



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

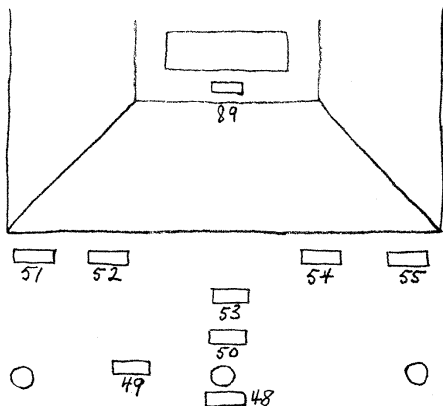
Morley's Diary, 1932

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 Stromsövic. 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 18 - Monday

This morning Gustav and I worked at Group A, or rather Structure A. The monuments associated with this building are as follows:



I may anticipate a little by saying that of these 9 stelae, all but 48, 49, and 50 seem to have been dedicated in 9.15.0.0.0. They are carved on unusually hard limestone for this site and are beyond doubt the finest stelae in the city. It is as though same master had carved them all.

Well work was begun on Stela 51 and 52. The former had fallen forward on its face but the magnificent sculpturing of the glyphs on the sides gave promise of something exceptional below. Stela 52 was standing but a great tree growing behind it had thrown roots around the base and these roots had to be cut out.

The Initial Series on the left aide of the monument is beautifully clear 9.14.19.5.0 4 Ahau 18 Muan, just 1 tzolkin (260 days) before the end of Katun 15. Exactly this same date is recorded by the Initial Series on Stela A at Copan.

While some of Gustav's men were digging along the sides of Stela 51 getting it ready to turn this afternoon while Karl turns the crank of the movie, others were digging around Stela 53, the sides of which were plain. This also had fallen face forward and Gustav was very doubtful about its having sculpturing on the under side. But this time he was mistaken.

It was not large but the relief was magnificent, superlative. The figure holds a spear in its right hand and in his left a small round shield which has cross bands across it and one can see through the corners viz.

The carving is beautiful and altogether we were greatly pleased. The shaft is broken off at the level of the knees, and Lino Paat was put to work excavating just behind this upper



part to see if he could locate the lower part of the shaft which must carry the feet of this figure.

In the meantime our two axmen, Isidro and Rafael, were making a great well of light in the forest. The pictures we will take here are to be afternoon ones. It is a great patch of blue sky closed in by forest on all aides.

From this beautiful Stela 53 we turned our attention next to Stela 50, a small insignificant monument, which had glyphs on its narrow sides. It had fallen on its face and though we hadn't too much hope we turned it.

A week ago Sunday when we had made our preliminary tour of inspection we had turned another small monument, Stela 49, standing next Stela 50, and it had had nothing on it.

We were not disappointed with Stela 50 this morning however; it has a figure on it facing to the observer's left but very much cruder than the five beautiful stelae behind it. At first I thought the figure was sitting but in the end came to the conclusion it was standing. The waist is greatly constricted though a bar passes just below the waist which reaches almost across the shaft. One point that was of especial interest in connection with this small monument was the red paint which still adhered to it in many places. This was not the usual dark maroon red but a lighter much brighter red. It must have been a lovely color when it was fresh.

By the time these monuments were turned and Stela 51 prepared for turning after luncheon, eleven had come around and it was time to call off work for the morning.


Frances and Jose Carmen had come up about ten and she went back with me. John's trails became confused just northeast of Structure B and what with the blocking of them by trees I had had felled we had some difficulty breaking through to the main trail running from Central Buenfils south through here to La Fama and thence on to Sacaté, Uaxactun, and El Cayo in British Honduras.


While we were at lunch Jesus Garcia came in with two faisán, a rather gamey bird common to the bush. He had killed a pair, male and female. He had been out looking for Lundell's lost last monument and had failed to find it. He thinks that Lundell was confused and saw a fallen monument—our Stela 94—on the south side of a mound, incorrectly describing it as standing on the west side of a mound. While we have found Lundell's map correct in every respect, it seems as though in this one respect he may have made a mistake. John has made lines through this general section, Jesus has been through here three different times and Victor Audinette also did some montearing through here. None of them, however, has found a single monument standing on the west side of a mound. John found another new stela today which I am calling provisionally No. 93. It is just south of Stela 47.

