ten years earlier.

The three final glyphs on Altar 22 contain the *uti-ya*, "it came to pass at," verb and the date 9 Ahau 18 Mol representing the katun ending 9.19.0.0.0 (June 26, AD 810). This date closes the hieroglyphic text on Altar 22.

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

THE THREE MONUMENTS discussed above are important not only as sculptural masterworks and for the textual information that they contain, but also because together they provide some of the missing information needed to interpret what may have happened to Late Classic and Terminal Classic Maya society at Caracol and elsewhere in the Southern Lowlands.

Altar 23 and Ball Court Marker 3 provide information concerning one of Caracol's last great rulers, Hok' K'awil. While two other rulers are tentatively known to have succeeded Hok' K'awil, most of our hieroglyphic information for the Terminal Classic Period at Caracol relates to this individual. Yet, others are also named on Hok' K'awil's monuments. Although Ball

Court Marker 3 tells us that Hok' K'awil was 27th in the line of succession at Caracol, it additionally commemorates the actions of a subordinate member of the elite. Stela 11 tells us that Hok' K'awil took nine prisoners in war. Altar 23 tells us about one of these prisoners, a ranking *bakab*, but the monument also presents two other "kings" taken in war by sublords of Hok' K'awil. Thus, rather than just celebrating Hok' K'awil's conquests and actions, two public monuments dating to AD 798 and 800 also celebrate the conquests and actions of up to three individuals who were not the current ruler.

It is probable that Stela 18 and Altar 23 were once paired, even though Stela 18 is dated 10 years after Altar 23; this would be consistent with the pairing of similar divergent dates on a single monument, Stela 11 (*see* Note 5). The pairing of this altar and stela would have presented a new iconographic complex at Caracol in which a giant snake rearing over a bound captive would also be dominant over the prisoners illustrated on Altar 23, i.e., dominant over both the ruler's prisoner and the prisoners of the two sublords. Thus, iconographically, the Stela 18 and Altar 23 combination may be showing that Caracol was symbolically a member of a larger union, as exemplified by the snake. Elsewhere, the suggestion has been made that Caracol may have allied itself with northern Yucatan and specifically Chichén Itzá during Terminal Classic times (A. Chase 1985; *and see* D. Chase & A. Chase 1983). Either Hok' K'awil is symbolically the snake (perhaps as a "vision serpent" or ancestor, for the succeeding ruler is named in the accompanying text) or the snake is representative of something else, perhaps an association with the Chichén polity.

Importantly, the next monument that follows in the series in the B Plaza illustrates two people conferring on thrones (Altar 12 at 9.19.10.0.0), in turn followed by a monument (Altar 13 at 10.0.0.0.0) with a presentation scene consisting of three individuals. One of these monuments was conjoined with Stela 19, which returned to the typical Late Classic presentation of a standing ruler, in this case Hok' K'awil's successor, who is iconographically dominant over one of the conference/confrontation/alliance scenes. With the exception of the all-glyphic Stela 10 dating perhaps to 10.1.10.0.0 and the stucco texts on the building midway up the front face of Caana, thus ends the epicentral Caracol monument record.

Whether the non-epicentral record ends at this time is unclear. Plain monuments are found in smaller groups in the core area of Caracol. In two of the known core groups, the monuments are carved. The first outlying group was recorded in the early 1950s by Satterthwaite (1954; Beetz & Satterthwaite 1981:64) and contained the carved and paired Stela 17 and Altar 10 dating to 10.1.0.0.0. Both of these monuments present "conference" scenes, and the hieroglyphic carving is crude. However, the current Caracol ruler is not mentioned on either monument, nor is there a Caracol emblem present on either stone. Rather, a title appears on Stela 17 with no associated name, and data from Altar 10 suggest that this title is applies to a lord from a different site, perhaps Hatzcap Ceel (*see* Houston 1987: 92).

Rather than seeing Stela 17 and Altar 10 as representative of the final breakdown of Classic Period Caracol society, however, the information from Altar 22 and Ball Court Marker 3 suggests that such non-ruler monuments were already being erected by the beginning of the Terminal Classic Period in the core of Caracol—perhaps in complementary fashion to monuments being erected in the epicenter. While the Caracol Glyph occurs on Altar 22, it is *not* associated with the current ruler's name, but rather with someone else.

Thus, the monument record of Caracol during the Terminal Classic Period shows that stelae and altars, carved and uncarved, were erected to and commemorated events by non-ruling individuals. Recorded Maya history for the Terminal Classic Period had thus become less oriented to any one particular ruler. This is also indicative of a culmination of Late Classic trends at Caracol showing that larger numbers of its society had access to previously restricted items. It may also be correlated with a de-emphasis of "sacred kingship."

