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# Polychrome Painted Basal Flange Bowls



FLAAR Reports  
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# Introduction

Basal flange bowls can either be polychrome painted, or black with no paint at all. We are producing two separate publications because to have both kinds in the same PDF would make that too heavy to be sent as an attachment for email.

The photographs in these reports were taken during the 1970's, 1980's, and the 1990's in museums and private collections around the world. I photographed in Australia, Japan, England, across Europe, across USA, Canada, Guatemala and Mexico. The earthquake in Guatemala in the 1970's damaged the FLAAR office and we put all our documents in storage while seeking a new office. When we went to retrieve the documents we found that mice and rats had used the paper to chew up and make their nests, so we lost all documentation of those years. Other records got lost in storage as we moved from Guatemala to Florida to be a professor there, first at Rollins College then moving to Brevard Community College. Then we moved to Ohio to be a professor plus the previous eight years in Graz, Austria while researching for my PhD dissertation there. Plus I had lived three years in Switzerland with my Swiss girlfriend and much later eight years in Germany with my German girlfriend. So notes on where a basal flange bowl was photographed are still stuck in storage somewhere.

The goal of the present publication is to share all these photographs so professors can have them for their classes. The horizontal format PDFs can be used like a PowerPoint presentation. Another goal is to make these photographs available for students to do Master thesis or PhD dissertation on an aspect of Maya ceramics that has not often been studied: basal flange bowls. A parallel goal is to show scenes that are not traditional Early Classic Maya personages or motifs. All the blackware basal flange bowls are traditional scenes that are easy to interpret. But there are seven or more polychrome basal flange bowls that do not have traditional scenes at all. Most studies of Maya iconography are based on stone stelae, lintels, murals, vases, bowls and occasionally plates. Early Classic cache vessels and basal flange bowls are rarely included in books, articles, theses or dissertations on iconography. It would be helpful if an archaeologist or student compiled a corpus of all basal flange bowls excavated by archaeologists with context and to be put together in a corpus (for example, from El Peru-Waka', El Zotz (Burial 9) and elsewhere in Peten).

# Basal Flange Bowls that feature traditional Motifs



Deer in the main panel. Recurved long-snouted reptile face with shark's tooth above.



Deer in the main panel. Recurved long-snouted reptile face with shark's tooth above.



Crossed bands in main panel (possibly a celestial motif). This motif is found on top of lid handles of at least two of the basal flange bowls shown in the present report. Recurved long-snouted reptile face with shark's tooth above.



Recurved long-snouted reptile face with shark's tooth with bands of geometric motifs above and below.



Recurved long-snouted reptile face with shark's tooth with bands of geometric motifs above and below.





Third of four recurved long-snouted reptile face with shark's tooth with bands of geometric motifs above and below.



Undulating band is the Surface of the Underwaterworld. Incurved long-snouted reptile face at the right. So lots of reptile faces have a curl going upwards (previous bowl lid); and lots of reptile faces have their snouts curled to the bottom.



Undulating band is the Surface of the Underwaterworld.  
Incurved long-snouted reptile face at the left. Upward long-snouted reptile face is at the right.



Undulating band is the Surface of the Underwaterworld. Upward long-snouted reptile face is at the right.



Undulating band is the Surface of the Underwaterworld. Upward long-snouted reptile face is at the left.



Undulating band is the Surface of the Underwaterworld. Incurved long-snouted reptile face at the right.



Incurved long-snouted reptile face at the left.  
Undulating band is the Surface of the Underwaterworld. Waterbird whose wing is traditionally a long-snouted reptile face



Waterbird, undulating Surface of the Underwaterworld, incurved long-snouted reptile face at the right.



Incurved long-snouted reptile face.



Undulating Surface of the Underwaterworld; upward curved long-snouted reptile face at the right.



Undulating Surface of the Underwaterworld with incurved long-snouted reptile face at the middle.





Incurved long-snouted reptile face has same “comb” motifs at both sides, as on the previous basal flange bowl. These two bowls were probably painted by the same individual or at least the same atelier. Lid has bird head as handle; bird’s wings are a long-snouted reptile head with feathers.



Bird's wings are a long-snouted reptile head with feathers.



A different bird with different wing motifs: a rare example of no reptile face on the wing.



Incurved long-snouted reptile face on the side of the bowl. Lid handle is a person's head with "moustache".



Lid also has an inward long-snouted recurved reptile face.



Waterbird swallowing a fish. Incurved long-snouted reptile face below the tail of the fish.  
Upward curled long-snouted reptile face on the side of the bowl at the left.



Waterbird swallowing a fish as common lid handle.



Closeup of the front of the lid handle.





Three recurved long-snouted reptile faces.



