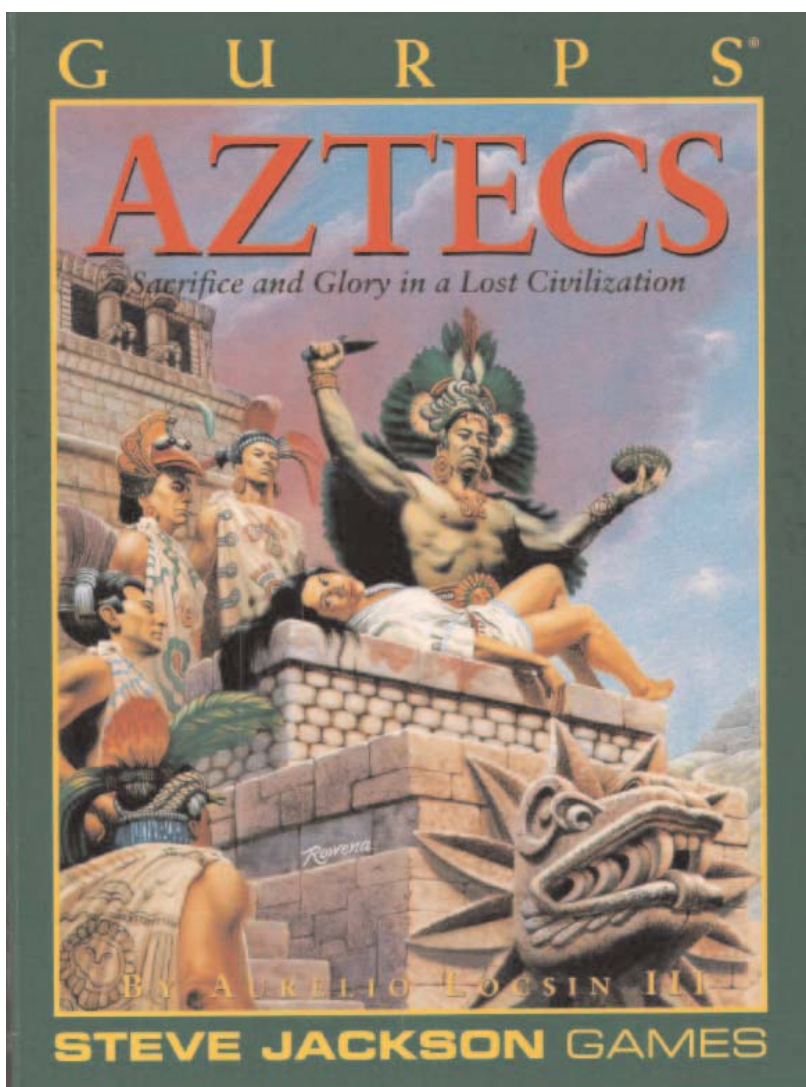


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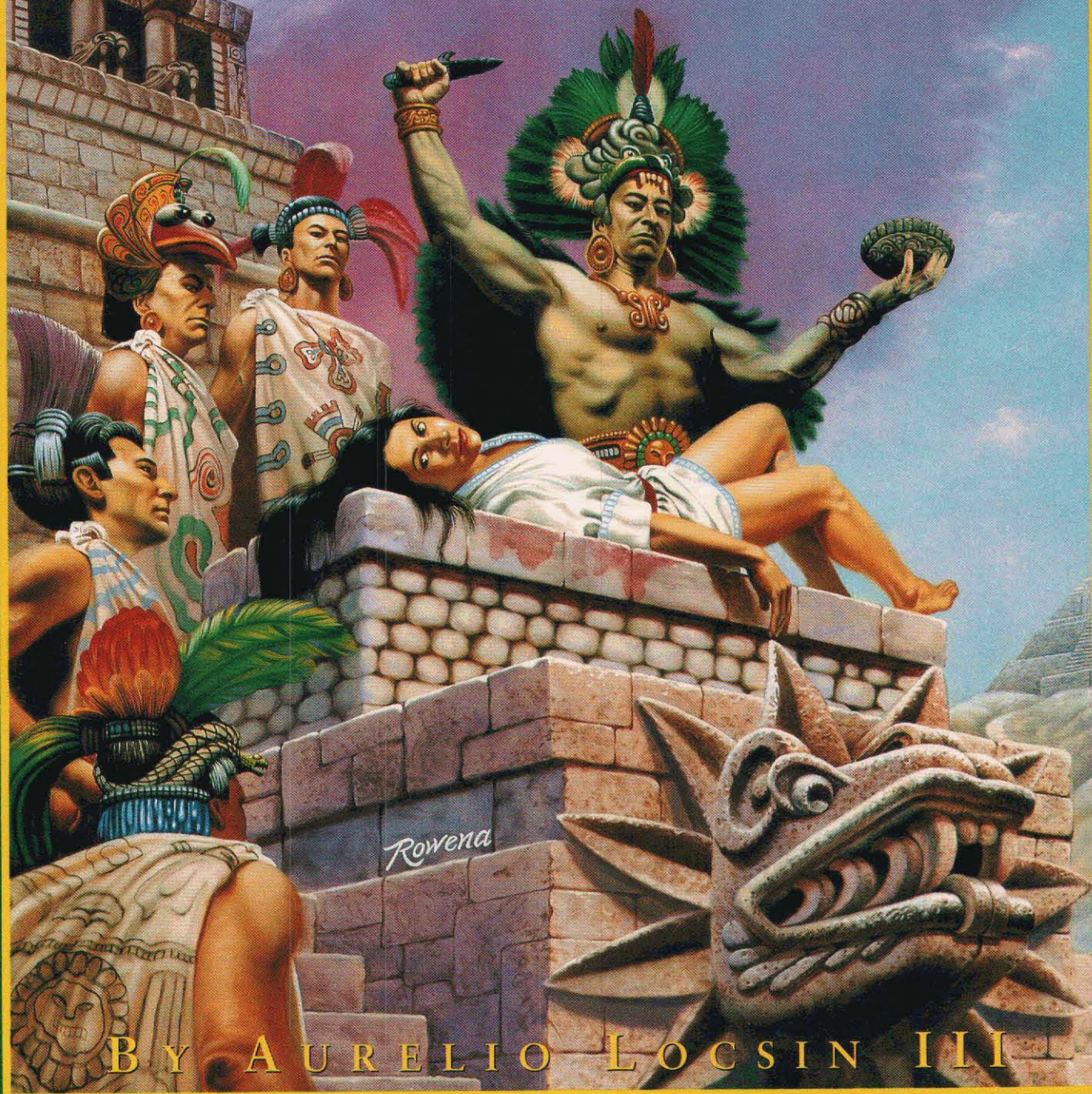


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AZTECS

Sacrifice and Glory in a Lost Civilization



BY AURELIO LOCSIN III

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS

