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Birds



on Late Classic Maya Plates

FLAAR Reports

FLAAR (USA) and FLAAR Mesoamerica (Guatemala)

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Waterbird; Sky Band on right half of surrounding circular band. Black objects below the bird are never before seen elsewhere and thus unknown. Codex Style plate.



Water bird getting ready to swallow a fish. The body of the bird is a deity face (eroded by the kill hole in the middle of the plate). A Sky Band fills the right half of the band around the bird.



Waterbird with fish in its beak. Drawing by Laura Gornto, FLAAR Photo Archive.



Waterbird neck and head rising above the head of a seated person.
The waterbird has grabbed a snail or comparable creature



Waterbird will now attempt to eat this giant fish.



Waterbird with the kind of fish that it eats.



Hunter has captured two waterbirds. Other game animals encircle them.
Many Maya hunters wear the kind of sombrero has he is wearing.



Drawing by Laura Gornto, FLAAR Photo Archive.



Waterbird in pieces.



Bird with unexpected top of body and "feathers" rising up from this area.



Do waterbirds eat baby turtles? Drawing by Barbara Van Heusen, FLAAR Photo Archive.



Baby turtles and birds that are probably waterbirds. The birds do not have anatomical bodies.



This decorated bird does not have the long beak of a traditional waterbird.
The accessories on the head and neck are not common.



The raised area in the center of the beak is a male while pelican in mating season. The color of these birds on the plate is to match the design. The wide area at the end of the beak is common in Maya art but so far I have not found any bird that has that feature in profile on their beak. The diagonal crack is over 1,200 years old. You can see the three sets of holes drilled on each side of the crack. In the 9th century or earlier, the crack was stitched in these three locations to preserve this plate for continued use.



Male white pelican.



Male white pelican because of the small raised area in the middle of its beak.
Raised area at end of beak is not natural.



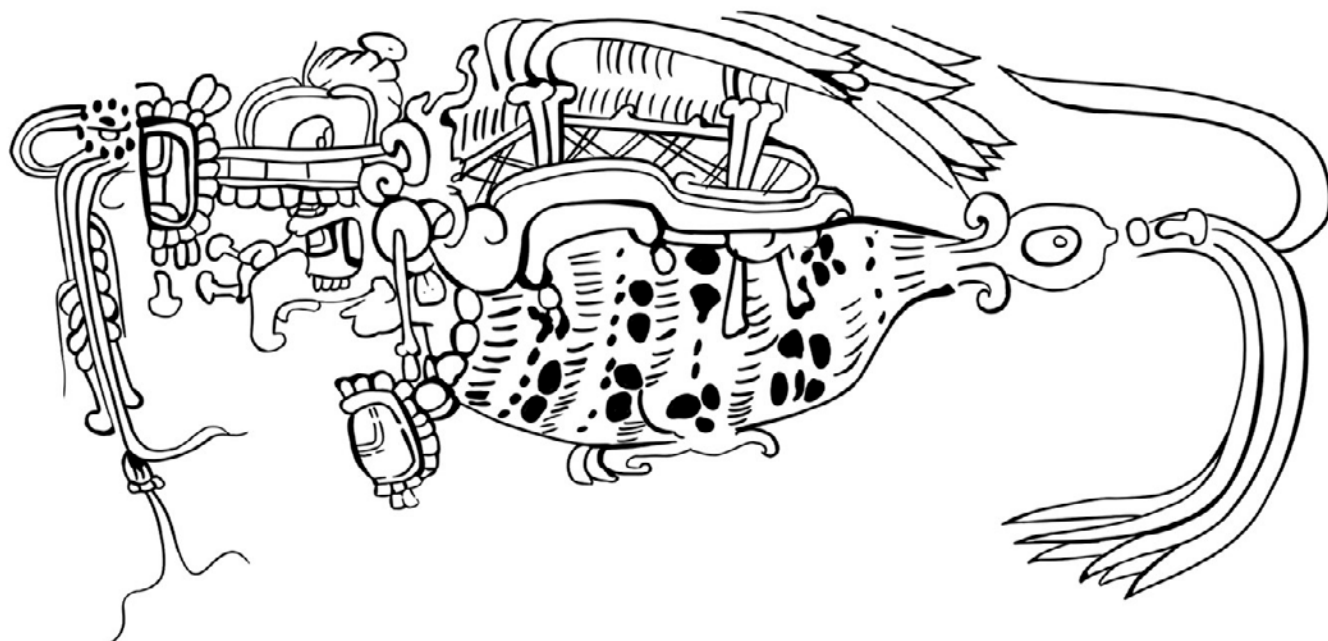
The raised end of the long beak of a waterbird is very common in Maya art. Skeletal bones for the neck I know only on this plate, the Blom Plate (now in a museum in Yucatan after I spent five years to find it in Oaxaca and had it donated to INAH). This plate was originally found when a Maya site was bulldozed flat to make the airport at Chetumal. Frans Blom published the plate over half a century ago and I wanted photos of the plate for my PhD dissertation, since the bird in the middle is the Principal Bird Deity (a Laughing Falcon).



The complete Blom Plate on the day I finally tracked it down in the house of the American engineer who worked on the construction of the Chetumal airport. The Hero Twins use their blowguns to shoot. The hieroglyphs are a PSS, Primary Standard Sequence. Authored by Hellmuth, FLAAR Reports has published the entire history of this plate.