The iconographic themes that occur on Caracol's late monuments are consistent with trends

seen at other Late Classic sites and may mirror the events that were transforming the Maya. Chronologically, in Caracol's late altars, there is a trend from prisoner to non-prisoner confrontation scenes. The portrayal of these prisoners is consistent with similar Late and Terminal Classic displays on monuments from Ixkun (Stelae 4 and 5; 9.16.0.0.0? and 9.18.10.0.0), Ixtutz (Stela 1), and Ucanal (Altar 1, Stela 3 altar)—all immediate western neighbors of Caracol (*see* Dillon 1982:37-38). Similar frontal, seated prisoner portrayals are also evident from other Late Classic sites of the Southern Lowlands, including Piedras Negras (Stela 12 at 9.18.5.0.0), Tikal (Altar 1), and Tonina (Monument 99); and other examples occur earlier in the Northern Lowlands, at Cobá (Stelae 1 and 15) and Dzilam (Stela 2)(ibid., 37-40). Also indicative of a northern connection are the two disc bead necklaces found on the prisoners on Altars 22 and 23, only noted elsewhere as occurring on a column from Chichén Itzá Structure 6E1 and on Uxmal Stela 14; at these two sites, the two disc necklaces are related to costuming associated with either the "Toltecs" or the "Xiu" (Proskouriakoff 1970:462-464). Northern style dress has been previously noted on Caracol Altars 10, 12, and 13 (Chase 1985).

Other iconographic prisoner scenes, however, do not manifest the *cauac* pedestals seen on Caracol Altars 12, 22, and 23. Caracol is the only known lowland Maya site to show this paired opposition on carved monuments, first in prisoners and then in conferring individuals (as shown on Altar 12). Such "thrones" are, however, found in two other media—ceramics and codices. On pottery related to Pabellon Modelled-Carved, there are portrayals of conference/confrontation/alliance scenes involving two individuals sitting on deified thrones (*see* Sabloff 1975: Figs. 384 and 386). Thus, the iconography of Altars 12, 22, and 23 matches similar throne-pedestal iconography found in contemporaneous fine orange pottery—a ceramic type supposedly introduced (along with foreign themes) from outside the Southern Maya Lowlands. This paired throne-pedestal iconography is also related to similar iconography seen in the Postclassic codices (e.g., Madrid pp. 34,36, & 37 [*see* Lee 1985:101-103]) indicating a possible iconographic continuity between the two eras with a shift occurring from *cauac* to *tun* thrones, both glyphs being indicative of "stone."

THE VIBRANCY of the Caracol monumental record and the recovered archaeological remains from the site indicate that Caracol was a force to be reckoned with during the Terminal Classic Period. The monuments and archaeology also belie the increase in warfare that occurred during the Late Classic Period (Schele & Miller 1986:209-221) and culminated in Terminal Classic times. It would appear that Caracol was almost always successful at war and had used warfare to carve out a huge realm early in the Late Classic Period. The place also appears to have been on the cutting edge of the changes in warfare that occurred at the onset of the Terminal Classic Period, just as it was in the forefront of associated iconographic changes as illustrated above. Why was this? And why did Caracol survive and prosper during the Terminal Classic Period like Seibal to its west (cf. Sabloff 1973)?

We suspect that one of the reasons for Caracol's survival and success during the Terminal Classic was Caracol's affiliation with a Yucatec heritage as represented in its monument texts and in its iconography. As a Yucatec-related site, Caracol would have controlled the eastern edge of a vast central "sea" of Chol or mixed Chol and Yucatec speakers (*see* Schele & Miller 1986:324). Caracol was also likely in communication with its Yucatec neighbors to the north who were absorbing non-traditional, foreign influences; these presumably included new warfare and sacrifice practices (A. Chase & D. Chase, in press). Thus, Caracol's iconographic precociousness makes perfectly good sense given a Yucatec tie.

Even more significant, however, are the implications of the Caracol data in the Classic Maya "collapse." Should the above be correct, it also would make sense that warfare would have escalated between the Chol and Yucatec-related speakers in the Terminal Classic Period, for

as Otterbain (1973:924) points out, violent warfare, often with no recognition of rules, occurs between differing ethnic groups, whereas similar groups tend to fight rule-bound warfare.

If some sort of ethnic/linguistic distinction existed in the past, it would also make sense that Caracol might not have followed a traditional set of warfare ethics in its defeat of presumably Chol-speaking Tikal. This may, in fact, be represented in the hieroglyphic record of Caracol Altar 21, for Houston (1990:40) has pointed out that the text concerning warfare with Tikal records both a full Venus sign and a full Tikal emblem glyph—language that is not at all common in the Classic hieroglyphic repetoire. If Caracol could be identified as a Yucatec-related site, this might also help to explain its use of a non-traditional emblem glyph and its distinctive archaeological patterns (A. Chase & D. Chase 1987:18-19; 1991). Thus, as a huge Yucatec-related power on the edge of a sea of Chol or mixed speakers, Caracol would have been free to follow its own rules of warfare and development. When the site adopted new warfare technology and new iconography at the onset of the Terminal Classic Period, Caracol again embarked on war with its own new rules, an example being the simultaneous taking captive of three rulers from three different sites in AD 800 (recorded on Altar 23), a feat not noted elsewhere in the Central Lowlands. Thus, Caracol was likely in the forefront of the drastic events that led to the collapse of the Southern Lowlands. However, the culmination of Late Classic trends that started at sites like Caracol are visible in Postclassic sites like Santa Rita Corozal (D. Chase & A. Chase 1988). Thus, the archaeology and monument record at Caracol reflect the processes leading to both the Maya collapse and the continuities seen between Classic and Postclassic Maya civilization.
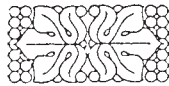
1. The Caracol Archaeological Project is sponsored by the University of Central Florida and currently funded by the United States Agency for International Development (U.S. A.I.D.), the Government of Belize, the University of Central Florida, and private donors. Some of the research reported here was funded by grants from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation in 1988 and 1989. Arlen F. Chase and Diane Z. Chase are the Project Directors, and Nikolai Grube is the Project Epigrapher.

