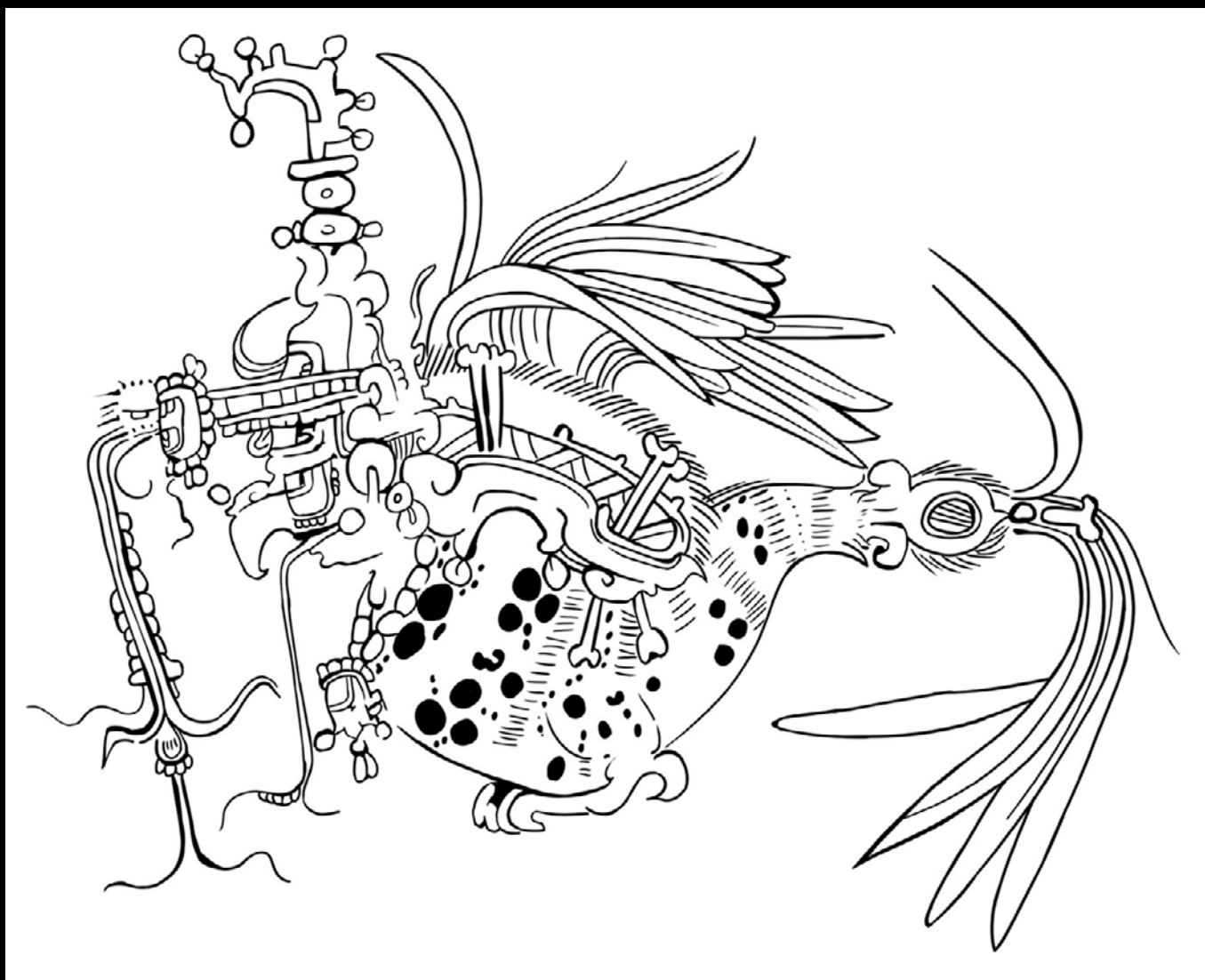


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# The Principal Bird Deity with God D Headdress



FLAAR Reports  
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# Introduction

The Principal Bird Deity has been studied by dozens of iconographers. Bardawil gave the bird this name. I discuss this sacred bird in my 1980's PhD dissertation and in 1996 *Hunting the Principal Bird Deity*. I also show a Principal Bird Deity in my recent publication on the "Blom Plate." So the brief report today is just to show a photo and a drawing not in many earlier publications.

I first recognized that the Principal Bird Deity often had the same headdress as God D in my 1980's PhD dissertation, and more in my 1996 publication. Many discussions of God D by other iconographers also mention the God D headdress on this sacred bird.

God L often wears a cape with rows of triangles of an armadillo. There is a Chama vase that has an armadillo with God L's headdress. God L occasionally wears a cape of jaguar hide and occasionally sits on a throne with a complete jaguar body covering the surface of the throne (but there are no jaguars with God L headdresses). God L frequently has a jaguar-spotted motif on the upper part of his ear area.

God N is often like a hermit crab, with part of his body inside a conch shell, snail shell or turtle shell.

Other old men deities are "living" inside a snake and appear in the open fanged jaws of a snake on Codex Style vases (I show these Kerr rollouts in the God N report and in the God L report).

God D's headdress is shared with the Principal Bird deity (not always, but often). Bardawil mentions this in passing for an example of the bird "...on page eight of the Paris Codex with the depiction of a creature that has the body of a bird and the head of Itzamna." Bardawil also mentions Itzamna again on his page 208 and he concludes on the next page "It was postulated that the Principal Bird Deity may possibly be the avian manifestation of Itzamna."

Bardawil shows the bird atop a "cross" on Palenque Temple of the Cross, Palenque Temple of the Foliated Cross, and Palenque sarcophagus lid in the Temple of the Inscriptions. In all these scenes the domed head and spangled upside-down J remind me of God D's head (but that aspect is not mentioned by Bardawil specifically for the Palenque examples). The God D features are not often shown in frontal portraits of the Principal Bird Deity.

I use the original term, God D, but other iconographers use the name Itzamna.

## **BARDAWIL, Lawrence W.**

- 1976 The Principal Bird Deity in Maya Art - An Iconographic Study of Form and Meaning. 1976 In *The Art, Iconography and Dynastic History of Palenque, Part III: Proceedings of the Segunda Mesa Redonda de Palenque, 1974*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson, pp. 195-209. Robert Louis Stevenson School, Pebble Beach, CA.



The Principal Bird Deity is based on a snake-eating hawk. This bird is also called a laughing falcon. The bird on the plate clearly shows the snake. The bird's head has several features of a human or deity head: beard under the chin and domed top of the head. A domed head is a feature of God D. The upside-down J rising from the top center of the head is also diagnostic of God D. The headdress here is a variant.

The bird's wing has an upside-down reptilian face. You see various reptile faces on wings of most birds in Classic Maya art.

The hole in the center of the plate is called a kill hole. Perhaps so the plate does not hold liquids when it is buried in a tomb with food in the plate? Photograph by Nicholas Hellmuth.



This is the FLAAR illustration of the entire plate by Luis Molina. The bird in the middle is also on the front cover of this report. This bird's headdress is much much closer to a God D than the bird on the other plate.

This bird has a spangled upside-down J symbol arising from the high head of the bird. This is the trademark symbol of God D. We have two forthcoming reports on God D that show this headdress.

The other headdress feature that is totally "God D-like" is the horizontal headband ending in a round motif which then has downward hanging pendant. The four other birds on this plate have this forehead design, but there is not space for them to have the spangled upside-down J symbol.