



ANCIENT SKIES

"Come Search With Us!"

Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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PALENQUE'S PERFORATED SLAB

BY GENE M. PHILLIPS, Founder of the Society

In 1949, the National Institute of Anthropology and History in Mexico City appointed Alberto Ruz Lhuillier to be Director of archaeological exploration of the Mayan ruins at Palenque, in the Mexican State of Chiapas. Although Palenque had been known to the Western world since about 1750 and had been sporadically visited, described and photographed by diverse explorers, it was not until 1925 that the first archaeological work was done at the site, when Franz Blom mapped most of the area. (See Ancient Skies 8:1)

Arriving at Palenque in March, 1949, Alberto Ruz quickly determined to begin his efforts with the Temple of the Inscriptions, so-named because of the large hieroglyph-covered stone slabs set into the walls inside the building at the top of a large mound in the central area of the ruins. The first task was to clear the mound of trees, underbrush and weeds. Then, beginning at the base of the mound, Ruz made probes into the earth, discovering stone steps, some very well preserved and others in total disarray. It took some time to clear a stairway 80 feet up the front side of the mound to the floor of the small building situated at the top. (Eventually the entire mound was cleared over a number of years and the stepped pyramidal structure was restored.)

Ruz then directed his efforts to removing all the stone rubble and trash which had accumulated inside the building. This effort revealed a floor consisting of large flagstones, fitted together and perfectly dressed to produce a smooth, even surface.

The flagstone on the far left of the floor attracted Ruz's attention. The stone appeared to be inscribed with perfect circles, each about 5 inches in diameter and placed not haphazardly, but in a deliberate pattern. Ruz recalled that Franz Blom had mentioned seeing these circles in his book Tribes and Temples, but apparently Blom did not investigate them further.

Intrigued by the circles, Alberto Ruz began a painstaking examination of the stone slab. He counted a total of 12 such identical circles, arranged in pairs, with three pairs at each of the long ends of the slab. He then noticed that inside each circle were two small holes, about two inches apart. The holes had been long since filled in with dirt, but Ruz was able to remove the dirt and insert his fingers into the holes. He discovered that the holes were joined inside the stone by a minute passageway or loop, through which a cord could be passed. Using his fingers in the two holes and exerting an upward pressure, Ruz was surprised to find that the "circle" gave way. He had pulled out a stone plug! It did not take long until all twelve plugs had been removed from their "nesting" places in the slab. (See Fig.A)

Ruz was astounded at the shape of the cavities into which the plugs fitted. Each cavity was about 5 inches across at the top, and then tapered downward in concave fashion towards the center to a hole about 3 inches in diameter, which penetrated entirely through the stone slab. Conversely, the stone plug had a flat surfaced head (to fit flush with the floor), which tapered downwards in convex fashion to a straight shank about 4 inches long. When assembled, the convex portion of the plug fit snugly into the concave portion of the cavity, with the shank of the plug extending through the hole in the slab. An amazing example of sophisticated mechanical engineering - in stone! (See Fig. B)

Utilizing the newly-discovered holes, Ruz and his helpers were able to lift and slide the one ton slab from its original position, which spanned two interior walls of the stone structure. Ruz was disappointed to see only stone rubble underneath the slab, but he soon concluded that underneath the carefully-camouflaged, perforated slab, there must be hidden something of great importance. Soon after his men began to remove the stone rubble, the first steps of a stone stairway appeared, leading down into the depths of the pyramidal structure. It took three more seasons of digging, until finally in 1952, the entire stairway had been cleared and the prize was attained, some 80 feet below the floor where the perforated slab was found, and 10 more feet below the level of the ground. After the first course of the stairway was uncovered for a distance of some 45 feet, the passage took a 90° right turn onto a level landing which extended for about 12 feet. After another 90° right turn, the stairway continued downward for 25 feet, before leveling out in a passageway. A triangle-shaped stone door was discovered set into the left wall at the far end of the passageway.

