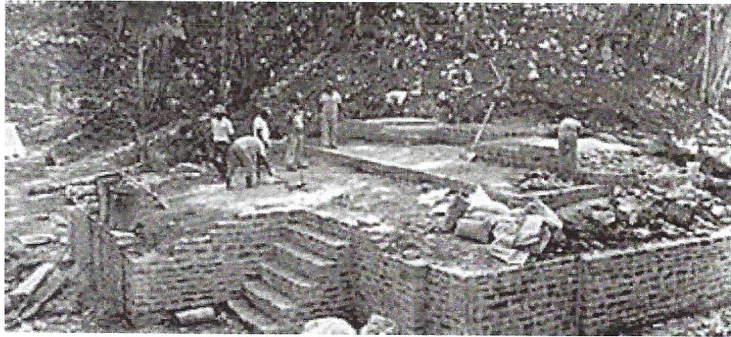


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TOURISTS, TOMBS AND TRASH: THE 1993 FIELD SEASON AT CARACOL



From PARI Newsletter 17:7 (August, 1993)

The Chases

The 1993 Caracol Project ran from mid-February through early June and involved a crew of 60. Some 4000 people visited the site during this time. This touristic surge was particularly appropriate given the improved road to the site and the fact that the majority of the season's funding came from the Government of Belize (with the remainder from the University of Central Florida).

The foci for 1993 were the summit of Caana and the Central Acropolis with additional work being undertaken on two "vacant terrain" buildings, Structure B118 in the "walled area," and the northwest plaza corner of the Barrio group.

Extensive work was undertaken on the summit of Caana. The northeastern palace complex was completely exposed and recorded, a process first started in its southern rooms two years ago. Extensive trash deposits were recovered in the interior plaza area and the rooms of several buildings.

The western building of this palace compound had been constructed over the eastern side of Structure B19, had

been residentially used, and then had been sealed shut; its plastered floors produced more than 20 *in situ* Late Classic vessels.

The summit of Caana's northern pyramid, Structure B19, was also cleared, revealing the remains of a tandem-room vaulted temple. The partial remains of two children were found on the floor in the front room of this building. An axial trench penetrated more than 8 meters into the latest version of Structure B19 and yielded a series of earlier building episodes as well as 9 caches. A majority of these caches were "finger bowls," lip-to-lip vessels containing partial human digits.

Significantly, the earliest formal version of Structure B19 used huge sascab blocks, something rare at Caracol, but reminiscent of the style found in the central Peten at sites like Tikal. Work under the front stairway of Caana's eastern pyramid, Structure B20, yielded a deeply-buried tomb of a single individual with a painted text dateable to A.D. 537; this is the earliest of the 4 tombs in this building.

In the Central Acropolis, excavation continued on the southern palace as well as in the eastern Structure A38 area. The southern building, Structure A39, proved to have 3 central tandem rooms bounded by transverse rooms. While some trash was recovered on the floor of this building (including a Sahcaba Modeled-Carved bowl), axial excavation revealed no deposits.

A collapsed tomb was excavated in Structure B118. It contained an intact burial dating to the onset of the Early Classic. A test pit in front of this structure recovered burials and caches. Among the artifacts found here was an exquisitely carved bone pin.

Exposure of the northwest corner of the Barrio plaza produced a substantial deposit of *in situ* garbage, including a partial Pabellon Modeled-Carved vessel.

C. Lynn Coultas (FAMU) continued work on Caracol soils, Ron Bishop (Smithsonian) tested over 500 Caracol vessels for paste sourcing via neutron activation, Joe Ballay (Carnegie Mellon) continued his

architectural studies of Caana, and Bill Feld (Tulane) continued his work on caves in the Caracol area.

The 1993 season resulted in a new understanding of Caana's building sequence and demonstrated that the construction of Caana's basic summit plan was begun at approximately the same time as Caracol's antagonisms with Tikal. Two early tombs were recovered, the positioning and occupants of both have striking implications for Caracol's social order.

In particular, the 1993 B20 tomb suggests a need to assess critically the relationships between architecture, burial location, and hieroglyphically known individuals. Finally, significant stabilization was carried out in two central areas of the site. The 4000 visitors serve as a harbinger of the role that Caracol will play in Belize's future.

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