AZTECS

Sacrifice and Glory in a Lost Civilization

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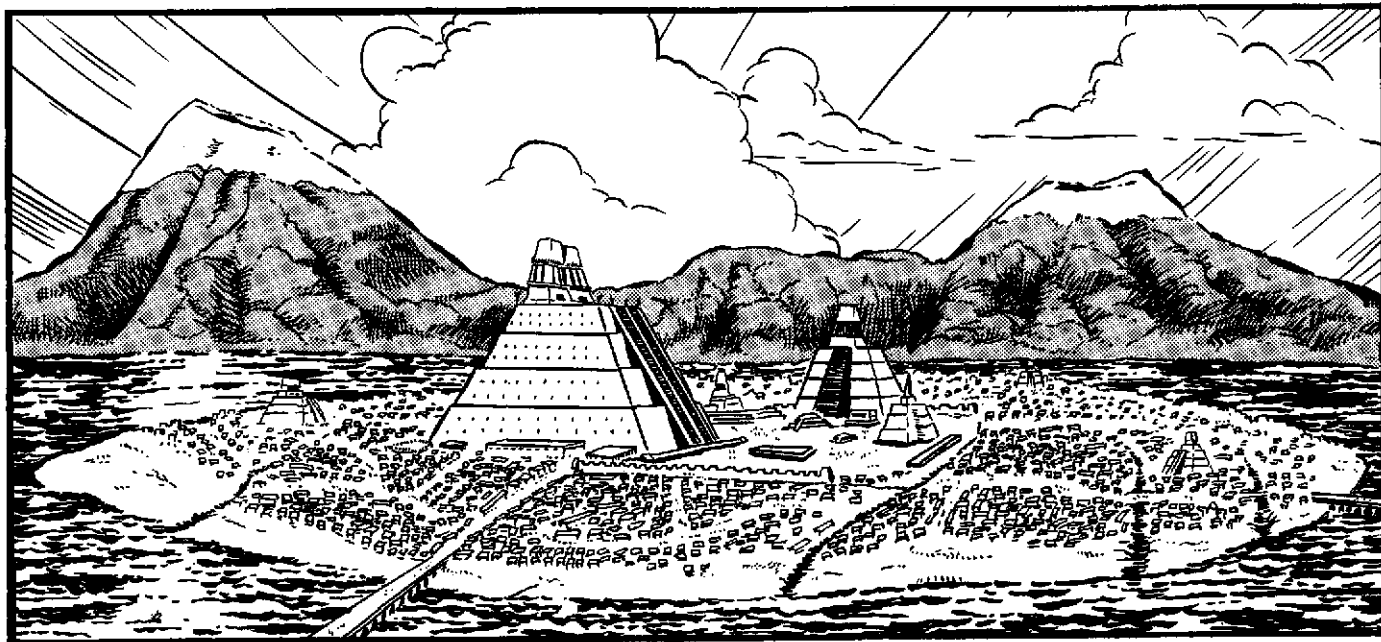
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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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INTRODUCTION