Prying open the triangular door, Ruz shone his flashlight into a large, corbelled room, which contained a sarcophagus covered with a huge stone slab. The 5 ton stone cover measured 13 x 7 feet and was carved on the top surface in deep relief, which has been variously interpreted as representing a Mayan on a sacrificial altar about to have his heart removed; as King Pacal in the jaws of a mythological monster falling between heaven and hell; and what we prefer to describe as an astronaut depicted in a space capsule, seated on a padded cushion and working controls with his hands and feet. (See Ancient Skies 6:3). But the tomb and its contents are another story.

It is tempting to speculate why the builders of Palenque would expend so much effort to create the perforated slab. It seems obvious that the purpose of the holes in the slab was to enable the heavy stone to be removed from the opening to the stairway, but why such intricate designs - why the plugs?

We must first assume that the tomb contained a

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very important personage, someone revered, or even worshipped. Perhaps the entire structure was a holy place, or perhaps a national monument, where the initiated, or maybe even the general public, were permitted to climb the outside steps to the top and then descend the steep slippery stairway to the triangular door and there to view the enormous sarcophagus cover with its elaborately carved relief, which we know was originally painted red. Inside the tomb room there were stucco heads of personages, as well as stucco reliefs on the walls.

We do know that the 5 ton sarcophagus cover could not have been taken down to the tomb through the interior stairway. The slab is simply too large. Thus, the tomb, which is located underneath the exterior steps at the front of the structure below ground level, had to have been sealed from the outside. The tomb room had been completed, except for the north face, and after the body had been placed in the sarcophagus the lid was sealed and then the huge sarcophagus cover was placed flat on top of the stone sarcophagus. (But here one must smile, because the cover was too large for the intended space and the two corners of one end of the slab had to be chopped off in order to close the room!) The exterior steps at the bottom of the pyramidal structure were then put in place, so that from the outside, the tomb was completely hidden, leaving the only access from the top of the Temple building down the steep interior stairway to the triangular door.

Then one day news of an impending disaster came to Palenque. Perhaps Palenque was an outpost of the Atlantean Empire and portents of the coming destruction were received. Or, perhaps the sages of Palenque knew that an astronomical catastrophe was about to occur, such as a "too-close" Mars fly-by, which would result in great tidal waves flooding most of the world. In any event, whatever was coming was not expected to happen overnight, because the people had time to prepare for the disaster. The filling in of the interior stairway had to have taken a lot of time, because it was packed tightly from bottom to top. In fact, the passageway to the triangular door was packed solid, almost like concrete!

Thus the rulers of Palenque wanted to protect their national "treasure" from the coming disaster and when the stairway was completely filled the perforated slab was fashioned and placed over the opening to mark its location. The elaborate design of the cavities and the corresponding plugs was intended to be known only by the priests or scientists who directed the operation. The plugs were the key to opening the entranceway, because only when they were removed, would the cavities be seen and could be used to lift the slab. One can imagine that instructions for finding and opening the slab and removing it were carved in stone for future generations, perhaps on the walls of the Temple of the Inscriptions itself.

But why use the plugs with the extended shank to fit into the hole in the slab? It would have been much easier to fashion a thin stone dish with a flat top which could rest in the concave portion of the cavity. But the engineers knew that such a simple covering would be too easy to remove, even by accident, thus revealing the secret to unauthorized persons. Therefore, the plug with the shank was devised to make certain that the plug could not be easily removed - it would have to be lifted straight up.

And so it was for a thousand years or more, and after the great flood subsided the jungle slowly encroached over Palenque and protected its marvelous structures from the elements and from mankind, until in the 18th Century Western civilization, having emerged from the Dark Ages, began to explore the far reaches of Earth and stumbled upon the rem-

nants of a sophisticated civilization at the edge of the rain forest in Southeastern Mexico.

The perforated slab at Palenque is a unique example of a remnant of a highly-developed, technological civilization which flourished in the remote past and is now forgotten to history and whose scientific accomplishments are erroneously attributed to an agrarian society which had developed nothing but crude hand tools, and who had not even discovered the use of the wheel!