2. This lord corresponds to Ruler IX in the reconstruction presented by Stephen Houston (1987). The *mah k'ina* prefix is substituted on the ball court marker by the syllabic spelling *k'inich* "sun face", a substitution first noted by Mathews (1979) and later confirmed by David Stuart (1986).

3. For the purposes of this paper an 11.16.0.0.0 correlation is being utilized although the archaeological remains do not conclusively support such a correlation (*see* A. Chase 1986).

4. The fact that the glyph is preceded by an *u-* pronoun and that it has the suffixes *-hi* and *-ya* which are known from many other verbal contexts strongly suggests that the *u kab* glyph is a verb rather than a possessed noun. The *u kab* glyph usually precedes the name of the subjects of sentences. In most cases, another verb is found before the *u kab* verb. This first verb provides the main information of the sentence, while the *u kab* verb seems to introduce the agent. Thus we find the *u kab* verb is used very often to introduce the agent of sentences when the main verb is set in passive voice. There is good evidence that the T526 main sign of the glyph is polyvalent for the two related words *kab* "land, earth" and *kah* "town, village". Besides meaning "village", *kah* also is an agentive verb in colonial Yuacatec. Furthermore, the verb *kah* appears with a prefixed pronoun and following many kinds of verbs in Yucatec texts of the 16th century.

5. It should be noted that Stela 11 has an ambigous date. The Long Count Date in A1-B3 clearly shows 9.19.0.0.0. The immediately following Calender Round Date, however, is 10 Ahau 8 Zac, 9.18.10.0.0. Here, like on Altar 23, a Half Period Glyph supports the 9.18.10.0.0 date. Long Count and Calender Round do not fit together, but this ambiguity may have been intended to represent two dates in one glyphic phrase.
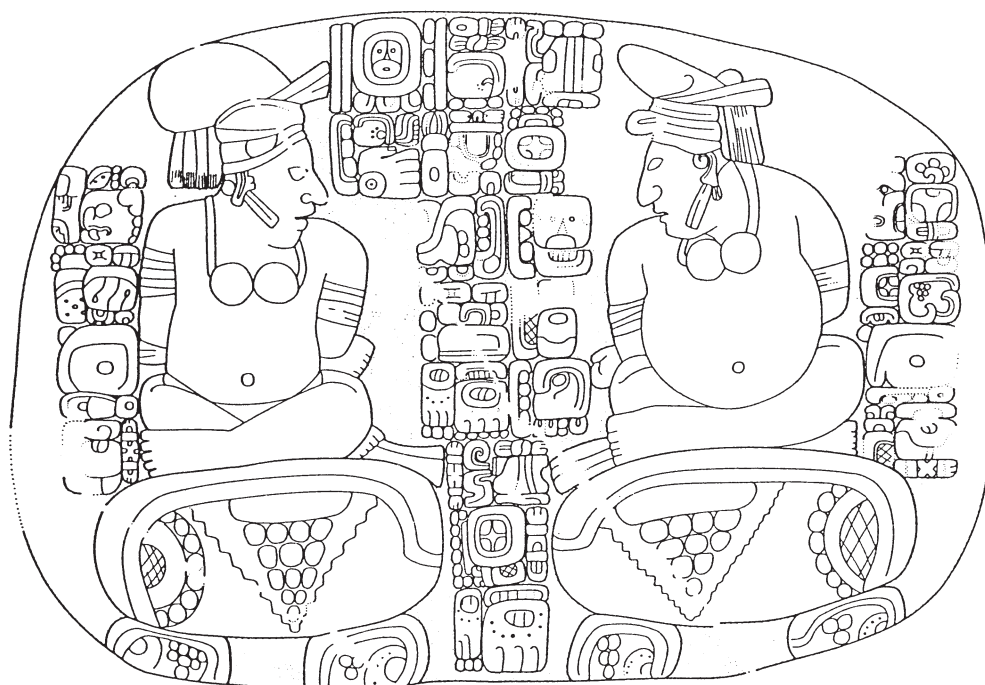
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