

# Morley's Diary, 1932

## Editor's note

A leading archaeologist of his time, Sylvanus Griswold Morley was an Associate of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the foremost organization excavating archaeological sites in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras in the early part of the twentieth century. This diary continues his account of the Carnegie Institution's expedition to Calakmul begun on April 3, 1932. Morley's professional companions were his wife Frances, Karl Rupert, John Bolles and Gustav Stromsvic. Reference is made to biologist Cyrus L. Lundell, who conducted the first scientific investigations at Calakmul and brought the site to the attention of the Carnegie Institution.

## April 15 – Friday (cont'd from *PARI Journal* 4:2)

After breakfast we went to our respective stations. Frances had her Jose Carmen, the water boy, who had to make two trips to the aguada for water first. Frances says we use 40 gallons of water a day, i.e. 4 trips with 2 five gallon tins. She also had a boy named Lino Paat, quite Mayan in appearance. With these two she continued work on her laja.

Gustav finally got the lower half of Stela 88 vertical and then we moved the entire cuadrilla including the two axmen, Isidro and Rafael over to Stelae 75, 76, 77, 78, and 79.

Only one of these monuments is fallen, Stela 76, the second in the line from the left facing the row of monuments.

Jesus began digging down the left side of this while some of the other boys made me an excellent pole and rope ladder. This was laid against the left side of Stela 75 and I climbed to its top bent on the decipherment of this date.

On our preliminary tour last Sunday I deciphered this provisionally as 9.12.?.?.? but this morning I was able to complete this reading as 9.12.0.0.0 10 Ahau 8 Yaxkin. As they had not finished digging out the fallen monument, Stela 76, I went on to Stela 77.

On our preliminary tour I had read this as 9.?.10.?.? but now I was able to find the terminal date 9 Ahau 18 Zotz which enabled me to fill in the missing katun coef. as 12, viz. 9.12.10.0.0 9 Ahau 18 Zotz.



Neg. No. 10313, Courtesy of the Museum of New Mexico.

In the meanwhile Gustav's men had finished digging out the left side of Stela 78 and to my delight this has an I. S. the 35th thus far at this site. The finding of the day of the I. S. terminal date as 3 Ahau, almost makes certain this reading as 9.12.5.0.0 3 Ahau 3 Xul.

The next monument, Stela 78, though standing is so far gone that I can only guess at its date. For reasons to follow I think this monument dates from 9.12.15.0.0 2 Ahau 13 Zip.

The last monument also has an I. S. Though this is far from clear I think the date here is 9.13.0.0.0 8 Ahau 8 Uo.

The intent here would seem to have been to erect each one of these five stelae 1 hotun after the one next preceding it to the left.

Thus the series read here I believe:

Stela 75	9.12. 0.0.0	10 Ahau 8 Yaxkin
" 76	9.12. 5.0.0	3 Ahau 3 Xul
" 77	9.12.10.0.0	7 Ahau 18 Zots
" 78	9.12.15.0.0	2 Ahau 13 Zip
" 79	9.13. 0.0.0	8 Ahau 8 Uo

In turning over Stela 76, Gustav hurt his foot; the stela settled down on it and crushed a toe. He took off his sock and the toe was suffused with blood.

This is the second foot accident we have had.

Yesterday Emilio one of John's best men hurt his foot by a blow from a falling tree. Frances dressed this in the morning before work, and by noon it was much better so he said.

Gustav said his did not hurt much and as he put back his shoe and went to work again I had take his word for it.

It was getting near 11:00 so I went over to the laja to see how Frances' work had been going on. She had uncovered two more heads, making a total of 6 and an arm and a leg that go under a still standing tree, which will have to come down in consequence tomorrow. It was just 11:00 as I got over there and we knocked off work, coming back on one of John's east and west lines which passes by Stelae 63, 64, and 65. We stopped off for a moment to see Stela 62 which is like her Stela 66 in the Ball Court in several respects.

From here we came into camp and hit his north and south line through the Main Plaza a little south of our own tent.

After luncheon I persuaded Frances not to go out to the laja but to rest here in camp instead. She had worked hard all morning on the laja and merited a rest.