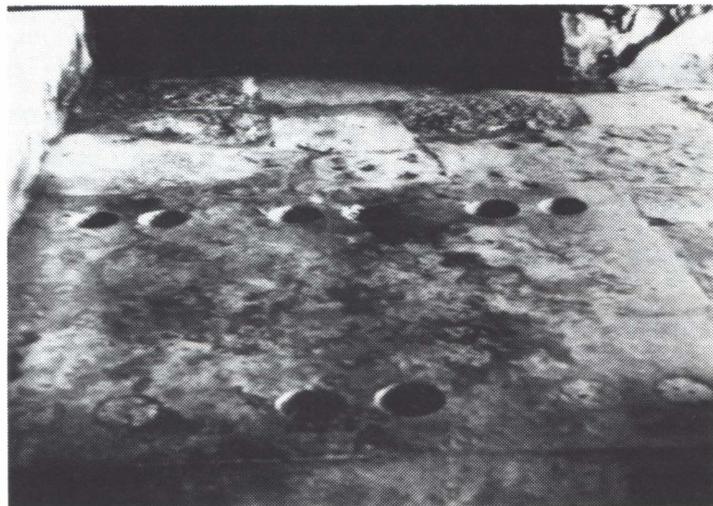


FIG. A. Photo of Perforated Slab at the Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico. The slab is about 6 1/2 feet long, about 5 1/2 feet wide and about 6 1/3 inches thick. The stone plugs have been reinserted into the two pairs of the cavities at bottom left and bottom right.

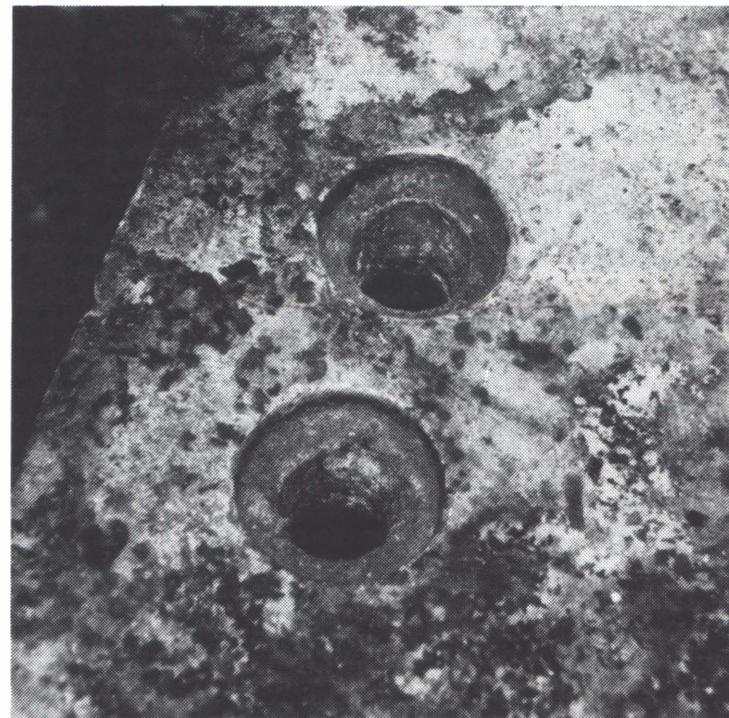


FIG. B. Photo of close up of one pair of cavities, showing the concave perimeter at the top of the cavity and the hole completely through the slab, into which the shank of the stone plug fits. The cavities are about 5 inches from the edge of the slab. (Both photos are by the author)

PRE-COLUMBIAN LANDING CRAFT?

