

and drinks from their beans and calabash seeds. There the chiefs and those who had fasted stayed for five days and nights, always burning copal and making their offerings without returning to their homes but continuing in prayers and certain sacred dances".

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ANOTHER PIEDRAS NEGRAS STELA

MAYA carved monuments fall into various categories, the most numerous being "stelae". These are long shafts set upright in the courts or plazas, or on the temple pyramids. Their chief function was to record in imperishable stone hieroglyphs the current astronomical observations and calculations of the astrologer priests. Also, by means of accompanying carved pictures of themselves at work apparently they sought to impress on posterity that if the stars boded ill for the community, they had not stood idly by. At any rate, the scenes depicted nearly always include a priest attired in elaborate symbolic regalia, and sometimes, especially at Piedras Negras, show him actually engaged in ceremonies.

Up to a year ago, forty-six monuments of this class had been found at Piedras Negras. Plate X shows two fragments of what is probably best considered the forty-seventh. The larger fragment was found by the Museum's 1936 expedition and was illustrated in the Bulletin, Vol. 6, No. 5, Plate VII. It was only ten centimetres (about four inches) thick, about the same as most panels or so-called "lintels". Previously known stelae were much thicker, so we suspected this was part of a panel to be let into a wall, but to be safe gave it a number in the series of miscellaneous carved stones. During the 1939 season a second and smaller fragment was found. Brought back to the Museum it fitted the first, and the two are now set up together in the Middle American hall. With this



PLATE X. **Miscellaneous Stone 16, Piedras Negras.** Discovery of a second fragment shows it probably was a small stela.

addition, enough is known of the form to be reasonably sure it was a small stela. It was long and narrow, if we allow enough height for the missing part of a standing figure. The top was rounded and the sides taper somewhat toward the bottom. These are all characteristics of completely known stelae at the site.

The new fragment includes part of an inscription. The upper two glyphs record a date, but unfortunately for us it is only in the Maya "short count" and it could be placed anywhere in Maya time at intervals of fifty-two years. It is comparable to our statement that the Declaration of Independence was signed in '76. A foreigner first studying our history would not know whether we meant 1776 or 1876, or perhaps 1676. So the piece still must be assigned to the middle period of Maya sculpture for stylistic reasons only.

The Maya short-count date given is 8 Manik 0 Ceh, that is a day numbered 8 in a thirteen-day "week" with the name Manik in another sort of "week" of twenty days, and which fell on the first or zero day of the Maya month named Ceh. Any such combination of given positions in the two types of week and also in the year will recur after fifty-two years, just as with us "'76" will recur every hundred years. The sign for zero, giving the position in the month, is unusual and rare, but seems to have been satisfactorily established as having this meaning by the distinguished Maya epigrapher Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley, of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, who kindly pointed out its presence on this fragment. According to Morley there are now eight known examples of this unusual glyph for zero, of which two resulted from the Museum expeditions to Piedras Negras.

The face of this priest is unusual. It is grotesque, and obviously represents a deity. The body is quite human, and it is possible that there is no intention of deceiving anyone into believing that the god was actually present. A perfectly human priest may be wearing a deity mask, though one cannot be quite sure. The feathered headdress seems to have a foundation of basketry. From this foundation a number of water flowers branch out on stalks. The stalks are marked as if wrapped with something. Possibly actual artificial flowers are being represented.

Despite the great care the sculptor took with this carving, he did not trouble to first prepare a really flat surface. Examination of the original will show this clearly. The surface from the chin to the breast ornament is markedly depressed below the general surface plane.

Both fragments were found in the debris of the temple numbered 0-13. There is good reason to believe that this monument was broken up by the Maya themselves and then used as building material when they made some changes in the temple. That is why the fragments were found at different times, and why the likelihood of finding others is not great. It is a matter of mere chance where the Maya happened to use the still missing pieces.

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