With the moving picture camera, Karl, his two men (Tarsisio and Francisco), Frances, her boy, Jose, Garcia, Gustav, myself and all our crew repaired to Structure A

where the turning of Stela 51 was gotten under way.

From the first this monument proved troublesome. To begin with it is an enormous shaft of stone 13 1/2 feet long, 5 feet 1 inch wide, and 1 foot 2 inches thick. To be sure he has raised larger stelae but the earth under this one was so soft that neither the jacks nor the rocks upon which they rested could get a good firm purchase below.

 Gradually he got it up bit by bit until it was inclined about 70° with the horizontal. At this point by assembling all hands—some ten men—he tried to get it up the remaining 20° by all pushing it at once but it never budged.

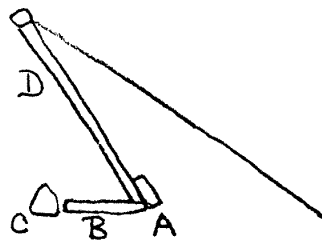
While he was getting ready his next device which involved the use of a pole some 25 feet long, we examined the relief. It is a beauty, the best we have found so far. The nose of the figure is slightly damaged but the details of the carving are exquisite. Frances noticed an elaborate curling of the hair  almost like an elaborate Egyptian wig.

The glyphs are in mint condition, in fact most of the relief may be described as in mint state.


It was too dangerous looking under this great slab resting as it was on the jacks and a few slender poles so we decided to wait a few minutes longer when it would be up.

Karl had taken movies at various steps: felling trees, placing the jacks, raising the slab with poles etc., and had saved about 15 feet for the final cleaned slab.

Gustav's plan was a good one. A great pole 25 feet high, D, was raised against the under side of the stela, A; this pole was fitted into a heavy forked piece of wood, B, which was backed against a stump, C. The forked piece of wood serving to keep the butt of the pole D, from slipping either way. A cable was tied to the upper



end of the pole and then the force pulled on the cable. Slowly the stela rose until it was vertical and resting easily against a stout short pole, which had been provided to keep it from going all the way over.

 On the side we had been lifting it, i.e. to the left in the above sketch, three poles kept it from falling back. It was just right and then an ugly thing happened.

When the crew at the end of the cable saw that the stela was up, they let the rope go slack, the pole tottered and then crashed to the ground parallel with the stela, knocking out at the same time the three props on the left side, and there before our eyes two hours arduous labor in the boiling sun went instantly for naught, the monument toppled over on its face again, which was that.

It was a great disappointment for us all. For one minute, no perhaps 30 seconds, we saw the sculpture in a magnificent slanting light and then it toppled over. And in boiling, broiling white sun too.

No more movies today. Karl, with his two men, and Frances went back to camp and all this work was to be done over again.

I went to work on Stela 52 and picked up a Secondary Series on the right side which was within 100 days of the Initial Series on the left side, viz.

9.14.19.13. 0 8 Ahau 13 Tzec
2.14
9.14.19.15.14 10 Ix 7 Mol
2. 6
9.15. 0. 0. 0 4 Ahau 13 Yax

In the meantime Isidro and Rafael had been felling trees over to the south near the fallen Stela 55, and in the better light that fell athwart it, I was able to pick up our 44th Initial Series, recorded on the left side, 9.15.0.0.0 4 Ahau 13 Yax.

I came home about 4:00 though Gustav stayed on for another hour, getting Stela 51 nearly up he reported when he came in.

This has been the hottest day we've had, and all the canteens were empty by dinner time, sure indication of the temperature.

After dinner, while I was writing up the entry for the day in this diary, Frances and John played against Karl and Gustav at auction. I also tended the phonograph spasmodically. Bed a little after eight.