Many cultures lived and died in Mexico before the Spanish Conquest. *GURPS Aztecs* concentrates on the last one: the empire of Moctezuma II. Until 1519, this empire stretched from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Its capital city, Tenochtitlán, featured orderly canals, 10-story whitewashed pyramids and a zoo teeming with exotic animals.

This empire's people, who called themselves *Mexica*, believed everything and everyone had their place. The gods controlled nature and fate while men, according to their station, nourished the gods and kept society in harmony. Through sacrifices, they helped their gods maintain their orderly world.

The Aztec mind-set was very different from that of any European country, which was one reason the Spanish crushed them so thoroughly. Playing in an Aztec world with a modern "personality" can be diverting, but trying to see the Aztec world-view from the inside is a real roleplaying challenge. This book is an attempt to make that possible.

GURPS Aztecs lets players visit three parts of the Aztec's brilliant, violent history. Before the Conquest, merchants and warriors lived in a complex world of trade and intrigue, as part of a powerful empire constantly absorbing its neighbors. During the Conquest, warriors struggled desperately against the pale-faced conquistadors, neither side ever understanding the other. After the Conquest, PCs might fight on as guerrillas, while the Spanish settled in to exploit their new lands.

Like many works about the Aztecs, much of this book is based on the 12-volume *Florentine Codex*, written by the Spanish friar, Bernardino de Sahagún, who came to Mexico in 1525. With the help of native informants, he wrote about the conquered society in both Spanish and the native language.

— Aurelio Locsin III

Spelling and Pronunciation

The Aztec language is called Náhuatl, which means *beautiful language*. It lacks the letters *f*, *g*, and *r* and is pronounced like Spanish, except for *ll*, which is pronounced like the English letter *l*. Vowels are all short and other letters are pronounced, with these exceptions:

Q: pronounced *k* as in *quetzal* (KETzal).

C: pronounced *s* before *i* or *e* as in *maceuatl* (maSEwatl). Pronounced *k* before *a* or *o* as in *calli* (KAli) or *calmecac* (kalMEkak).

CH: pronounced *tch* as in *telpochcalli* (telpotchKAli).

HU: pronounced *w* as in *Huitzilopochtli* (witziloPOTCHtli).

X: pronounced *sh* as in *xóchitl* (SHOcheetl).

U: silent in *que* (KE) and *qui* (KEE). Pronounced as *w* or *oo* before other letters, as in *Tula* (TOOla).

TL, TZ, TS: each of these is pronounced as one sound that should not be separated, as in *coatl* (koAtl) or *Náhuatl* (NAwatl).

Accenting of Náhuatl words is not well understood; the best sources show no accents, or show them in an inconsistent manner. The best compromise is to accent the next to last syllable unless (as with a Spanish word) an accent shows otherwise, as with *Tenochtitlán*, which is accented on the last syllable.

Not even the *Florentine Codex* spelled Aztec words consistently. *GURPS Aztecs* chooses the simplest known spelling of a word and modernizes it when possible. For example, the singular *pochteca* (merchant) and plural *pochteca* becomes the singular *pochteca* and plural *pochtecas*. This does *not* follow Aztec usage, but is easy to understand. For information on the correct plural forms of Aztec words, see the *Glossary*, p. 125.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

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Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to a page in the *Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set*, Third Edition. Page references beginning with M refer to *GURPS Magic*.