Another lid handle of a long snouted waterbird getting ready to swallow a fish. The bird's wings are the typical long-snouted reptile heads. In fact the wing at the right has a second long-snouted reptile face below the main reptile face. No feathers are visible because everyone knows these are bird wings.



On the inside of a basal flange bowl a long-beaked waterbird has caught different water creature (not a fish). The bird's wing has nose-beads but no overt reptile face. The head and headdress are enlarged compared to the rest of the body. His body has a central band that we will see many examples of towards the end of this report.



Bird's head is lid handle.



Long-snouted reptile head in upper ring of designs on the lid.



Long-snouted reptile head in upper ring of designs on the lid. Stylized profile face looking down on the side of this basal flange bowl.



Lots of stylized motifs in each area of the lid and side of the bowl.



Downward facing face on side of the bowl is identical to that on the edge of the lid above it.



Downward facing face on side of the bowl is identical to that on the edge of the lid above it.



Bird's head as lid handle.



“Wings” of the bird are each a long-snouted reptile face.





Bird head as lid handle.



A person's face looks downward from the edge panel of the lid.



Basal flange bowl and lid.



Both from the same basal flange lid.



Identical painter but different basal flange bowl.



Three profile human faces are on the edge panels of the lid. The area of white background has one complete human body on each side.



This face has the same shape of the eye as the previous two basal flange bowls, suggesting they are by the same painter or at least the same atelier.



Human face on the lid and sideways on the basal flange bowl.



Human face looking down on the basal flange bowl is same as on other side.  
But the face on the lid, with incurved scrolls, is very different.





Human head faces the lid handle instead of the edge of the lid. The head is held in the mouth of an outward recurved-snout reptile face. This may now be in a museum in San Antonio, Texas (caption for photograph on the Internet).



Human head faces the lid handle instead of the edge of the lid.  
The head is held in the mouth of an outward recurved-snout reptile face.



Each head is held in the mouth of an outward recurved-snout reptile face.



There is a parrot or macaw on the side of the basal flange bowl.



The face at the right is partially brown colored. No long-snouted reptile faces anywhere.



White cross motif is between the two faces.



Upward recurved long-snouted reptile face.



Upward recurved long-snouted reptile face.





A different entwined crossed-bands motif in between the two reptile heads on the side of the basal flange bowl. The same motif is on the top of the lid handle of the basal flange bowls with two birds twisting their necks together. There is also another lid that has the same motif.



Deer running on the inside of the basal flange bowl. Lid has downward facing stylized human head.  
Side of the bowl has upward facing head.



It is rare to see the two heads (lid and bowl) facing each other.



Basal flange bowl with lid.



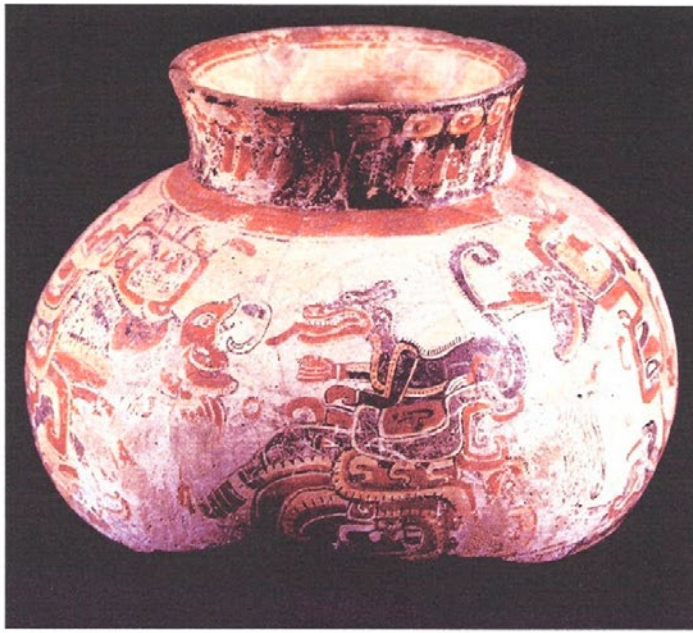
Lid and side of the bowl each have identical upward curled long-snouted reptile faces.



Lid and side of the bowl each have identical upward curled long-snouted reptile faces.



3-dimensional monkey head as lid handle. One additional monkey (with oval body) on each side. Two birds with a basket between them (in front of the arms of the monkey). The two "snail" scrolls on the central monkey's back are the same concept as on the other monkey lid.



Mammal has same black tail size and shape as the monkey on the other side. This is not a basal flange bowl but the style of the scene is similar.

Spider monkey with tail of same size and shape as unidentified animal on the other side. A long-beaked bird is behind the monkey.