April 19 - Tuesday

The moon should be full tonight or tomorrow. Which will make it rise about 11 on Monday or Tuesday when we will be going out. The drivers of the trucks as well as of the platformas prefer night driving to day driving at this time of year because of the pest of flies.

Our work took us again to the group of stelae in front of Structure A. Gustav had not finished getting Stela 51 on it edge, but a half hour's work on this monument put it right for a good afternoon picture.

I had my boy Genaro rig up a pole and rope ladder and sent him to the top to clean off all the ashes Lundell had put on Stela 52, I suppose in the nature of a distemper for his photographs. Jesus Garcia says he had no brush with him and had to resort to this expedient to get any picture at all.

When Gustav finished with Stela 51 he moved his gang over to Stela 55 but he himself stopped at the little middle monument, Stela 53, the butt of which had been found in situ. This we excavated and assembled it with the longer larger upper part. This monument begins

with the date 4 Ahau 13 Yax, the Initial Series of which is 9.15.0.0.0 as used here.

While we were at work on Stela 55 Frances came up, and together we went over to study the beautiful Stela 51. The date on the front of this is 10 Ahau 13 Chen just 1 uinal before the dedicatory date, i.e. 9.14.19.17.0 10 Ahau 13 Chen.

The design on the front of Stela 55 had flaked off somewhat but one could distinguish still a large figure facing to the left.

The dedicatory date 4 Ahau 13 Yax is probably repeated in the two first glyphs also on Stela 55.

When this monument was finished Gustav transferred his gang to Stela 54. This was also dedicated in 9.15.0.0.0. The stone of which it had been made was very hard but lay in strata which were not strongly cemented together, with the result that the different layers of the monument had come apart. The raising of this, and more the fitting together of the pieces, was a rompecabezas on a grand scale—a giant picture puzzle.

While this was going forward Frances and I took my Genaro and Demetrio to Stela 48, off the terrace but directly in front of Structure A and Stelae 48 and 50. I put Genaro digging along one side and Demetrio the other, and literally while we were waiting they uncovered our 45th Initial Series. Frances' quick eyes caught this first. Katun 15 was the sign that gave it away.

Further excavation yielded the Initial Series introducing glyph, the uinals and the day 4 Ahau. The whole upper part of this fallen monument had scaled away in small flakes taking with it most of the left column of glyphs, i.e. the left half of the introducing glyph, the bak-tuns, the tuns, and the kins. With the katuns being 15, the uinals 0, and the day of the Initial Series terminal date, 4 Ahau, I was able to decipher the whole Initial Series as 9.15.0.0.0 4 Ahau 13 Yax.

This makes the seventh stela we have found dedicated on this important katun ending. In fact I believe Structure A must have been dedicated at this time.

I was delighted to get this new Initial Series as I thought we must have about exhausted the possibilities of the site in this respect. As I mentioned it is our 45th and I was doubly happy that Frances had found it.

Gustav only had the main part of Stela 54 raised at 11:00 and leaving it well propped up went to lunch.

It was a scorching hot day and we were all wringing wet by the time we got back to camp. Gustav is seedy, a pain in his right side; I am afraid he must have strained a muscle with all the lifting he did yesterday. It was hot at luncheon, but afterwards in the oven that the terrace in front of Structure A became in the white heat of the afternoon, it was hell nothing else.

Gustav got the upper half of the monument up and then with great difficulty assembled the fragments of the lower two-thirds.

Some of the fragments are exquisitely carved, and in general our assemblage gives a fairly good idea of the entire composition with some parts missing. The Initial Series terminal date 4 Ahau 13 Yax is repeated as the first two glyphs on the front.

It was boiling hot and I spent my time between this reassembling on Stela 54 and on the digging along Stela 48. One other satisfactory item came up: the variable central element of the introducing glyph is the half Venus sign which is the form of that glyph corresponding with the month Yax.



The assembling of Stela 54 was finished at 4:00. Gustav's cuadrilla had worked like slaves under a white heat and I thought they had a day coming to them then and there, so I called it a day and we all tramped back to camp.

Frances had a hot bath waiting for me and it was restful and soothing at the same time, until I felt my fatigue slipping from me like an old garment.