About the Author

In 1988, Aurelio Locsin discovered pre-Columbian ruins on a trip to Mexico and became hooked on the Aztec culture. He discovered roleplaying games much earlier, while still a high school junior in 1975. He now works as a freelance technical writer in Orange County, California, and occasionally writes nonfiction articles for magazines.

1 THE AZTEC WORLD

The Aztecs were not the bloodthirsty, war-like savages portrayed by their Spanish conquerors and later by Hollywood. Their culture was so alien that the Europeans did not see the religious conviction and fatalistic nature that drove the sacrificial rituals. The Spanish saw a people without iron, without gunpowder, without ocean travel or horses or wheels – a society built on bloody sacrifices to strange gods – and reacted with contempt and loathing.





But the sophisticated and organized Aztec society built clean and spacious cities, practiced arts using jewels, gold and feathers, and kept order through complex laws and customs. Only in the technologies of transport and war were they inferior to the invaders – but that was their undoing.

Geography

The world of the Aztecs occupied most of central and southern México. A chain of mountains ran down the center of this land, cupping the Aztec homelands in the Valley of México. The flat lands surrounding the mountains were mostly unfarmable grassland and desert. Stretches of low-lying jungle and forest covered the south, east, and the Yucatán.

Anahuac

The Aztecs knew México as *Anahuac*, a world floating in the middle of a limitless sea that merged into the sky. The varied terrain and climate of México can be divided into three zones.

The areas under 3,000 feet formed the hot lands or tropical lowlands, which produced cacao, vanilla, tobacco and cotton. From here too, came the exotic birds, feathers, jaguar skins and seashells used to produce luxury goods. The Aztecs detested the hot lands, preferring the cooler climates of their temperate lands. Averaging between 3,000 and 6,000 feet above sea level, these areas contained most of the Aztec cities and produced grains, wheat, barley and maize. The cold lands above 6,000 feet could not be farmed and were covered with forests of oak, pine, spruce and cedar. Snow permanently covered the highest peaks.

Valley of México

The Valley of México rose 7,000 feet from the lowlands; it ran 75 miles from north to south and 40 miles from east to west. Here lay the Aztec heartlands, with its most famous cities. Mountains ranging from 3,000 to 10,000 feet surrounded the area. The highest of these peaks included two volcanoes: Popocatepetl, at 17,880 feet, and Itzachuatl, at 17,340 feet. Both lay perpetually under snow.

Lakes

Five lakes, all under 12 feet deep, nourished the valley. Lake Texcoco was the largest and lowest, receiving the runoff from lakes Xaltocan, Zumpango, Chalco

Popocatepetl

This beautiful mountain, usually snow-covered, is one of two which overlooks the Valley of México. Usually quiet, it began to spew smoke and fire just before the Conquest. Most interpreted this as an evil omen. The emperor may send adventurers to the summit to discover the meaning of its ominous behavior. Or during the Conquest, Cortés may send an expedition to gather sulfur for gunpowder.

Adventurers who dare to brave the volcano's slopes will discover its lower regions dense with forest. The trees thin out and then completely disappear at 13,000 feet.

Native climbers need to make a Will roll each time they hear the volcano rumble. If they fail, they abandon their journey out of fear. Each subsequent Will roll after the first adds +1, as the climbers become braver.

At around 12,000 feet, inexperienced climbers may develop altitude sickness. Roll against HT once per hour. Failure temporarily decreases HT by 1. Initial symptoms include loss of appetite, headaches, weakness and loss of interest in the climb. Climbers who continue will experience apathy, nausea and sleepiness. Resting one hour per 1,000 feet counters the symptoms (recover lost HT by 1 per hour of rest). Retreating to lower altitudes also quickly improves health (increase lost HT by 1 per 1,000 feet of descent).

On the way up, climbers have to contend with smoke, and depending on volcanic activity, hot ash and rolling boulders. At the summit is a 500-foot-deep crater with a diameter of 2,700 feet. Sulfur deposits cover the walls of the crater.

Weather and Climate

Weather and climate in the modern valley remains unchanged since the time of the Aztecs. Temperature ranges from 41 to 70 degrees in the winter months with occasional frost and rare snow, and from 50 to 81 degrees in the summer with occasional 90+ degree weather. Winds blow from the northeast and northwest, with the windiest months being March through May.