This monkey's head is missing, but it was the lid handle. Long-snouted heads each have long-beaked water birds on both sides.



Long-snouted head has long-beaked waterbirds on both sides.



Looking down at the black spider monkey with three motifs surrounding him.  
The two "snail" scrolls on the monkey's back are the same concept as on the other monkey lid.



Long-snouted head has long-beaked waterbirds on both sides.



Each bird has long-snouted reptile head as the wing (with feathers). The twisted necks of two birds here on the lid are similar to what you see at Copan. The motif on the top of the lid handle is identical to a motif on the side of a previous basal flange bowl that we showed earlier. There is also another lid handle with identical motif.



The birds on this side appear to be the same as the better preserved birds on the other side.



The red bird is most likely a scarlet macaw.



The blue bird has not yet been identified.



Birds twisting their necks around each other is similar what is shown at Copan. Yet this basal flange bowl is almost certainly from Peten. The two birds on the Margarita panel at Copan simply cross their necks. One is macaw-like (and is on the left); the other is totally different than the Peten bird. But the concept of the Margarita panel and this lid of the basal flange bowl are the same.





Two different basal flange bowls have these two vertical geometric shapes in the empty space between reptile faces.



Second set of two vertical motifs on the bowl of crossed bird necks on the lid.



Upraised long-snouted reptile face on white background. The blue colors are not very common.



Second upraised long-snouted reptile face on white background.



Scarlet macaw on the side of a different basal flange bowl.



Scarlet macaw on the other side of a basal flange bowl.



Upraised long-snouted reptile face on lid of a basal flange bowl.



Upraised long-snouted reptile face on lid of a basal flange bowl.



Upraised long-snouted reptile face on lid of a basal flange bowl. Each panel has different arrangement of motifs.





This basal flange bowl was probably painted by same painter or at least same atelier as the one with the twisted-bird neck bowl.



This basal flange bowl was probably painted by same painter or at least same atelier as the one with the twisted-bird neck bowl. The white background is identical. The sequence of colors on top of the basal flange are also similar on both these bowls.



This basal flange bowl shares many aspects with the previous bowl: the diagonal black and alternating red colors on the basal flange, the two thick vertical bars in the empty space between the two reptile faces, and the recurved long-snouted reptile faces.



One difference is lack of blue color on this reptile face.



The scene on the lid is completely different.



But the white edge of this bowl has identical vertical decorations in dark orange.



What is unique about this lid decoration is that each side is a different set of motifs; on most lids each side is the same.



No actual reptile face is presented; only shared accessories like the curls.



More abbreviated than the other side.





Close-up view.



Lid of a basal flange bowl.



Basal flange bowl and lid with simple geometric decorative designs.



The personages and deities on this basal flange bowl are of unique style and content.



Many of the personages and deities on this basal flange bowl are of unique style and content. The man standing to the right is more traditional.



This standing man is not as bizarre as most of the other personages.



Unique style and content. The seat on which he is seated has long-snouted reptile faces at each end, but they are atypical.



It is almost as if each panel was painted by a different painter, but more likely the same painter just wanting to express different concepts in each panel.



These animals are nearly identical to animals on Tepeu 1, Peten, hunting scenes. Yet this painting is probably a century earlier. The animals are the size of a dog but are more likely deer (based on the Tepeu 1 scenes).



Since not many other Early Classic basal flange scenes are similar to Late Classic scenes, it is interesting to have this one example.





Two waterbirds but with no bird body parts except the head and neck. I estimate that the four other animals are baby turtles.



A probably fish in the middle. The Maya show most insects with just four legs (not six) so the two black creatures could be insects. Monkeys do not have a divided body and have a longer tail.



A challenge to suggest what animals these are. Turtles have a more rounded, oval body shape.



Complete feline as lid handle. Long-snouted reptile face below.



On the reptile face, the downward in-curved "long snout" is matched by a lower jaw to the right, so may be the upper jaw rather than a snout. There is a second, very long upturned "snout"



The designs on the other side are different.



The "reptile" face.



The other side is eroded but is definitely different (though sharing lots of thick scrolls).





The band coming from the front of the feline is found on other lids.