I divided her gang, turning Jose Carmen over to Gustav after the former had brought the water for the afternoon, and sending Lino with Gustav and also one of the axmen, Isidro. The other, Rafael, I left chopping in the plaza of the eleven stelae.

I was to go first to Stelae 85, 86, and 87 and write them up. I took Genaro with me and Gustav was to go over to Stelae 75-79 with his enlarged cuadrilla and then calling through the bush to me was to come guided by my voice to Stelae 85-87. This plan nearly miscarried because I took a wrong trail and went too far south. When I got back to Stelae 85-87 and gave a call I was surprised to find Gustav and his cuadrilla very nearby.

Of these three monuments found by Karl only the middle one is standing. The I. S. is included in the total of 35 previously given. While the other boys were digging along the edges of the two fallen monuments, Nos. 85 and 87, Jesus and Demetrio built a platform against the left or east side of Stela 86. I had no difficulty in reading this as 9.12.0.0.0 10 Ahau 8 Yaxkin. It was rather crude.

Both Stelae 85 and 87 were in such bad condition that we did not even turn them. I could get dates from neither.

From here Gustav and I went over to Stela 46 on the east side of the trail, the first monument associated with Structure B, which is the largest construction in the city.

In our preliminary examination of the site and its monuments last Sunday, I had read this provisionally as 9.14.?.?.? and I could do little better with this I. S. this afternoon. This I. S. is also included as just mentioned in the 35 already given as our total to date, but now a number of I. S. suspects may be mentioned.

Stela 45 lying a little east of Stela 46 is the first of those. It was clasped, or rather its head, for it had fallen, in the roots of a great fig tree – the wild fig – which has such a penchant for growing on top of the monuments. Isidro began cutting these large roots with his axe while the other boys hacked away with their machetes on the smaller ones. I had them cut first on the left side, and saw a very suspicious looking which looked like a zero, the cutting away of the roots on the left side was not finished by five, so I will call Stela 45 Suspect No. 1.

It also looks to me as though Stelas 38, 40, and 41 are going to be Initial Series when we get them cleared, but for the present I will call them suspects Nos. 2, 3, and 4.

I came back to camp early – about 4 – as I was worn out and had a hot sponge bath, a boiling hot one too, which refreshed me greatly, and afterward wrote in this diary until dinner.

Three new monuments were discovered late this afternoon bringing the total up to 103, of which we have found 40 and Lundell 63. One of these, found by Karl, on the very summit of Structure A has an I. S. our 38th. It is hard to see how Lundell missed it though it is fallen forward on its face. Karl reports it as 9.15.0.0.9. The glyphs are beautiful he says. This will be given the number 89. Coming back to camp, John said he had found two new stelae both small in the Main Plaza. I could hardly believe it. One was hardly 60 feet from our dining-room and the other no more than 75. The first I have given the number 90, it is directly behind Stelae 7 and 8 and only the stump of a monument. It projects only a short

distance above the slope and I doubt that excavation will show a trace of carving on it.

The other is another stump still standing to which I have given the number 91, this is not more than 2 yards south of Stela 9. I do not think this has any carving but will have both of these monuments dug up before we leave.

Victor Audinette is going into Central Buenfiles tomorrow or rather tonight returning tomorrow. I got \$10.00 from Karl and gave it to him, with instructions to buy all the eggs he could find and also a fowl. "Good Sir", said the Belizano.

We are beginning to get tired of camp fare. Tinned foods get awfully tiresome eventually and the time is arriving. We have another 9 days though so there is no use fretting about it.

Alberto, one of Gustav's best men came down with fever this afternoon. He felt it coming on this morning he said; his body ached etc., and he looked seedy. He did not come back after lunch and Jesus said he was down with calentura.

I sent down 6 quinine pills to him. Frances thinks by their size they are 7 or even 10 grain but I doubt if they are more than 5.

I wrote after dinner until 7:20 and then went over to the tent. Every time I go to bed as early as this I can only sleep 7 or 8 hours and then wake up. So it was this time. I must have fallen to sleep sometime between 7:20 and 7:45 but I woke up for an hour or perhaps an hour and a half about 3.

The moon is now about half full and is beginning to give us some real illumination under the trees.