The hotter and more humid lowland jungles receive more rainfall. Average highs can reach 92° in the summer, with rainfall of 100-180 inches annually. The regions north of the Valley receive only 24 inches yearly, with some desert regions receiving almost nothing. Throughout México, the rainy season runs from May through October, and so does the farming season.

The Mexica

México comes from the word *Mexica*, which is what the Aztecs called themselves. The term means either "In The Center of The Moon" or "In The Heart of the Century Plant." The word *Aztec* was coined in 1813 by the Mesoamerican scholar, Alexander von Humboldt. Thirty years later, historian William H. Prescott popularized the term in his book *The Conquest of México*. The term derives from *Aztlán* (Place of Herons), the Aztec's legendary point of origin.

Because the word Mexican can apply to any inhabitant of the country of México, the term *Aztec*, as used in this book, refers to inhabitants of the capital city of Tenochtitlán, its suburb of Tlatelolco, and allies.

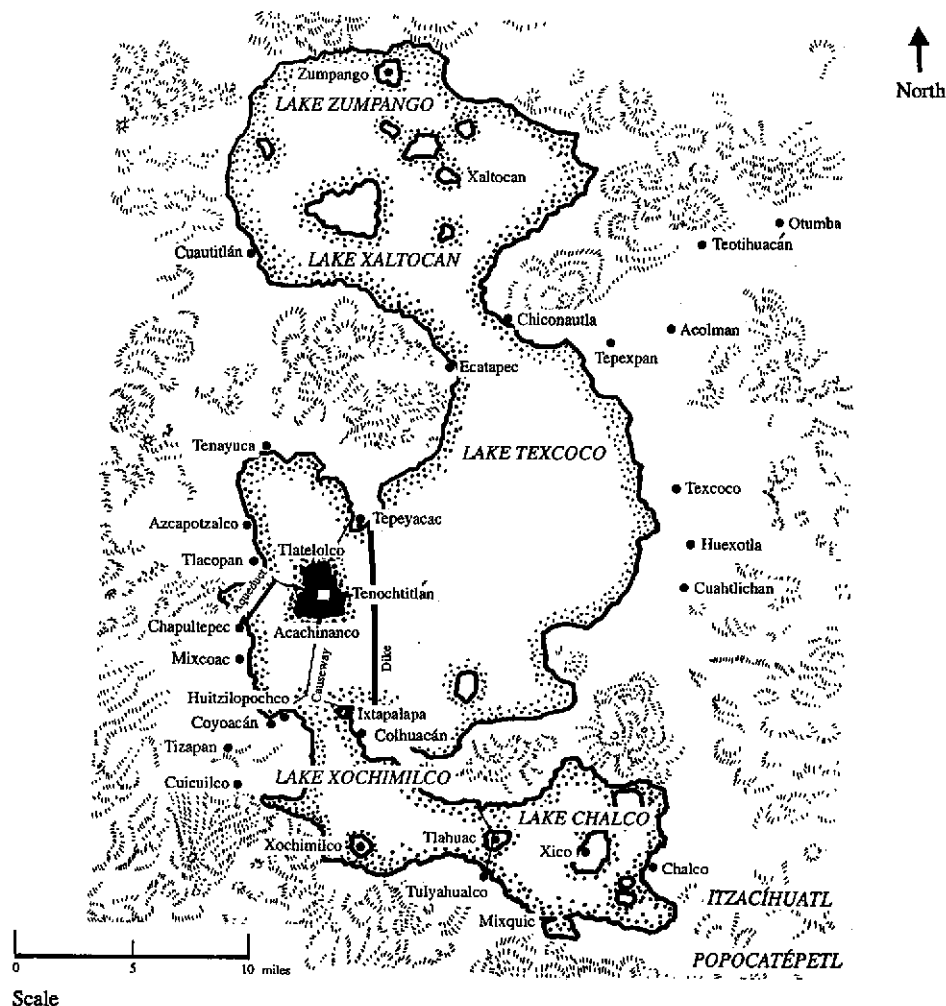
The inhabitants of Tenochtitlán were sometimes known as *Tenochca*, while those of Tlatelolco were called *Tlatelolca*.

Garrison Provinces and Towns

The province of Quautochco, on the eastern side of Tlaxcala, was a militarized province with several fortresses and fortified towns. Its main function was to cut off its hostile neighbor's access to the sea and to quell any rebellions caused by that country in adjoining provinces. The towns of Quautochco needed to provide supplies to the warriors stationed in this area. Thus, their tribute obligations to the capital were somewhat light in comparison to other provinces.