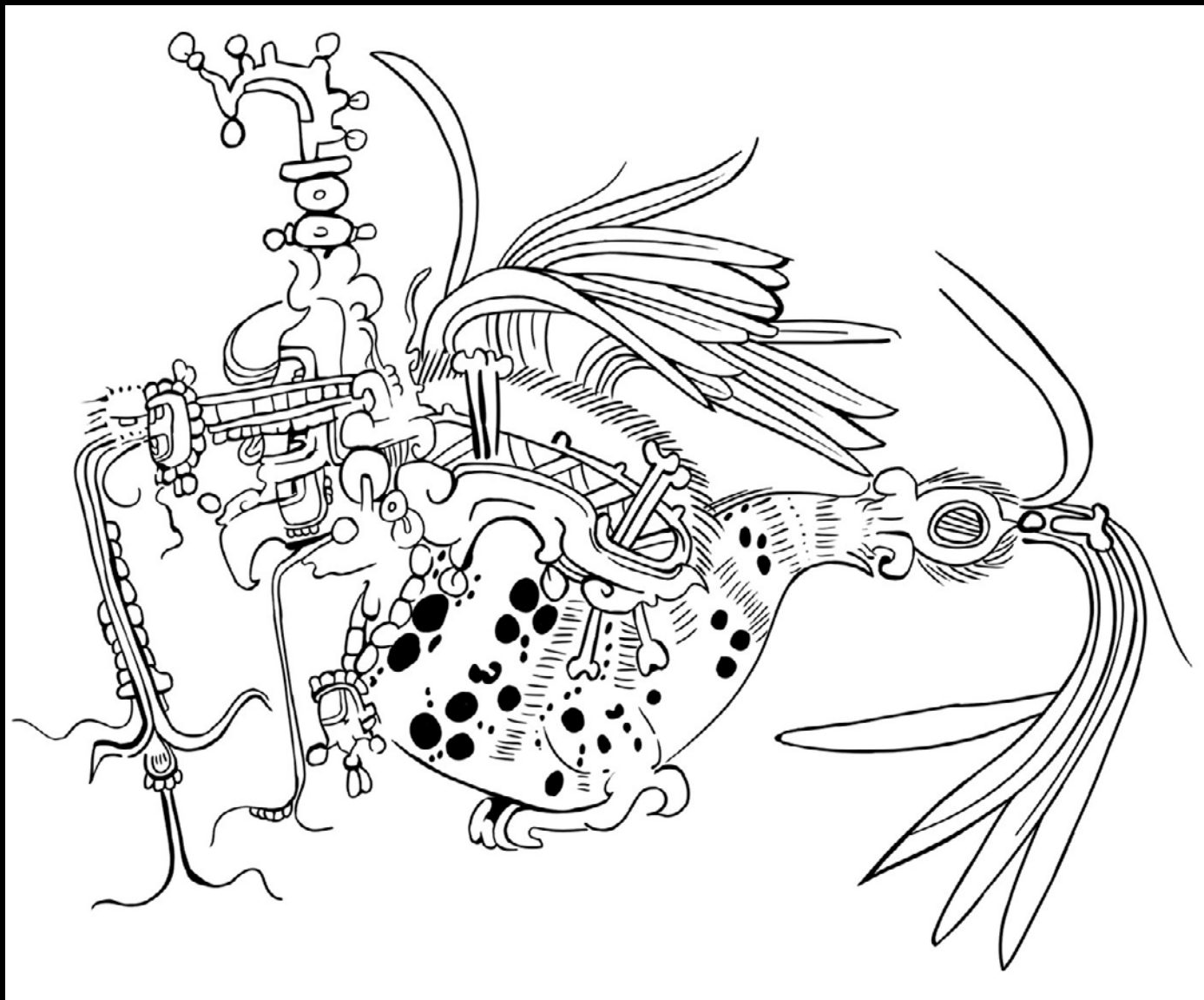
Potential Principal Bird Deity, though it is unexpected that five would be shown together.
Codex Style plate. Drawing by Luis Molina, FLAAR Photo Archive.



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Codex Style plate. Drawing by Luis Molina, FLAAR Photo Archive.



Bird in the center of the Codex Style plate. Drawing by Luis Molina, FLAAR Photo Archive.



This is God L with two associated birds. Neither of these God L birds is the same as the Muan birds of plates of the Yucatan Peninsula. Copy-and-paste web sites say that the bird atop the headdress of God L is a Muan bird. On the two God L scenes that I saw today, neither was a Muan bird, though there are so many dozens of other God L's that perhaps some are Muan birds.



Bird with a long beak but not as long as most "waterbirds".
The ring of motifs around this plate are the end of turkey feathers, very common on plates at Tikal.



During my years of research for my PhD dissertation I determined that the Principal Bird Deity was usually a snake-eating hawk. Here is a raptor with a snake in its mouth. Kill hole in the middle of the plate.



Bird with different size and shape of head.



The beak is size and shape of Maya hummingbirds but the head is not.

Plates with “Muan Birds”

The dozen plates that follow are all in the same regional style. None are from Peten. Copy-and-paste web sites on the Internet say they are from Campeche, but INAH says one in the Museo del Pueblo Maya Dzibilchaltun comes from Dzibilchaltun.

https://lugares.inah.gob.mx/es/museos-inah/museo/museo-piezas/15593-15593-10-290791-plato-tripode.html?lugar_id=457&lugar_id=457

The Museo Amparo says their plate comes from possibly the island of Jaina (which I doubt) or the Puerto of Xambo in the north of Yucatan. Dzibilchaltun is in Yucatan. The plate in the Brooklyn Museum offers no provenance. Not all the plates of this style show the identical bird species, and Muan or Moan is a generic name.



All these birds share the same thick black areas on their feathers.
And most of the feathers are in parallel rows. Most of these are Muan birds.



Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico



Generic Muan bird.



Generic Muan bird.



Generic Muan bird.



Generic Muan bird.



Beak is not naturalistic (curves too far downward).



Potential variant of Muan bird.



Generic Muan bird.



Potential variant of Muan bird.



Completely different bird but same style plate as Muan bird plates.