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The Kaminaljuyú Miraflores II Ground-Penetrating Radar Subproject

Research Year: 1995

Culture: Maya

Chronology: Classic

Location: Guatemala City, Guatemala

Site: Kaminaljuyú

Kaminaljuyú remains one of the ancient cities deemed important to development of high culture in Mesoamerica and specifically to the Classic Maya. At the same time, Kaminaljuyú is one of Mesoamerica's most poorly understood centers. This is despite the fact that there has been, relatively speaking, much archaeology done at the site, although at Kaminaljuyú, which is located under roughly the western third of Guatemala City, this work is inevitably salvage in nature.

A critical research problem is that the more than 400 sculptures and sculptural fragments in the ancient city's monumental corpus have not been studied with the aim of integrating iconography, ideology, and history into standing processual views. I received funds from **FAMSI** for a ground-penetrating radar (*GPR*) search at two loci where, based on previous work at Kaminaljuyú, I believed buried sculptures might be found.

Any new monuments discovered would be of great interest, but of equal or greater importance than the monuments themselves would be the contextual information gained so that more informed inferences could be made about the chronology, likely placement, and uses of Kaminaljuyú's sculptures.

In 1994, **Dr. Juan Antonio Valdés**, director of the *Instituto de Antropología de Historia* and *Director General of the Office of the Cultural Patrimony of Guatemala*, began work at the **Kaminaljuyú Miraflores II** site, which is located at what has been regarded as Kaminaljuyú's southern limits. "Conjunctive" in its approach, calling on a wide variety of subdisciplinary methods and analyses, it has been the largest effort conducted at Kaminaljuyú in many years and promises to provide important information.

Before leaving for Guatemala in the late spring of 1995, I was contacted by Dr. Valdés who informed me that the *KJM II* site was in imminent danger of being destroyed by the construction of a large hotel and a road; when completed, the hotel will be the tallest structure in Central America. I concluded that I would try not only to conduct the FAMSI-supported radar projects I had planned to mount but also that I could hardly refuse to

help with the very important *KJM II* project, especially given the urgent salvage basis of Dr. Valdés' request.

Further, the finding of a large stela years ago just to the west of the large mound, **B-V-3**, indicated a radar probe for monuments at the site would have been justified anyway. The result was a very compressed and expedited but thorough radar probe at the *KJM II* site. Although, somewhat disappointingly, no monumental sculpture was found after radar-searching more than 6,300 meters, many features were identified, including extensive Preclassic floors, a brick hearth, and two extremely large middens, each with caches, and each containing approximately 20,000 artifacts, including some very fine quality Providencia-phase vessels. In sum, a much better sense was gained of the extent and uses of some of the southern districts of Kaminaljuyú.

A paper co-authored by Dr. Valdés and myself is currently in draft form in Guatemala. Plans are to submit the paper to journals in Guatemala and in the United States. I would be happy to answer questions from anyone interested in hearing more about my results. Please contact me, Jonathan Kaplan, at the Department of Anthropology, Yale University, PO Box 208277, New Haven, CT 06520.

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