BY DR. STUART W. GREENWOOD*

An outline drawing has appeared on the top left-hand corner of Ancient Skies from the very first issue (1). This drawing, by Society member Richard T. Crowe, is based on a gold artifact from a grave in Colombia, South America, dated approximately 1,000 years old. It is drawn a little larger than full size and is suggestive of a modern high speed aircraft. It makes a fitting logo for our publication in that it presents us with a continuing challenge - what does it represent? The material offered here is of necessity inconclusive in that we have no way of reconstructing the thoughts of the craftsman who made the artifact all that time ago.



FIG. 1. Replicas of Colombian gold artifacts. Left in Gold Museum, Bogota. Right in Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. Photo: Univ. of Md. Photographic Services

A replica of the artifact is shown at the left in Fig. 1, the original being in the collection of the Gold Museum at the Bank of the Republic, Bogota, Colombia. The replica on the right in Fig. 1, also from Colombia, is of an artifact in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. There are resemblances but also dissimilarities between the artifacts. Do they represent different things, or different artists' interpretations of the same thing? This illustration accompanied a somewhat imaginative scenario I offered a few years ago in Ancient Skies 11:4, concerning the Landing Site and Vehicle for a Venus-Earth Expedition.

The Bogota artifact was first widely publicized by Ivan T. Sanderson (2), a trained biologist and experienced zoologist, who considered that the object might represent a high speed aircraft rather than a living creature. He sought the opinion of a number of aircraft engineers who gave qualified support to the idea. Sanderson developed his material further in a later book (3), together with references to other artifacts in this category, and I recommend both books as a source of a wide range of interpretations and ideas, and "must" reading for anyone undertaking to pursue this matter. For convenience I will here attempt a brief introductory outline of the material given by Sanderson.

There is nothing in the fish or insect world like it. These objects do not resemble any kind of animal. In support of the aircraft interpretation one notes the delta wing with slightly drooping tips and the vertical fin at the rear. Against the aircraft interpretation are the apparent lack of a propulsion system, the separation of the tail sur-

faces from the delta wing, and the positioning of the tail surfaces close to and in line with the wing. There is a pronounced gap just behind the "head" which could have been covered by a transparent canopy in the real thing, a protuberance just beneath the head which could have been a water or air scoop, and a curious bump on top just in front of the fin. One engineer noted that the shape of the body does not conform to the "coke bottle" distribution of cross-section necessary in high speed aircraft to avoid high air drag in flight.

On re-reading the various analyses of Sanderson and his associates I find certain observations particularly perceptive. If not an aircraft, was it a glider? Arthur Young asks whether, with wing surfaces so far back, it was intended for "dart-like" descent through the atmosphere. Could it have been a vehicle that entered and left the Earth's atmosphere in support of a larger space vehicle which remained in orbit? We have here essentially a consideration of the space shuttle concept as opposed to an aircraft concept. At the time Sanderson's books were published the United States shuttle concept was still only in the discussion stage - the program came to fruition a few years later.

So the world was presented in the early 1970s with a fascinating mystery, coinciding happily with my own developing interest in such matters. Early in 1974 I presented a talk to the International Foretean Organization (INFO) in which I reviewed the Colombian artifacts and offered (hopefully) some additional insights. The results were published subsequently in the INFO Journal (4) and I hereby restate some of that material.

My first concern was to trace further examples of the artifacts in the hope that they might provide new information. One book that turned out to be helpful was that by Allen Wardwell (5), including dating of the artifacts at about 400 to 1100 AD. When I started my search I understood there were perhaps 4 or 5 such pieces. My friends in INFO told me about the specimen in the Smithsonian Institution. (See Fig. 1) I was able not only to view this, but also to purchase replicas in the museum gift shop, which regretfully are no longer available from that source. [See Editor's Note at end of this article].

At the conclusion of these searches I had identified 18 separate specimens in museums and private collections. This total has been quoted elsewhere as though it is a real limit, but it represents only those I was able to track down. I would greatly appreciate learning of any new sources of information on these artifacts.