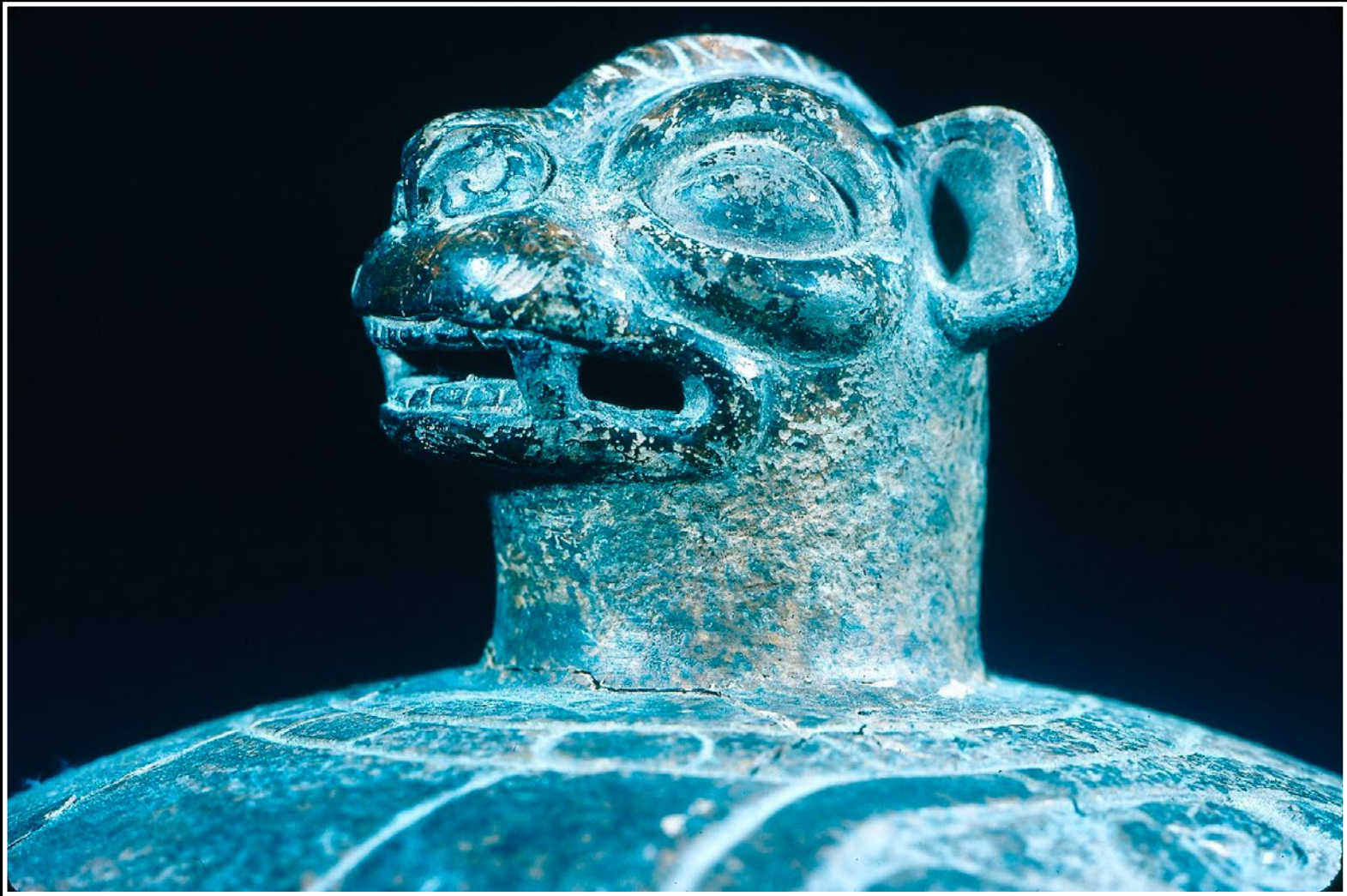
Feline head that broke off its lid.



Back view of a peccary lid handle. The size and shape of this head is based on jaguar heads that the same atelier would have produced. But the hooves rather than claws shows the rest is a bit more peccary-focused.



The flat front of the snout is of an obvious peccary. The hooves are visible also. The other decorations on the lid and the side of the basal flange have not yet been identified.



Feline head on non-polychrome basal flange bowl.



Jaguar across the top and puma across the bottom of the inside of this basal flange bowl.



Jaguar across one side of the inside of this basal flange bowl.



A puma (cougar, mountain lion) is native to Guatemala but are rarely pictured by the Classic Maya.





Feline as lid handle.



Three circles or three round areas are the hieroglyph for hix, a feline symbol.



A feline, probably a jaguar, whose head is lid handle.  
Towards the edge of the lid is a traditional profile man's face.



As on other basal flange bowls, both the lid and the side have downward facing human faces.



Both the lid and the side have downward facing profile human faces.



Basal flange bowl with lid.



Basal flange bowl with feline head as lid handle.