After bathing I made up our photographic schedule, i.e. what monuments are to be taken in the morning and what in the afternoon.

After supper while I was writing up the entry of the day, Frances and John played Karl and Gustav at auction. The boys came up from the aguada about eight of them, and Tarsisio gave them a phonograph concert. They sat around on the ground and seemed to enjoy it. We went to bed a little after eight.

April 20 - Wednesday

This morning we first went to Stelae 47 and 93, two small monuments—at least they looked small on the ground—east of Structure B. We left Jesus and Demetrio to dig these out while we continued with the main gang to Stela 48.

This monument is the one Frances found an I. S. on yesterday, our 45th. The I. S. is on the right side facing the monument and the mound in front of which it stood, and this, as noted yesterday, reads 9.15.0.0.0. It seemed that the sculpture on the front or exposed upper surface has entirely flaked off. I thought that it might be worth while to turn this monument over to see if there had been a design on the back or down side.

This had broken in three pieces and Gustav turned his attentions to the middle piece first.

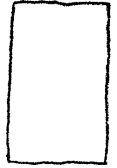
In order to turn this it was necessary to bring down a dead limb of a tree. When this was felled it was found to harbor a veritable metropolis of tree ants, and all the rest of the time we were working on this monument, we were covered with these pests. They bit too and when squeezed smelled of formic acid to high heaven.

When this monument was turned we found it had a human figure facing to the observer's left in very low relief, little more than incised.

There is some evidence that Stela 48 had never been finished. In the first place the inscription on the left side seems to be incomplete only the first 5 or 6 glyph-blocks are carved.

In the second place there are two glyphs in the upper left corner on the front which have had the panel prepared for them but which have never been carved.

The relief is so low as to be little more than incised. The right hand is extended down in front of the body as though the figure were sowing corn. The other hand is in much the same position. The fingers are noticeably elongated on both hands. Gustav said they were quite aristocratic.



It was getting on for nine when we finished with Stela 48 and moved back to the row of monuments on the terrace from which the lofty Structure A rises.

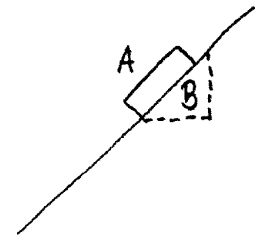
Gustav moved the cuadrilla and all its implements, shovels, picks, axes, jacks, rope, etc. up to the top of the lofty pyramid, while I stayed for a moment with my boy Genaro measuring Stela 54.

The ascent is very steep at least 45 degrees perhaps more, indeed if it were not for the trees which grow on its steep sides one could hardly reach the summit.

When I got to the top the boys were already at work digging off the blanket of roots, leaves, and soil which had accumulated on the upper surface of Stela 89. This had fallen forward on its face and had slid down the slope a few meters below the place it had stood originally—i.e. on the summit above.

The turning of this monument offered a new problem to Gustav's ingenuity. It lay on a very steep slope, and it would have taken very little to send it crashing to the bottom.

Gustav's plan for turning this was simplicity itself and proved in the afternoon most efficacious. He put his gang to work digging in along the right side of the stela at the level of its lowest point. His idea was then when this trench had been driven into the pyramid the length of the monument, it (the stela) could be pushed over into it. In this sketch, A is the stela on the slope and B the triangular section he moved out. This piece of work could not be accomplished in the forenoon but before 11:00 he had made great headway on it.



The I. S. on the left side which Karl read correctly when he discovered Stela 89 last Saturday is 9.15.0.0.14, i.e. 14 days after the End of Katun 14.

This reaches the day 5 Ix 7 Zac and a Sec. Series of 2 days declared by the very unusual inverted Ahau sign with a coef. of 2 over it. This should carry the count to the day 7 Cib 9 Zac, but 10 Zac is incorrectly recorded in-

stead.

This error in the original curiously enough, to anticipate slightly, is repeated on the front of this monument where the date 7 Cib 10 Zac—an impossible condition in the Maya calendar—is surely recorded.