As I was pursuing my search in early 1974 I saw an Alan Landsburg production on television entitled "In Search of Ancient Mysteries." The program included a tantalizing brief showing of the five objects shown in Fig. 2. I had already seen a picture of the uppermost specimen in a somewhat pithy article on ancient astronauts in Esquire Magazine (6), but the rest were new to me. It was evident that there was more variety to the specimens than I had at first supposed, though the impression remained that they represented some kind of flying machine.

I learned of the artifact shown in Fig. 3 from a book by Andre Emmerich (7). This was identified as a "winged crocodile" and typifies the problem faced by anthropologists and others in interpreting what they are faced with. I was privileged to see and handle this specimen in the Museum of Primitive Art in New York City. It is a superb piece of gold craftsmanship and Fig. 3 does not do it justice. I was later able to view several specimens in the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago while attending one of the Society's World Conferences.

One of the most informative reference works I examined dealt with the Bogota collection (8). A specimen of particular interest shown in this ref-

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erence is reproduced here as Fig. 4. The object's center section has an open top, suggestive of a supplies compartment in the presumed original, and is reminiscent of the corresponding section of today's space shuttles.

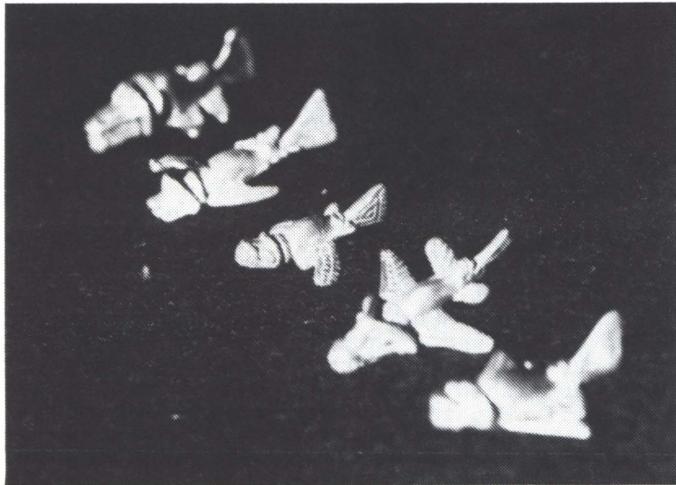


FIG. 2. Artifacts in the Bank of the Republic, Bogota. From the Alan Landsburg Production film "In Search of Ancient Mysteries."

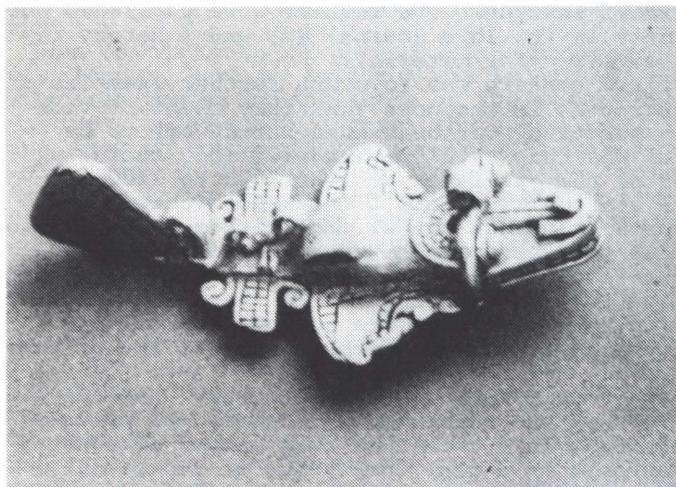


FIG. 3. Artifact described as a "Winged Crocodile" in the collection of the Museum of Primitive Art, New York City. From Ref. 8.