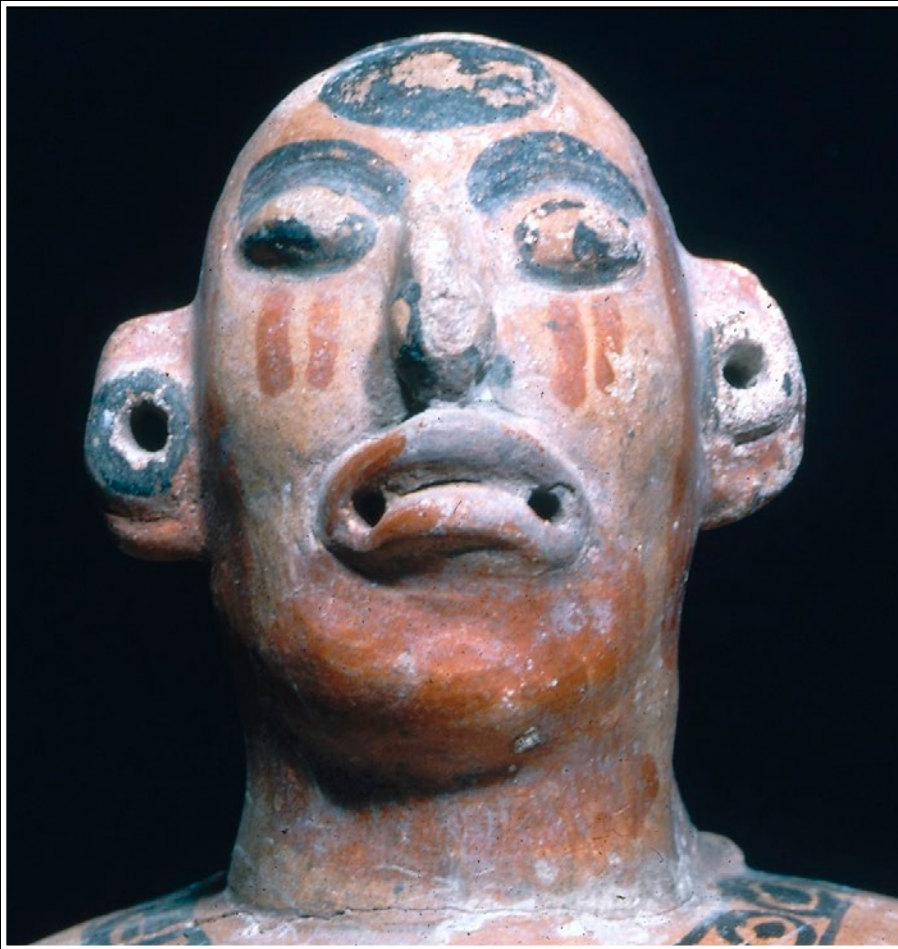


Basal flange bowl with high lid handle.



Face has two vertical bars under each eye. Either hieroglyph for number 10 or simply a decoration like on the sides of several white basal flange bowls. Lid and bowl are decorated with geometric designs.





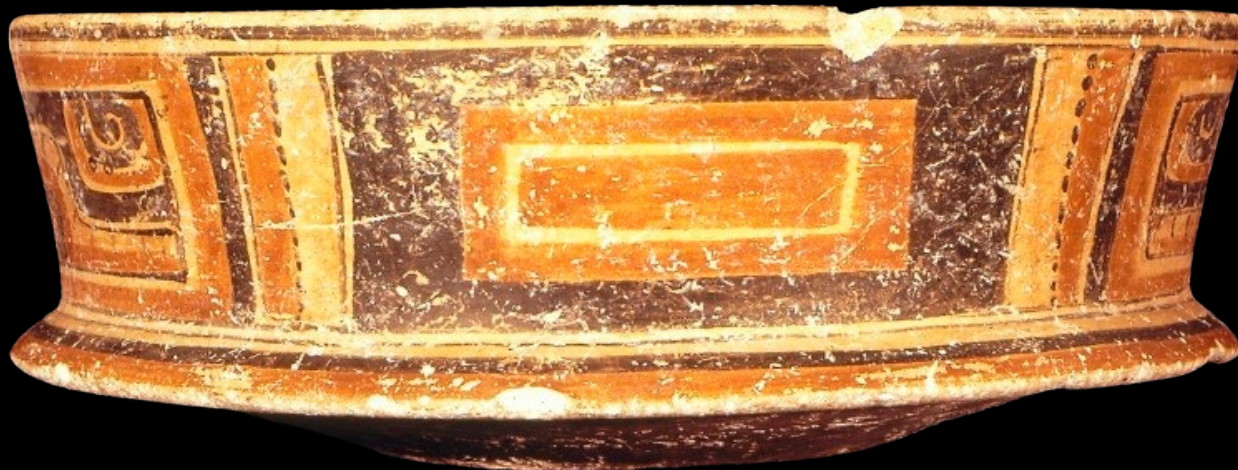
Face has two vertical bars under each eye.  
Either hieroglyph for number 10 or simply a decoration like on the sides of several white basal flange bowls.