#### **April 16 – Saturday**

This morning there was a little different distribution of the workmen. Frances had three men. Rafael the axman, Lino, and Jose Carmen, the water boy. I had Genaro, a youth from San Luis Potosi, with me over at Stelae 70 and 71, and Gustav took the rest of our joint gang over to Structure B to continue work there.

Stela 70 has an I. S. reported in our original inventory which reads 9.12.8.9.9 11 Muluc 17 Kankin. I had not attempted to read this Sunday other than to say it was a non tun I. S. It works out as given above. Next Genaro

built me my ladder of poles and rope on the left side. This records the I. S. 9.14.0.0.0 6 Ahau 13 Muan which however I had read last Sunday.

The bush had not been felled sufficiently to let in the light so that I could see the inscriptions on Stelae 72, 73, and 74, which were still in the shade, so I gave up trying to do them until this piece of felling had been done. I went over to see Frances and her work. This was getting near its end. The laja now has six figures on it, and is beginning to slope off in every direction so that it must be ending. Frances notices that a plaster level comes right up to the rock, which probably is the plaster floor level of this court.

I next went over to Stela 80 with Genaro and my rope ladder. John was over here with his gang and he told me he was working over toward the laja.

This monument has a good sized bee's nest in a hollow on the back. At first I thought I would have this burned out, but the boys assured me that the bees would be angry for some time afterward and I could not get near the monument so I gave it up.

Stela 80 in front (north) of Structure O is a late monument. Its I. S. reads 9.18.0.0.0 11 Ahau 18 Mac. The glyphs are small and beautifully executed. It was included in our original inventory of I. S.

After finishing with this I went back to see Frances' work once more and then went over to Structure B where Gustav had his gang at work.

Stela 4, which I suspected yesterday of having an I. S. proved to have one on its left side after Isidro had cleared away the roots of a wild fig which entirely hid the upper half of the left side.

This was not reported as an I. S. in our original tour of inspection, but it now becomes our 37th. Unfortunately the katun coef. is missing, the uinals and kins are surely 0, and the day-sign coef. probably 5 or 10. My decipherment 9.14.10.0.0 5 Ahau may be right, but I have questioned it with 2 interrogation points.

Stela 38 is fallen and I believe has an I. S. though I cannot decipher it. This was not reported in our original inventory and is therefore our 38th.

Stela 39 is in such terrible condition that I could do nothing with it.

Stela 40 has an I. S. on its left side, another new one, our 39th. It records the date 9.13.10.0.0 7 Ahau 3 Cumhu, which is also repeated as a Period Ending on the front in the upper left corner.

An interesting condition occurs here. I noticed yesterday that the upper left corner of this monument was missing. I noticed a piece buried in the ground directly in front and asked Gustav to dig it up today, which he did. This proved to be the missing upper left corner of the stela and records the date 7 Ahau and the upper dot of the corresponding month part 3 Cumhu.

The last of yesterday's suspects, Stela 41, proved to have an I. S. our 40th. This had a wild fig growing on top of it and hiding not only its front but also its left side. The decipherment is not too sure but I think this records the date 9.13.10.0.0 7 Ahau 3 Cumhu, the same as the nearby Stela 40.

At lunch time Victor Audinette had not yet shown up. Frances again did not work in the afternoon so her gang was absorbed in Gustav's again.

I spent most of my time taking notes on the monuments in front of Structure B. Gustav was digging himself in front of Stela 40 and unearthed a great quantity of potsherds of all kinds mixed with charcoal. It looks like a refuse heap and extended to the floor level of this plaza which was well plastered. It is about 15 inches from the present ground level to the floor level.

Most of his men were digging around and in front of Stela 43. In our original tour of inspection I had deciphered this I. S. as 9.4.0.0.0 13 Ahau 18 Yax and as the boys got deeper and deeper on the left side, this reading became verified, for presently they uncovered the "18 Yax".

A tremendous quantity of potsherds came up here, potsherds of all sorts, painted, coiled, black polished, and several little clay figurines, some bones, (deer) and a beautiful finely chipped blade about 5 inches long.

This stela is very fine and I am confident that its contemporaneous date must be much later than this.

Frances came out after lunch to see this monument and then went home to our tent to take a nap. It rained several times this afternoon, not hard, but several different times.

