

**FAMSI © 2007 Fabio Esteban Amador**

## **Archaeological Atlas of Eastern El Salvador**

Interim Report



Figure 1. Professor Amador instructs students from Georgia State University and from the National University of El Salvador on the importance of architectural documentation and condition assessment studies.

**Research Year:** 2007

**Culture:** Maya

**Chronology:** Preclassic to Postclassic

**Location:** Eastern El Salvador

**Sites:** Laguneta, Salto Coyote, El Cacao

### **Table of Contents**

Abstract

New Digital Site Registry Database

New National Site Registry

Mapping and Excavation Program

Laboratory Season 2007

Conclusions

List of Figures

### **Abstract**

During the last six months of archaeological research in eastern El Salvador, the project: Archaeological Atlas of Eastern El Salvador, made possible by a FAMSI grant (07070), has been successful in achieving many of its goals during the 2007 season. The present interim report will provide a brief description of the activities carried out as well as the goals reached up to the present.

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## **New Digital Site Registry Database**

One of the most important objectives of the Atlas project is to create a new database that will serve the National Council of Arts and Culture (CONCULTURA) with a basic tool for updating the outdated paper site registry. We are happy to announce that we have created a new and functional database that includes a digital version of the old record as well as all new information gathered by the Atlas project. This new database will be formally presented to CONCULTURA in late October at the Second Archaeological Congress of El Salvador. The database has been built on a web-based platform with the hope that it will be put online. This will enable students and researchers to conduct preliminary research on line. The new Atlas database includes maps, photos, pdf articles, as well as other geographical and cultural data of relevance to the study, protection and conservation of each site.

## **New National Site Registry**

Our second goal for the 2007 season was to visit sites in the eastern region of El Salvador in order to update the previous national registry. We are happy to announce that we were able to visit and document 57 archaeological sites. The improved national registry permits the gathering of detailed information for each site. These sites and all the information recovered are being entered into the new database. Although we feel that this is a great accomplishment, we estimate that approximately 150 sites need to be visited and registered for the completion of the Archaeological Atlas. We hope to complete the Atlas registry during the 2008 season, although this complementary research will require additional funding.



Figure 2. Salvadoran students process data recovered from the 2007 field season as part of their training as archaeologists.

## Mapping and Excavation Program

From the list of the 57 sites visited, we selected three for intensive mapping and excavation to meet our scientific goals. The three sites selected for mapping and excavation are sites that have never been studied, and given their geographical setting and architectural components, we felt they would provide important information regarding the cultural history of the eastern region of El Salvador.

The mapping was achieved with the collaboration of Dr. Jeffrey Glover from Georgia State University who contributed to the project with his expertise in mapping and equipment. Students from the National University of El Salvador as well as from Georgia State University participated in the mapping program and learned new skills including archaeological field methods for recording architecture using state of the art equipment provided by Dr. Glover and Georgia State University.

An extensive test unit excavation program as well as limited architectural exposure was carried-out at the selected sites as well. This phase of the project was important in achieving a number of goals such as recovering cultural material for ceramic classification and analysis, and to further refine chronology and cultural affiliation issues. The architectural exposure program permitted the identification and documentation of architectural features, which are important in our condition assessment study. In addition to the three sites intensively studied, we also conducted extensive surface collections at ten additional sites distributed throughout the eastern region, which will provide additional cultural information for the eastern region.



Figure 3. Salvadoran ceramist in training inspecting materials recovered from excavations at new sites in eastern El Salvador.

## Laboratory Season 2007

We have just started our lab season which will be important in processing all the information recovered in the field. We will be incorporating students from the National University of El Salvador in our ceramic study as part of an educational goal for our project, thus training new Salvadoran ceramic specialists and future archaeologists. Furthermore, we will also be analyzing the mapping data with the help of Dr. Glover who will provide basic training on the use of ArcGIS data management and analysis.