Human head as lid handle. Decoration in the circular band is geometric.



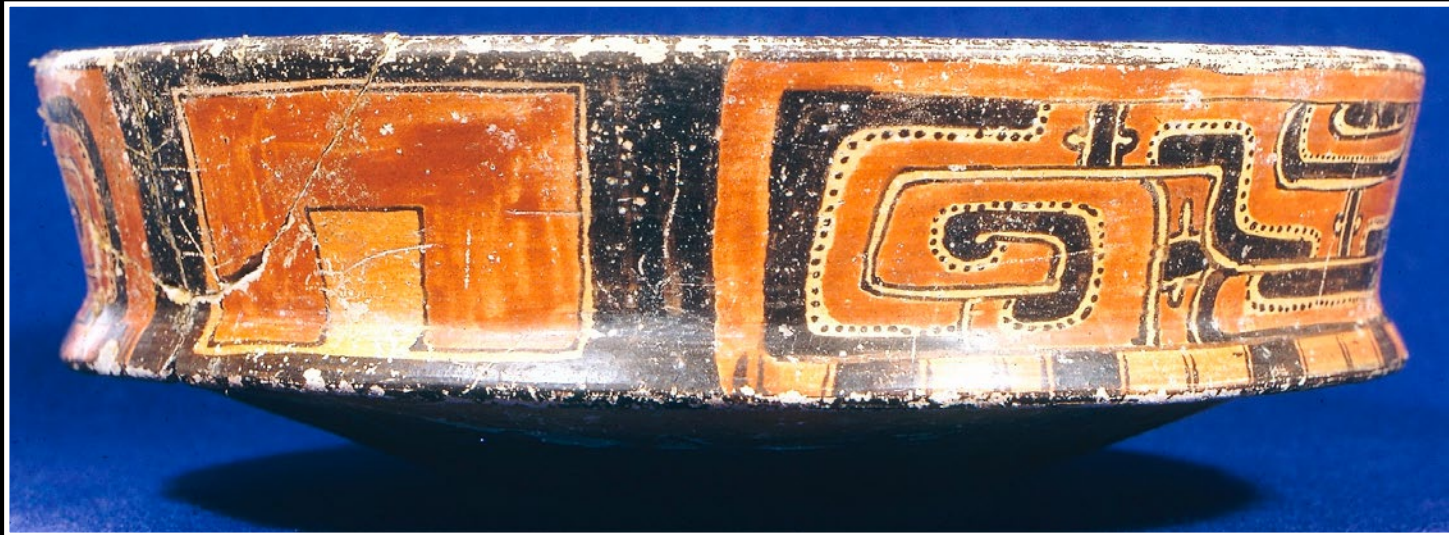
Basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



Basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



Basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



Other side of this basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



A different basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



Lid and bowl covered with geometric decorative design. This basal flange bowl is in a museum.



Lid and basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



Other side of this lid and basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.





Another side of this lid and basal flange bowl with geometric decoration.



Basal flange bowl with two accessories for pouring out a liquid.



Basal flange bowl with two accessories for pouring out a liquid.



Basal flange bowl with one accessory for pouring out a liquid.



Basal flange bowl with one accessory for pouring out a liquid.



Basal flange bowl with one accessory for pouring out a liquid.



Basal flange bowl with one accessory for pouring out a liquid.



Inside the basal flange bowl a head on a body. The top of the head is "cut off". On the outside of the bowl is another human head with no space for a headdress. The body (or legs) of this head has a line down the middle and undulates up and down with the body. This open space down the middle is found on many scenes shown in the following chapter.





Lid with white background. No major designs, just a ring of stepped motifs.  
The side of the basal flange bowl has scrolls and associated geometric decorations.



The entangled crossed bands on the lid handle are found on other lid handles and as a motif on white background side of another basal flange bowl.



Geometric motifs on lid and on side of the basal flange bowl.



Another basal flange bowl with blue paint. Both in front of and behind the seated person are two vertical orange bars. These are found on two other white background basal flange bowls but of potentially different atelier.



Both in front of and behind the seated person are two vertical orange bars. These are found on two other white background basal flange bowls but of potentially different atelier (that focused on recurved long-snout reptile faces).

# Unexpected Style, Unexpected Motifs, Unexpected Personages



Geometric decorations are found on several basal flange bowls and lids but these are the most complicated.