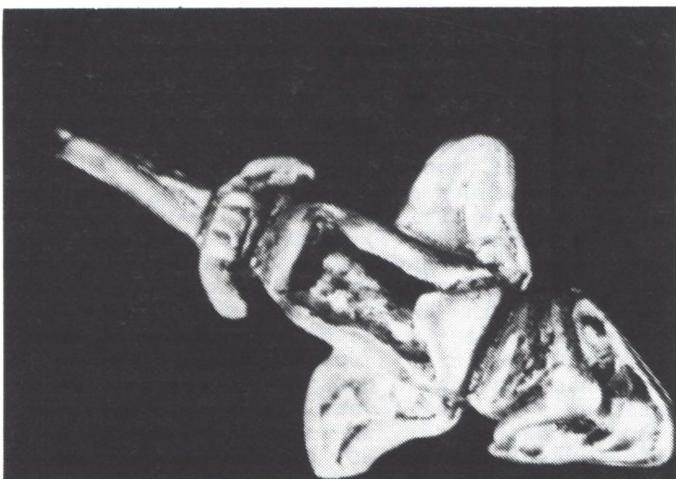


FIG. 4. Artifact in the Bank of the Republic, Bogota. From Ref. 9.

It seemed to me at that time that it would be useful to compare the features of the artifacts with those that would be associated respectively with high speed aircraft, a space shuttle, and a one-way supply vehicle from orbit. At that time only high speed aircraft vehicles existed, but space shuttle designs were being investigated, and a one-way supply vehicle from orbit could be envisioned as something like a shuttle, but without a major propulsion system. The reader can perform her or his own assessment of the relative merits of these possibilities, but it is no secret that I favored (and still favor) the one-way supply vehicle as the solution. In support of this conclusion I offer in particular the blunt-nose which is evident on the artifacts. This characteristic is required on a spacecraft entering Earth's atmosphere to reduce the heat transfer into the vehicle itself. The blunt-nose design is more effective than a pointed nose to protect the vehicle from heat.

These fabulous gold artifacts may have signified something else altogether, but if my conclusion should turn out to be correct, the implications would seem to be quite awesome. Did supply vehicles from space land in the Northern part of South America in pre-Columbian times? When did they come? Who and what did they bring? What happened following the landing?

References:

- (1) "Masthead Logo", Ancient Skies 1:1, page 1.
- (2) Invisible Residents, Avon Books, 1973.
- (3) Investigating the Unexplained, Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- (4) "Golden Models of Ancient Spacecraft?", INFO Journal 5:5, pp2-6.
- (5) The Gold of Ancient America, Greenwich, Conn., 1968.
- (6) Alicia Ostriker, "What if We're Still Scared, Bored and Broke?", Esquire Magazine, Dec.1973.
- (7) Sweat of the Sun and Tears of the Moon, University of Washington Press, 1965.
- (8) Jose Perez de Barradas, Orfbreria Prehispanica de Colombia, Part 4, Collection of the Museo Del Oro, Madrid, 1954.

[Ed.Note. The Ancient Astronaut Society offers to Members a plastic, gold-colored replica of the gold artifact found in Colombia, South America which is in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and shown in Fig. 1 of the foregoing article. The plastic replica is available for a contribution to the Society of US\$10. The offer is valid only so long as the supply lasts.]

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS:

MUFON 1991 INTERNATIONAL UFO SYMPOSIUM, CHICAGO, July 5,6 & 7, 1991 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Rosemont. Info: Paul Fisher, 3952 N. Sheridan Rd., Chicago, IL 60613
ANCIENT ASTRONAUT SOCIETY WORLD CONFERENCE, BERLIN, August 23 & 24, 1991 at the Hotel Berlin, Germany.
THE UFO MYSTERY, September 7 & 8, 1991 at the Sebel Townhouse Hotel, Elizabeth Bay, Sydney, Australia. Info: P.O.Box 240, Manly, NSW, 2095 Australia.
JOHN WHITE'S THE UFO EXPERIENCE, October 12 & 13, 1991 at the Holiday Inn, North Haven, Connecticut. Info: Omega Comm., P.O.Box 2051, Cheshire, CT 06410.
ANCIENT ASTRONAUT SOCIETY 20TH ANNIVERSARY WORLD CONFERENCE, August 2,3 & 4, 1993 at the Imperial Palace Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada.

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