About 3:30 Gustav and I decided to go over to Structure A and climb it to see Karl's new stela, No. 89. We left his men digging in front of Stela 43 and fought our way through the thick bush just east of Structure B until we ran into a line running south past the southeast corner of Structure B when it ran into another bearing generally east. We followed this until it reached Structure A, which we began to climb.

This pyramid goes up very steeply and if it were not for the trees and saplings which grow on its sides would be extremely difficult to climb.

As we approached the top we seemed to come into a different ecological zone altogether. The big trees disappeared and wild hennequen, thorny bush, and even a chacté quite reminiscent of Chichen Itzá, were about us. This sparser growth is undoubtedly due to the fact that there is little water held in the steep upper part of this pyramid and the plant life is more characteristic of our Yucatan flora than it is of the heavier rain forest growth on the ground level here.

Near the top on the front (west) we saw Karl's stela fallen forward on its face, but we pushed on to the top a few meters higher.

Forest, trees, bush everywhere and not a clearing much less a habitation in sight. Depressing it was. A rain storm was in progress to the southwest, and in this direction one could see where the high forest broke and the big akalche everyone speaks of, lies.

John's line comes up the back and some of his boys had stuck a newspaper on a stick. We tried to pick up Shufeldt's ruins to the southwest which Gustav thought he saw from Structure B several days ago but we could not see it.

After looking around a little we came down to the stela which lies on its face. On the left side is an I. S. which apparently records the date 9.15.0.0.14 5 Ix 7 Zac. At the top of the right side is an inverted Ahau with 3 dots above it. On Stela C at Quirigua and on Lintels 2 and 3 at Piedras Negras the inverted Ahau is a substantive for the kin sign and if 3 kins is added to 5 Ix 7 Zac,

the date 8 Caban 10 Zac is reached. The monument has 7 Caban 10 Zac which is probably an error in the original for 8 Caban.

It will be quite delicado turning this over as it lies on the slope but Gustav says he can achieve it and if he says he can he will.

We descended Structure A and then passed Stelae 51 and 52, came back along John's lines to Structure B where the gang had made good headway clearing out in front of Stela 43. It was 4:30 so I came in and had a hot bath. While I was taking it, it poured.

Frances said Victor Audinette was back with a fowl and 24 eggs, for which we had paid at the rate of 6 per peso.

After supper the moon came out and the prospects for tomorrow are clear.

After supper I am writing this diary and getting caught up therein. Tarsisio is playing the phonograph and Frances and John are playing auction whist with Karl and Gustav.

It is very late for us Calakmulers, almost 8:30, and as soon as I close this entry we will all scatter to our respective tarps and to bed.

We now have a total of 40 Initial Series which makes Calakmul one of the most important of all Maya cities in this important respect.

The city must be ranked as Class 2, probably the largest northwestern center of the Old Empire.

#### **April 17 – Sunday**

All men reported for work this morning except Juan Andres, one of John's men and Demetric and Jose Carmen. Jesus did not show up during the forenoon though he came back before lunch having bought corn and other viveres for our two cuadrillas.

Rafael, one of the axman, told me this morning that he and Isidro had finished felling the bush up in the plaza where the two rows of standing monuments are, so I decided to work up there and finish Stelae 72, 73, and 74.

Karl was going to work on the Ball Court and went up John's round about north line. We had mislaid a

shovel somewhere and I took my boy, Genaro, with me and sent him into every place we had worked, but he did not find it.

When I got up to the laja Karl already had his man, Francisco Quinjana, at work looking for possible "base stones" such as we had found at Yachilan and Piedras Negras last year. I put Lino to work clearing the laja and went with Karl to see John's monument, the new Stela 92, just north of Mound L.

This is a small stela only 5 feet 4½ inches long over all and the sculptured panel only 3 feet 4 inches long. It is 1 foot 3 inches wide and 9½ inches thick. It is broken in two pieces and the butt is still in situ. In front of it (north) is a very small altar in keeping with the diminutive size of the stela. It is only 1 foot in diameter and 1 foot 2½ inches in thickness.

This stela is in every way similar to the almost identically sculptured Stela 84 in the Main Plaza. There are three glyphs on each side each separated from the other by a thick bar. I could detect no coefficients in any of these six glyphs. The little figure on the front faces the observer's left.

