

AZTEC ICON #8 – ITZPAPALOTL, The Obsidian Butterfly



ITZPAPALOTL

ITZPAPALOTL (Obsidian Butterfly) {*eets-pa-pa-lotl*} is the ancestral goddess of the stars (Milky Way), lady of mystery and death, but also of beauty and fertility. Patron of the day Cozcacuauhtli (Vulture), she is a fearsome warrior who rules over the paradise of Tamoanchan for victims of infant mortality. She may be the mother of Mixcoatl, the Cloud Serpent, and is patron of the Cihuateteo, harmful spirits of women who died in childbirth. She is also one of the Tzitzimime, star demons that devour people during solar eclipses. She is usually depicted with a skull-face and butterfly or eagle wings, but can also be a beautiful woman also known as the Clawed Butterfly.

SOURCES

Of the following Codex examples of the goddess, I again chose Borbonicus as my guide, giving her a face, claws, and headdress more like Borgia.



AUBIN



BORBONICUS



BORGIA



Following the examples below, I also gave her the wings of a more or less real Mexican butterfly.



RIOS



TELLERIANO



VATICANUS

The Tsitsimitl (Star Demon) in the icon refines the image from Magliabechiano. The two women in frames (now with skull-faces) are the Cihuateteo who haunt the cross-roads. The serpentine apparitions are a surreal mystery, and the spotted hemisphere symbolizes the night.



MAGLIABECHIANO



BORGIA



BORBONICUS