

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE  
RUINS OF COBÁ  
QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO

BY

J. ERIC THOMPSON  
HARRY E. D. POLLOCK  
JEAN CHARLOT



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Jean Charlot Collection  
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of the stela. The explanation is probably to be found in the fact that the outstanding questions as to the length of the moon, which had worried the Maya during the preceding sixty years, had been settled, for the time being at least, by the adoption of the Uniform Lunar Count. It was no longer necessary to fill stelæ with long calculations dealing with the moon or the length of the tropical year. The writer believes that eventually it will be found that the length of a stela's inscription will serve, not to place it in a gradual scale of evolution, but to indicate to a certain extent whether the monument was erected during a controversial period. In other words lengthy inscriptions did not indicate a desire to mark the close of a period with a maximum length of writing, but were due solely to the fact that serious matters had to be discussed.

Subsequent to the decipherments of the inscription suggested above, M. Charlot wrote a short analysis of the artistic treatment of the stela, which, it will be noticed, is in close agreement with the date finally reached for the missing Initial Series.

"Stela 20 at Nohoch Mul is one of the most complex monuments of the Cobá area. The standing figure is as elaborate as the corresponding ones on the front and back of Stela 1 at Macanxoc, but the captives kneeling at the sides and crouching under the feet fall short of the high standards set by Stela 1.

"The kneeling figures are much stiffer, and seem to be cursorily worked; they are, in fact, less successful than those of even earlier stelæ, like Stelæ 4 and 6. The captives under the feet of the principal personage are of an ambiguous style. Their postures are most elaborated, presupposing in the artist who sculptured them a high training in problems of foreshortening, but the sophistication of the posture is not upheld by the stylistic treatment. The work is not so well executed as the similar figures on Stela 1.

"If any date could be set on stylistic grounds alone for Stela 20, it would have to be placed very close to Stela 1, perhaps as a link between earlier stelæ and Stela 1, since it presents both clumsy and highly evolved traits, but more probably as a later interpretation of a highly complex subject by a less skilled artist than the sculptor of Stela 1. In that case the artist would have undertaken a complex work that proved too ambitious an enterprise, and was unable to carry drawing and modeling to the point of excellency that such complicated postures would require. In that case Stela 20 was later in date than Stela 1 at Macanxoc."

#### Stela 21

Location.	Great Plaza, Nohoch Mul. In front of Structure XII.
Date.	9.11.0-0-0, 12 Ahau 8 Ceh?
Photograph.	Plate 10, <i>b</i> .

Stela 21 was discovered *in situ* by the sixth Carnegie Expedition to Cobá in March 1930. It stands in front of the center of the northeast side of Structure XII in the great sloping plaza. It has a height of 1.37 meters from base of the carved zone, and is 66 cm. wide and 26 cm. thick. Only the front (east side) is carved. Most of the face is occupied by a large figure of the usual Cobá type, who holds a ceremonial bar at a steep cant against his breast and wears the trident-ended bar across his knees. Both of these features are, as we have seen, typical of Cobá sculpture. There is a subsidiary captive with bound hands on each side of the feet of the principal personage. The carving is inferior to that of the neighboring Stela 20, or the beautiful Stela 1 at Macanxoc. For example, the outstretched arms of