Not all fortified towns protected hostile borders. Others guarded important resources. For example, Oztoma guarded widely distributed salt resources at Iztapan, while Tzotzolan protected wealthy gold mines.

Valley of Mexico



and Xochimilco. Because melting snow and spring water fed the last two lakes, they always remained fresh.

Cities and towns ringed the lakes, and rested within on natural and artificial islands. Fish, fowl, reeds and other lake dweller helped sustain the exploding population. This food and the other necessities of life were transported from place to place by canoes.

During the dry season (from late September through mid-May), some lakes shrank or grew weeds, enough to make water travel impossible. In the spring, strong winds often blew large waves that overturned canoes. Sometimes underwater quakes made the surface mysteriously boil and bubble. These water disturbances foretold misfortune.

The Empire

In 1519, Moctezuma's domains stretched from the Pacific to the Atlantic, north past the mountains to the desert and south to Oaxaca. Additionally, the empire controlled a distant province called Socunusco, bordering what is now Guatemala. At its height, the empire consisted of over 38 provinces and 20 million people, many of whom were citizens of foreign and once-hostile nations. A powerful army helped to keep all imperial territories in line.

The emperor lived in the capital city of Tenochtitlán, located on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco. In theory, this city shared power with the nearby cities of Texcoco and Tlatelolco, as members of the Triple Alliance. In practice, Tenochtitlán had most of the power, making all the decisions for the empire,

although both Texcoco and Tlacopan did exercise partial control over their immediate dependents.

Language

Of the 190 languages spoken in Mesoamerica in 1519, the most important was Náhuatl. A modern version is still spoken today by over a million Mexican natives. As the primary language of the Aztecs, Náhuatl was spoken as a second language by many who had dealings with the empire, such as traders. The scholars and poets of Texcoco spoke the purest form of the language. Other important languages at the time were Yucatec, spoken on the Yucatán peninsula; Chontal, spoken by the Chontal Maya; and Tarascan, Mixtec and Otomí, spoken by people of the same names.

Because Náhuatl formed new words easily, it featured a rich and sophisticated vocabulary that was easily pronounced and pleasant to hear. The Aztecs found all other languages vulgar and barbaric.

Náhuatl used noun and verb forms that showed politeness and respect. For example, the ordinary form "You see" became the polite form "Your lordship sees." The informal form "You think" became the formal "You are so kind to think." The suffix *-tzin*, meaning lord or lady, was added to the names of important people. For example, Moctezuma was addressed as Moctezumatzin.

Provinces

The Aztecs used many techniques to transform independent nations into imperial tributaries. Military attack, being very expensive, came only after all other methods of intimidation had failed.

The least costly method involved an ambassador presenting a simple proposal for integration to a foreign king. Cities that produced valuable goods or lying at strategic or economic crossroads presented prime targets for "conquest by request." Many areas were already so intimidated by the Aztec war machine that they submitted peacefully. Naturally, any other settlements that depended on the annexed cities voluntarily joined the empire. Otherwise, they risked losing a valuable trading partner.

Because the Aztecs only wanted tribute, they did not impose their religion or government on conquered areas. Thus, foreign cities kept their rulers, customs and gods. One concession to Aztec rule might be the presence of imperial tax collectors, who ensured that all subjects paid their tribute. Rarely would a province require a garrison and a military governor. However, to ensure continued loyalty, the emperor transferred ownership of some tributary lands to loyal Aztec nobles. Similarly, he also ensured that the tributary nobles received a stake in imperial holdings.

Many tributaries ruled over dependent provinces of their own, which they conquered with or without Aztec help. The empire generally did not meddle in such relationships, unless squabbles interfered with the flow of tribute. In such cases, the Aztecs dictated terms for both parties to follow. Disobedience meant destruction.

Taxes and Tribute

Every 20 or 80 days, tribute was collected for the emperor in the form of raw materials and manufactured goods. Raw material from one town was often diverted to another town to be turned into finished goods.

Each province sent its tribute by porters. Thus, tribute was measured in loads, or the amount a porter could carry. Tribute also came from services such as ceremonial performances, building maintenance, or street cleaning.