Geometric decorations that have not yet been found on many other basal flange bowls.



Lots of shared aspects to recurved long-snouted reptile faces, but no traditional face here.





Geometric designs, partially biometrically symmetrical.



Geometric designs.



Elongated, stretched body arrangement almost never noticed on Tepeu 1 or Tepeu 2 vases, bowls or plates. The unexpected band down the middle of the distorted body and legs is found on lots of other basal flange bowls possibly from the same atelier.



This atelier has their own Tzakol style.  
The blue paint on white background is shared with other ateliers but the elongation of the body is not common elsewhere.



My question is what in the world was this painter trying to say?



The white space up and down the middle is another aspect of this and related ateliers.



One of the few aspects shared with more traditional basal flange bowls is the geometric band across the basal flange: orange alternating with black. I estimate this painting is done by the same painter as the previous basal flange bowl or at least the same atelier.



Elongated, distorted body style, with band down the middle.



Elongated, distorted body style.



Most of the motifs on these basal flange bowls are not found on traditional Early Classic paintings.





This artist and atelier produced numerous examples of their style with extended distorted bodies.



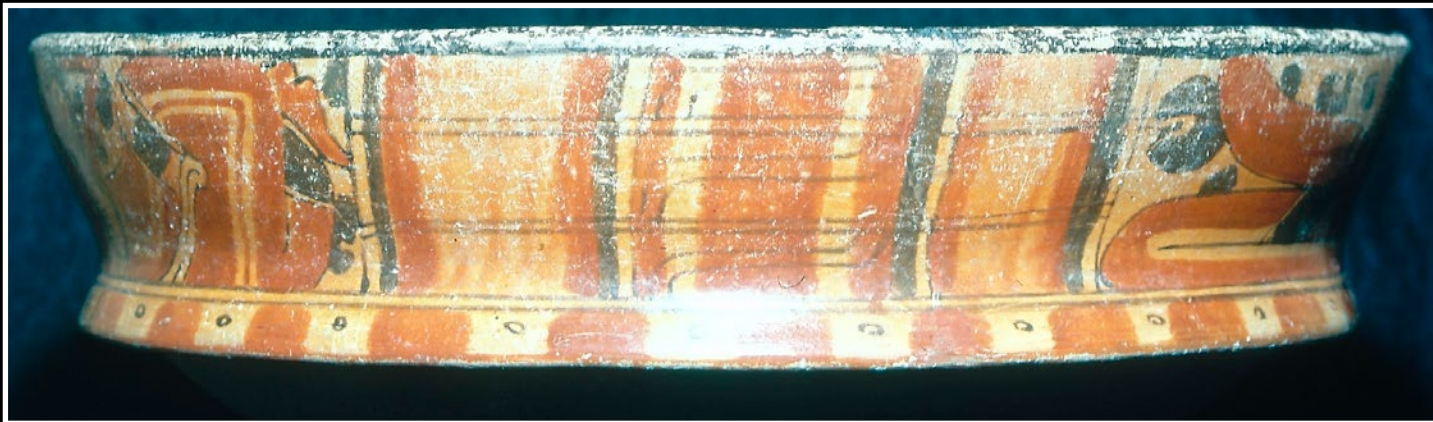
Example of extended and undulating body, with band in the middle of the body and legs.



Scenes, so far, not known for Late Classic and not previously documented for the Early Classic.



A third painting by the same atelier.



A third painting by the same atelier.



Same orange-light-orange-lite rectangular colors on top of the basal flange (as the previous bowl).  
A fourth painting by the same atelier.



Another painting by the same or related atelier  
(has open space down the middle of the elongated distorted body).



Another example of this style. Many of them have black geometric designs around the basal flange.



A fifth painting by the same atelier.



The fifth painting by the same atelier.



Open band down the middle of the leg.



Body parts not anatomical.



Decorations are shared among the products of the same or similar atelier.



Another side of this basal flange bowl.



Another basal flange bowl sharing the same open space down the middle of the body and leg.





Open space down the middle of the body and arm.



Open space down the middle of the leg and elongated body.



Open space down the middle of the body.

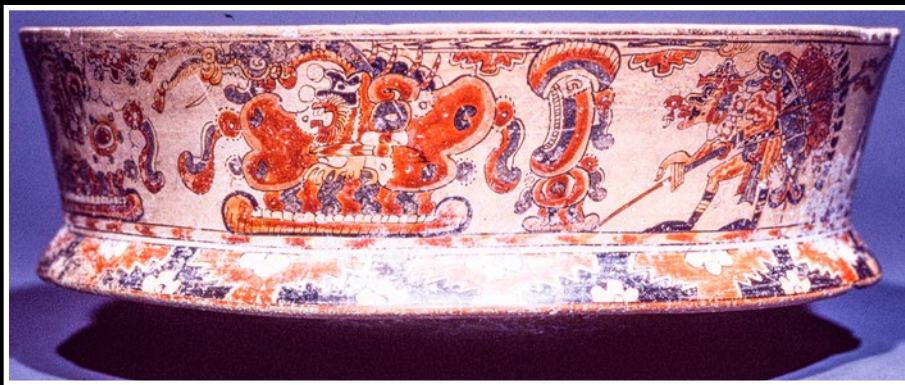


Open space down the middle of the body.