There is a Sec. Series of 6.2.14 on the right side near the bottom and then the "4 Ahau 13 Yax, End of Katun 15". This last is doubtless the dedicatory date of the stela.

Eleven o'clock came before we realized and leaving all our tools on the summit of the pyramid, we descended for lunch.

Gustav thought that we would be ready to turn the stela a little after two, when Karl said he would come up to take some movies of the event.

When we set out after lunch we had three cameras—the large 5 x 7, the 3 1/2 x 5 1/2, and Proc's Verascope, and the latter, believe me, is a little devil to get under way—so many damn gadgets to get fixed and attended to before the picture can be taken.

When Karl came up about two he brought the movie camera with him making four photographic outfits to record the event.

But to go back. This was Frances' first ascent of Structure A and we went clear to the summit. A pale blue haze hung low on the horizon all around, milpa smoke. I thought in this remote spot we were even beyond milpas, but as Jesus aptly observed, "humo viaje lejos, "smoke travels far".

She was struck by the different flora on the summit of the mound—so much wild hennequen, even some Spanish moss.

Frances found a lovely bright red flower, which she plucked and wore; it was her mother's birthday.

After we had rested on the top for awhile, catching a few vagrant breezes, we went down to Gustav's operations a few meters below.

By this time Stela 89 was very nearly ready to turn. I finished my notes on the right side which was to be turned down and then Frances took this side with the 5 x 7 and I tried to load the Verascope but what business. I couldn't load the blistering thing, and just then we heard Karl bellowing at the base of the hill. He called up not to throw any stones down while he was coming up.

He reached the top pretty winded and hot. It was plenty hot too up there. The sweat just pouring off us as we were manipulating the damn cameras.

Between us we managed to load the Verascope, and then the three no the four cameras recorded the raising of this stela. As it came up we could see that it had a magnificent figure on the under side.

The principal figure faces the observer's left. He holds in his right hand a beautifully executed Manikin Scepter and in his left a round shield. There is a subsidiary figure in the lower left corner. The first two glyphs in the upper

left corner are 7 Cib 10 Zac again repeating the error on the other side. These should be 7 Cib 9 Zac.

By the time this monument was finally turned and cleaned, it was too late to photograph. It was about 4:30 and the boys had put in a hard day's work on the summit of that blazing pyramid.

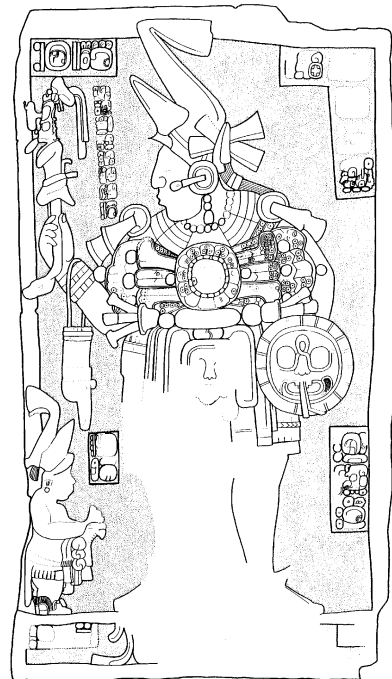
At one time we were 13 people up there, probably more human beings on this pyramid than had been here for the past thousand years and what a different gathering from the last. Then perhaps some final ceremony, some last rite to offended deities before the city was finally abandoned, while this afternoon, people of a different race, color, and nationality were raising a monument the earlier group had erected in the long forgotten past. It was a vivid contrast.

We descended and returned to camp. The work of turning monuments is about over. Stela 94 and 95, and raising Stela 8 a little more and that is all. Gustav will do this by himself in the morning while Frances and I go out to photograph in the morning.

My notes on the monuments are about done too. Stelae 43, 36 and 37 are the last.

After supper we half expected to see the boys up for another phonograph concert but I guess they were pretty well burned out by the heat of the day and the arduousness of their labors.

The same quartette played auction while I wrote up the day's entry. It threatened rain, thunder in the distance, but nothing materialized. Bed about eight.



Calakmul Stela 89. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.