Tax Structure

The emperor sat at the top of the tax structure. He decided what each member of the Triple Alliance received and paid to him. When the Alliance was formed in 1433, 40% of the receipts each went to Tenochtitlán and Texcoco, with Tlacopan

A Chalcan Lord Talks of Tribute

"What else is a Chalcan lord to do? Moctezumatzin is my lord and we must obey. Our province provides much maize, stone, sand and wood in tribute. My people also have to serve in their armies but I welcome the chance to fight with the fine Aztec warriors. My favorite tribute is the dances. We have to go to the capital three times a year to help celebrate their feasts. I enjoy dancing, of course. But I enjoy even more the gifts the Reverend Speaker always gives us after the rituals: turkeys and cacao, well-formed jewelry and fine mantles. And always, he praises our dancing."



Sample Tribute List

This tribute list from the *Codex Mendoza* illustrates the richness and variety of goods that flowed into the empire. Many luxury goods that the Aztecs enjoyed, such as cotton and cacao, did not grow in the Valley. They came to the capital through tribute and trade.

From Atlán: 800 red-bordered mantles with a shell design, 800 multicolored loin-cloths, 400 large white mantles, 1,200 loads of cotton.

From Xilotepec: 400 loads of rich women's clothes, 400 half-quilted skirts, 400 mantles with an obsidian-snake design, 400 mantles with the jaguar design, 400 mantles with a red step-fret design, 400 diagonally divided mantles, 1 or more eagles, 2 warsuits including shield, 1 bin of amaranth (a grain), beans, chia and maize.

From Tochtepec: 1,600 decorated mantles, 800 striped mantles, 400 women's clothing, 1 warrior costume and shield, 1 decorated shield, 1 back device, 16,000 balls of rubber, 4 bundles of rich green feathers trimmed with yellow feathers, 24,000 handfuls of parrot feathers, 80 handfuls of quetzal plumes, 1 shield, 1 gold diadem, 1 gold headband, 2 gold necklaces, 10 greenstone necklaces, 20 lip plugs each of amber and crystal, 100 pots of liquidambar (a fragrant tree resin) and 200 loads of cacao.

Climbing the Social Ladder

Fame and glory belonged only to those at the upper levels of society.

Combat was the most common method of advancement for men, and indeed, the nobility were required to show combat prowess (see *Combat*, p. 46).

The priesthood offered another stepping stone. Devoted and talented priests occupied all rungs of society, from the highest, in charge of the Great Temple, to the lowest novitiate (see *Religion*, p. 58).

The least desirable way to rise was by becoming a traveling merchant or *pochteca*. The nobility despised their wealth, but the emperor saw the value of the goods they brought in and the information they gleaned by spying (see *Pochtecas*, p. 85).

Other Royalty

Royalty existed not only among the nobility of the capital city but among the citizens of other cities and towns. Each province and nation had a king and each village had a chief. How the ruling classes of other cities fared in the capital depended very much on what they ruled.

For example, the king of Texcoco, the Aztec cultural center, reigned second only to the emperor. The king of an important, smaller city, such as Xochimilco, was respected as a Great Lord. On the other hand, when the chief of an unimportant province or the ruler of a barbarian tribe came to the capital, he would receive no more respect than a commoner.

Becoming A Slave

There were many voluntary and involuntary ways of falling into slavery.

A thief or one who sold stolen goods became the slave of his victim. If he stole from a temple, for example, he became the slave of that temple. Traders who kidnapped children to sell as slaves also lost their freedom.

Prisoners of war who were not sacrificed, or people received as tribute, could become slaves. Gamblers who could not pay their debts were sold to cover them or could wager themselves.

Finally, a person could sell himself or his children as slaves. The transaction had to be witnessed by four well-respected and elderly people. The slave received his price and remained free while the money remained. This might take a year or more. Spending all the money made him a slave.

getting 20%. By the 16th century, most of the tribute went directly to the capital city, which apportioned meager amounts to its allies.

Although the emperor did keep some tribute for himself, most of it went to support his domain. From this income came the salaries of all the government officials and civil servants, as well as the financing for public works. During times of crop failure or drought, the emperor reduced the tribute owed by a town. He also distributed emergency seed and other aids to help the town recover.

Each tributary, in turn, decided what its citizens had to pay. Rates depended on a person's social class and total wealth.

Landless peasants paid tribute to their lord and not directly to the emperor. Merchants paid tribute in merchandise; artisans paid tribute in art objects. These classes were exempt from working in the fields or on public projects. Nobles, priests, children, orphans, widows, beggars and the disabled did not owe tribute.

City dwellers paid the most. They cultivated land and rendered services for their district chiefs and still owed taxes to the emperor. The chief owed no tribute because he administered the district.