Open space down the middle of the arm and distorted body.

# Basal Flange Bowl with Personages and Motifs rarely seen or published before



The basal flange bowls of the previous chapter were mass-produced, sharing extended distorted bodies and a band of no color on the middle of most body parts. Now there is available the basal flange bowl pictured above that is unique. We do not yet have other basal flange bowls from this painter or his atelier. The bird-man has butterfly-shaped wings rather than the traditional long-snouted reptile face. Snake rises out of this head. The platform with a "row of white teeth" is seen also to the left.



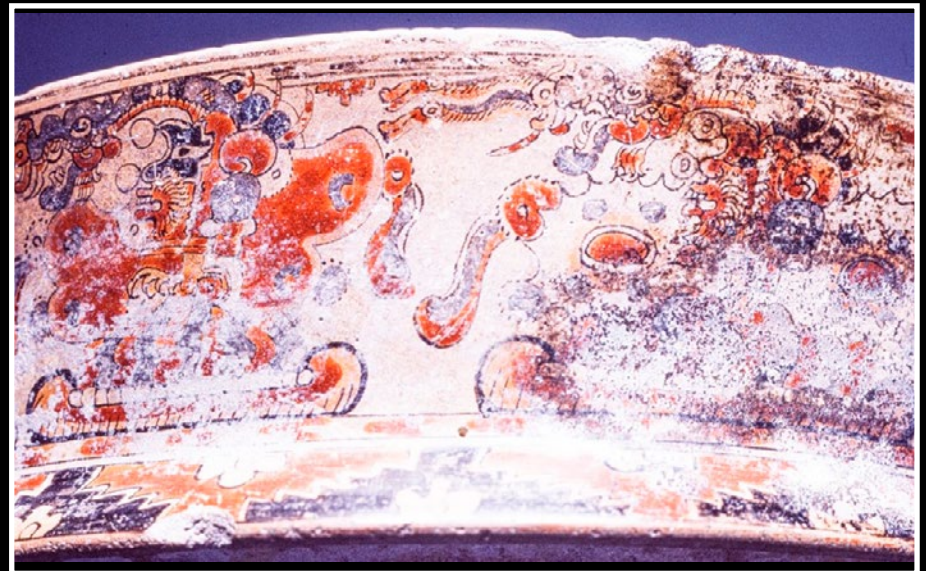
The only aspect of this scene that is traditional is the row of stepped geometric shapes around the basal flange. But the crouching person with the giant fish on his back is rarely seen elsewhere. The man has deer-like antlers on his head. The front of his face is more the size and shape of an animal than a human (but his eyes and body are human).



Three areas in a row all have the same platform with a pile of material on which the bird-talons are perched. The wings on the far left and far right remind me of butterfly wings. The middle bird has white wings of a completely different shape and interior decoration. All three "birds" have snakes coming out of their heads.



The stick he carries is long and curved. I doubt it is a weapon. He has a twin on the other side of this basal flange bowl.



There are three of these personages on each side of the bowl. The first and third have "butterfly-like" wings.



The personage in the middle has rounded white wings (of unknown origin). The faces all appear bearded. All three have the same platform.



The stack of two motifs that separates the snake-birds from the fish-man are not well documented. His stick is thicker and a bit shorter than his twin earlier on the other side of the bowl. He leans over since there is not enough space to show him standing up. Like his twin he has deer antlers over his hat and a giant fish on his back.



The head with "butterfly wings" has the same platform and the same snake as all the others.



These round white wings are not typical for birds elsewhere in Maya art. But this basal flange bowl is not a forgery; there is also no repainting. All these basal flange bowls are authentic, it's just that because they have not been studied before, we have not seen these motifs before.





This is one of the best preserved "butterfly wing" birds. It has the same snake as the others. Behind it, as a space divider before the more human-like fish-man. This is a similar stack of two motifs as on the other side of this basal flange bowl. A scene like this deserves a MA thesis or PhD dissertation. For example, are there any cylindrical tripods by the same artist or atelier? Obviously this is not the only ceramic he painted. There must be basal flange bowls somewhere that share features.