

LATEST CRETACEOUS REPTILES FROM THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

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The Arabian Peninsula was contiguous with Africa during the Cretaceous, before the Arabian Peninsula collided with southern Eurasia and before the Red Sea and Jordan River Valley opened. The paleobiogeographic relationships between Africa and neighboring landmasses during the Cretaceous remain a major question, in part because of the uneven distribution of fossiliferous sediments on southern landmasses. Southern South America is the only region of Gondwana with good representation of vertebrates from Early and Late Cretaceous sediments. Vertebrates of India, Antarctica, and Madagascar are only known from latest Cretaceous sediments, whereas those of Africa and Australia are only adequately known from Cenomanian and younger horizons.

Recent field exploration into Upper Cretaceous sediments in southern and western Jordan have produced new remains that improve the African vertebrate record. Santonian vertebrates include a new bothremyd turtle sharing closest affinity to the Maastrichtian *Zolhahah* (Egypt) and more distant kinship to the Santonian *Bothremys* (U.S.A.). Maastrichtian vertebrates include partially articulated remains of the giant pterosaur *Arambourgiana*, which are still being developed, and the first definitive dinosaur from Jordan. A nearly complete dorsal vertebra pertains to the sauropod clade Titanosauria. It is characterized by extreme camellate pneumaticity, a posteriorly inclined neural spine, absence of hyposphene-hypantrum articulations, and features indicating close affinity to the Early Cretaceous *Malawisaurus*. These preliminary discoveries suggest that the Cretaceous of Jordan contains paleobiogeographically diagnostic vertebrate fossils that provide insights into the final chapter of African Cretaceous vertebrate history.