

DINOSAURS AMONG THE MOCHE

The Moche Indians inhabited the north coast of Peru from roughly 50 A.D. to 900 A.D. The Moche primarily are known for their fabulous pottery. They are famous for their singular mastery in recording the realism of a variety of animals, people, and daily life, all captured in ceramic. Portrait vessels are the greatest achievement of the Moche civilization with the production of true portraits of individuals in vivid detail and in three-dimensional ceramic sculpture.¹

The Moche used two fundamental colors in painting their vessels: either white on red, or red on white. The Moche stirrup-spout pots were modeled to represent warriors, battle patients undergoing brain surgery, physicians performing caesarian sections, midwives aiding births, scenes of sexual life, portrait jars, animals, plants, musical instruments, people with different diseases, and Moche warriors fighting dinosaurs.

I was rummaging around in dusty archaeological papers, when I stumbled on a little-known fact, that in the Chicama Valley and Viru Valley of the northern coast of Peru were found Moche vases with dinosaurian creatures as well as Moche warriors engaged in combat with the dinosaurs. The vases with dinosaurian creatures on them were first labeled as vampire monsters or dragons by Rafael Larco Hoyle.² Rafael Larco Hoyle was the Vice-President of Peru in the 1920's and an ardent scholar, archaeologist, and author. He investigated the Moche and filled in the gaps in archaeological knowledge by establishing the chronological order of the civilizations of northern Peru. His book, Los Mochincas (The Moche), became a turning point in Peruvian archaeology. Rafael amassed a collection of ceramics that exceeds 55,000 pieces. The Natural Museum of Peru in Lima and the Gold Museum of Peru have collections of Moche ceramics that exceed 20,000 pieces each.

The author has extensively studied the 100,000 plus pieces of Moche ceramics in the Lima Museums and has found twenty pieces that unmistakably depict dinosaurs. My research has revealed that the Moche, who were known for being species specific, indeed painted dinosaurs in red with cream-colored white background. The twenty stirrup-spout vases were photographed, and the fine line drawings of the dinosaurs were examined.

In a further pursuit of the possible interaction of dinosaurs with the Moche, I found a mural painting from a Moche tomb showing a dinosaur attacking a Moche warrior. The mural painting of Panamarca is in the Nepeña Valley of northern Peru.

¹ Pillsbury, Joanne. Moche Art and Archaeology of Ancient Peru. (Yale University Press: London, 2001).
Bawden, Garth. The Moche. (Blackwell LTD: Oxford, U.K., 1996).

² Hoyle, Rafael Larco. Los Mochicas. (The Moche Vol. 1). (Lima, Peru, 1938).

Dr. Don Patton and I also investigated a Moche gold funeral mask that has a dinosaur on both sides of the headdress. The gold dinosaur funeral mask is dated from 50 to 800 A.D. and was found in a Moche tomb in the Lambayeque Valley in the 1920's.

The significance of the Moche vases, mural, and mortuary mask with dinosaurs on them directly relates to the Ica Stones. Some of the same kinds of dinosaurs with dermal spines are engaged in battle with Indian warriors. The fact that dinosaurs had dermal spines was not uncovered until the early 1990's:

Recent discovery of fossilized sauropod (diplodocid) skin impressions reveals a significantly different appearance for these dinosaurs. The fossilized skin demonstrates that a median row of [dermal] spines were present . . . Some are quite narrow, and others are broader and more conical.³

It is nothing short of phenomenal that the Moche accurately depicted dinosaurs with dermal spines almost two thousand years before modern paleontologists. In order to draw them correctly, they had to be eyewitnesses of these behemoth beasts.

I cannot forget what Maria Reiche, the queen of the Nazca Pampa, the foremost authority on the Nazca Lines said of the Ica Stones, "No greater marvel occurred in Peru."⁴ Maria Reiche believed the Ica Stones were a great marvel like the Nazca Lines. I would concur with Dame Reiche, and add that now there is another marvel equal to the Nazca Lines and the Ica Stones--the Moche dinosaur vases.

³ Czerkas, Stephen. New Look For Sauropod Dinosaurs. (Geology: 12/1992, V. 20), p. 1068.

⁴ Reiche, Maria. Mystery on the Desert. (Stuttgart: Heinrich Fink (MBA), 1968).