

PTEROSAURS AMONG THE MAYANS

In the tropical forest valley of the lower foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains, in the State of Varsacruz, Mexico, lies the enchanting ruins of El Tajin. El Tajin is by far the most important and impressive ruins north of Teotihuacan. Ninety percent of the vast ruins are still engulfed by the jungle. Stand on top of one of the pyramids, and you see green mounds in every direction concealing even more ruins. The Niches Temple is the most famous pyramid at El Tajin with one recessed niche window for every day of the year. El Tajin is also home to an unprecedented number of ball courts—seventeen have been discovered so far.

Surrounded by so many unexplored ruins, you are tempted to go and discover one of these for yourself, but the jungle is crawling with a rogues gallery of poisonous snakes and insects.

The Mayans made El Tajin a regional center from about A.D. 100 and continued building and occupying the city until around A.D. 1200. Is it possible that the Mayans were familiar with pterosaurs soaring over the jungle?

El Tajin is rarely visited today by foreigners, but I journeyed there along with Dr. Don Patton to unravel a mystery about a pterodactyl carved on one of the ruins. As we came to the entrance to El Tajin, I kept gazing overhead at the tops of the tropical trees halfway expecting to see a lingering pterodactyl perched in a branch or flying furiously, darting across the sky. Armed with a digital camcorder, I was ready to photograph a living pterosaur, but none were readily visible, so I quickly returned to reality and began inquiring if anyone knew where the carved pterosaur was on the ruins. Frustration immediately set in as guides, museum directors, and others gently assured me that no such *bas-relief* carving existed at El Tajin.

We hired an enthusiastic guide who spoke fluent English, and he smiled whenever I mentioned a pterodactyl carving on the ruins. I frantically drew a picture of the pterosaur carving that I had seen in a science journal years ago. Antonio, the guide, was amused and declared that for twenty years he had worked at El Tajin and if a pterodactyl carving existed, he would know, and there was absolutely no pterodactyl. For a fee, Antonio was persuaded to humor us comical Americans in searching the ruins for the pterodactyl.

After a vigorous two hours of climbing over ruins in a steamy hot, humid jungle, and inspecting every panel without a pterodactyl carving being found, Antonio felt vindicated in his prowess as a guide and was ready to call it a nice adventure. I was not willing to concede defeat so easily and adamantly asked if there were any items that are not on public display. Antonio rushed off to speak with the museum director. Soon he was back saying that there was a storage area with a few stone columns, but he himself could not get in to see them. I implored Antonio that this was of great archaeological

importance. Hesitantly, he shrugged his shoulders and gestured, "I'll try." In a few minutes, Antonio returned with a security guard, and we were escorted to a large building. As the door was unlocked and creaked open, the rays of sunlight filtered through the shadows, and we could see the stone columns. The security guard told us that photographs were forbidden, and we could only verify that the carving existed. As we scrambled around the columns looking for the carving, it seemed hopeless, until we came to the last stone column, and there on the far side and at the bottom was the pterodactyl—about eight inches long and three to four inches high, the serpent-bird of the Mayans with a long "s" shaped neck, cranial crest, and beaked jaw.

Dr. Jose Diaz-Bolio, a Mexican archaeologist-journalist made the discovery of the serpent-bird sculpture in the ruins of El Tajin in the late 1960's. The serpent-bird sculpture is a realistic representation of a pterodactyl that lived among the ancient Mayans one thousand to five thousand years ago. Such flying reptiles were supposed to be extinct some sixty-five million years ago. They were not stone dead for the Mayans had to have seen them in the jungles from 100 A.D. to 1200 A.D. to carve them on stone.

Science Digest wrote, "The twain (Mayan and serpent-bird), never should have met." ¹ This discovery is not a mere evolutionary oddity which lived among the Mayans. It is further confirmation of the creationist theory of dinosaur and man cohabitating the earth at the same time.

There is mention of a flying serpent in the scripture: Isaiah 30:46 ". . .and fiery flying serpent." This appears to be a reference to one of the dinosaur-type creatures that flew such as the pteranodon or rhamphorhynchus.

¹"Serpent Bird of the Mayans's". Science Digest 80, (November: 1968), p. 1.