From here I went over to the plaza of the big standing stelae and tackled Stela 72. This has an I. S. noted in our preliminary tour of inspection. This I had not been able to decipher on my original hasty examination but this morning it came out satisfactorily to 9.14.0.0.0 6 Ahau 13 Muan, precisely the same date as Stela 71 north of it and Stela 73 just south of it. I transferred my portable ladder to Stela 73 next, and after Genaro had given its sides a good brushing with my scrubbing brush I verified its I. S. as 9.14.0.0.0 6 Ahau 13 Muan as first read on our preliminary tour of inspection last Sunday, a week ago today. These three monuments therefore, Stelae 71, 72, and 73, the three middle ones of this row of 5 all declare the same date, i.e. 9.14.0.0.0 8 Ahau 13 Muan.

I next transferred myself and my impediments to the last of these five monuments, Stela 74, but its I. S. was not so easy.

The variable central element of the Initial Series introducing glyph seems to be the Venus sign indicating

the month Yax, but I could not decipher this I. S. There is a troublesome Secondary Series at the beginning of the left side apparently consisting of 1.1.13.14 and perhaps leading to the day 6 Ahau. If this last identification is correct it probably is to be interpreted as indicating that Stela 74 was also dedicated in 9.14.0.0.0. In fact I think all five of these stelae were erected to commemorate this particular katun ending.

I was just finishing here when Frances came over. We went to see her laja and Lino, the faithful, had uncovered the figure in the lower left corner of the composition.

We left him working here by himself and went over to the Ball Court where Karl's man has found an excellent floor of hard plaster a good foot below the present ground level. He had not found any "base stones" but he had located the side platforms.

We next returned to camp where I left Frances and went over to Structure B. Here a curious reversal of conditions had come about which deprived me of one I. S. on Stela 38, which I reported first as a suspect and later as an I. S. which I cannot now definitely establish. Which leaves me minus one, and I reported Stela 39 as not having an I. S. or at least I could not find one yesterday and now I have one on it making me a plus one here, or considering the two together the same as before, i.e. a total of 40 I. S. up to now, but additional ones were just ahead.

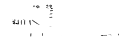
I had reported Stelae 38 and 35 as without I. S. but this morning we found that both of these had I. S. Also I had reported an I. S. on the west side of Stela 35, but just before noon I found another on the east side. This is the second moment here (Stela 9 being the other) having two I. S. This now brings our total up to 45 I. S. for the site. I did not have time to decipher these granting that I can because they are very much gone – as the luncheon bell rang.

After luncheon I returned to Structure E and finished Stelae 32 and 33, Gustav found the upper part of the right side of Stela 32. This has on it part of the I. S. introducing glyph, 9 baktun and the top of a zero sign of the tun coefficient.

I cannot decipher this but it is almost surely 11 or 12 katuns. It works better as 12 but judging by the other dates around Structure E it would be better some time in Katun 11.

Stela 33 just next it also has an I. S. which seems to be in Katun 11, 12, or 13, again I think it would be better in Katun 11, but I cannot tell. There are some interesting calculations on the back of Stela 33, which I think I can work out but have no time now.

I believe this building has the oldest monuments associated with it of any structure at Calakmul.



Stelas 27 and 28 are the oldest having been dedicated in 9.9.10.0.0, Stelae 32 and 33 perhaps in Katun 11 and Stela 35 surely in 9.11.10.0.0.

Jesus came back after lunch and reported he was not feeling well and could not look for the still missing last Lundell stela, but that tomorrow he will go back out and find it.

John was on top of Structure A this afternoon and yelled over to me and I called back so vigorously that Gustav thought I was hurt and came charging over the top of Structure B to see what was wrong.

He had his gang on the north side of Structure E digging out in front of Stelae 27 and 38 so that we can photograph them.

I came in at four and had a bath and then wrote in this diary. When John came in he reported another stela near 47 between Structures A and B. Gustav, who carried all his tools over to Structure A where we are starting operations in the morning, did a little digging around it and tells me he thinks it was plain.

After supper John went upon Structure F and took an observation on Polaris for latitude. Something was rotten in the State of Denmark since according to him we are some 19 miles inside of Guatemala! He is going to try it again at 11:00.

Well and so to bed, 7:40 P. M.