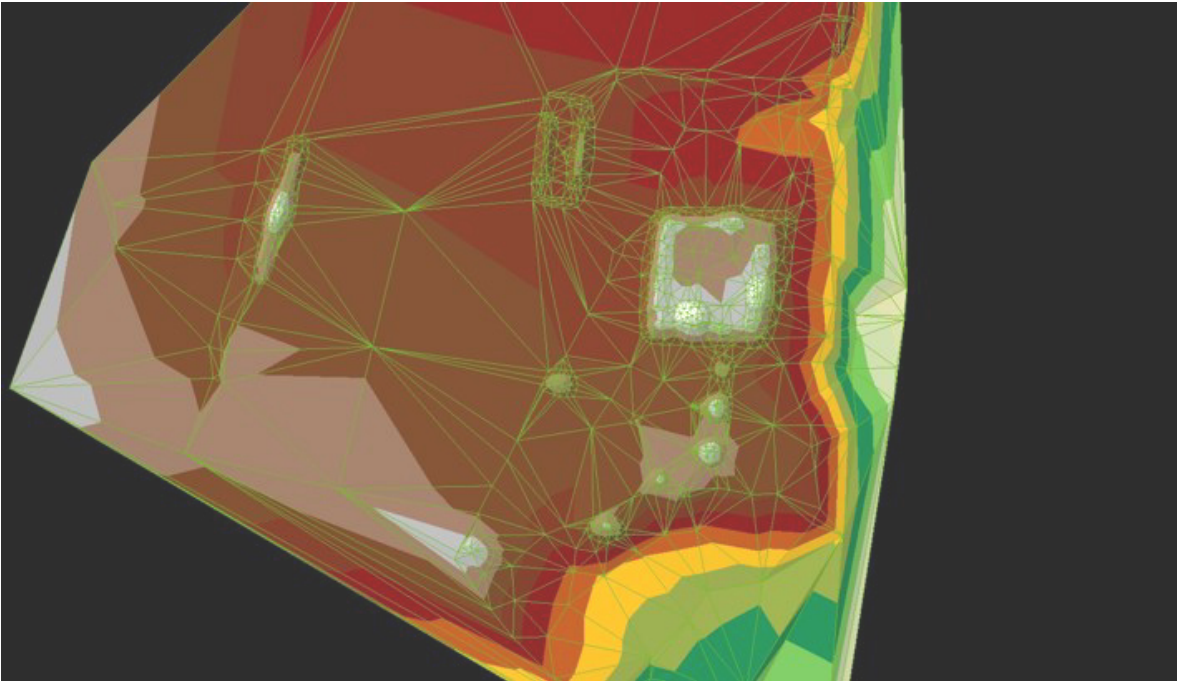


Figure 4. Preliminary map of archaeological site produced by the Atlas project with the collaboration of Dr. Glover and students from Georgia State University and the National University of El Salvador.

## Conclusions

We are profoundly grateful to FAMSI for their generous support and for believing in our project. I think that we have accomplished much of what we set out to do. I strongly believe that our principal contribution to the nation and to the conservation of the cultural patrimony of El Salvador has been the creation of the new digital site registry database. We hope to have this database on line by the end of the year once CONCULTURA has given their permission. We are proud of this achievement and hope that CONCULTURA as well as other scholars and students will benefit from it.

The 57 sites visited have been registered with the new site registry format, which allows for detailed information to be incorporated into the database. Although we are far from finished, the next field season will be limited to visiting 150 sites, which will complete the Atlas for the eastern region of El Salvador.

The mapping and excavation program was also a great success due to the help and collaboration of Dr. Glover and students from Georgia State University as well as from the students of the University of El Salvador. This phase of the project was certainly an important cultural experience for the students as well as a great experience in learning archaeological field methods. The project also benefited from this phase by recovering important information that will be used to further our understanding of the southeastern periphery of Mesoamerica.

Finally, the most important achievement during the 2007 season was having the support of three young anthropologists who have been working with the project; Rosa María Ramirez, Fraces Paola Garnica, and Raul Alberto Valencia. They have acquired significant skills during the process and now they are important contributors to the Atlas. I owe much of the success of the project to their enthusiasm and hard work. Lastly, all project activities carried out and all of the folks who have benefited from the project are the result of the funding that FAMSI has provided. I am personally thankful to FAMSI and all the people who have supported the Atlas project from the beginning. The Archaeological Atlas of Eastern El Salvador is a project made possible by the support of the Council for Scientific Investigation and the Institute of Historical, Anthropological and Archaeological Studies at the National University and FAMSI.

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Professor Amador instructs students from Georgia State University and from the National University of El Salvador on the importance of architectural documentation and condition assessment studies.

Figure 2. Salvadoran students process data recovered from the 2007 field season as part of their training as archaeologists.

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