Many Aztecs viewed their payments as we view taxes today, with despair and resentment. Special assessments provided additional burdens. For example, every year, two neighborhoods in the capital city had to provide all the wood needed for the largest temple. This questionable honor placed such a heavy load on citizens that people avoided payment by disappearing into the countryside. Others went off to war, hoping that death would relieve them of the obligation.

Tributaries

The *Trade Routes* map (p. 93) shows all the provinces during the reign of Moctezuma II. Tribute goods provided by some provinces are also listed. Traders should note that unallied areas near tributaries produced similar goods. See *Pochtecas*, p. 85, for more information on trade.

Class

The Aztec social hierarchy reflected the universal order that they believed in. At the top of the social pyramid stood the emperor, who ruled absolutely. At the bottom were the slaves, who were ruled by individuals. Although each class had privileges, each also had responsibilities to the class above and below it. Though women served men, they had rights to property, justice, and divorce.

Birth determined entry into each social rung, but one could climb the social ladder through religion, trade, or war. One could just as easily fall through misfortune or through punishment for a crime. Social climbing preoccupied many Aztecs.

The Upper Classes

The upper classes used the best weapons, wore the best clothes and received many privileges. However, they also owed many obligations to their subordinates and the emperor. All upper-class males had to excel in combat as well, or risk losing their status.

Hereditary Nobles

The nobles or *totecutin* were a hereditary class that produced the emperor and many top officials. Less than 1% of the city population belonged to this class. Nobles had many duties to the gods and to their vassals: they had to lead a moral life, protect the people from disasters by storing food reserves, distribute their own goods during emergencies and serve the emperor when requested. They also had to strictly obey all laws, as punishments for nobles were more severe than for commoners.

Nobles could also work at the noble crafts of agriculture, featherworking, goldworking and jewelry-making, but could not become merchants or peasants. Most held the top administrative positions in government, religion and trade.

Members of the great council, the top administrative posts and judges came

from the nobility. The emperor supplied them with a salary as well as room and board when they worked at the palace. The nobility spent much of their time visiting their estates to ensure that their peasants produced sufficient food.

In exchange, a noble lived in a large house, received lands, workers and tribute, and did not owe taxes. He did have great responsibilities to his vassals, ensuring their welfare and their sustenance. Many nobles loved their subordinates as children and treated them with dignity and kindness.

Meritocratic Nobles

Commoners rose to the nobility through combat prowess. A meritocratic noble, a *cuaupilli*, joined the war council, received lands, did not pay taxes and could become a tax collector. But he could not have landless peasants working their property and could not sell his lands to commoners. Though his sons retained noble status, they were still considered upstarts by those of more ancient lineage.

Sons of Nobles

The *pilli* class included all the emperor's sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, as well as the sons of all the nobles. In theory, the sons of nobles received no unearned privileges. In practice, they attended the best schools and received some of the better jobs, such as official government posts, ambassadorships and judgeships, and received lands worked by peasants. They owed no tribute or service, other than occasional military duties, and received food and shelter in the palace. They also merited a salary from the emperor.

If their fathers died as officials, the sons automatically inherited the posts and moved up to the hereditary noble class.

Commoners

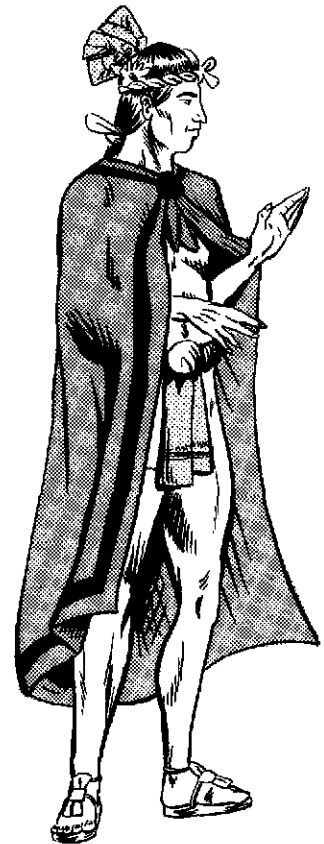
The commoners or *maceualli* formed the bulk of Aztec society. As full citizens, they elected local chiefs and owned interest in a plot of land for cultivation and a home. The land still belonged to the state, however.

In return, commoners served in the military, paid taxes and did civil service, such as street cleaning, temple supply and bridge repair.

Peasants

A *maceualli* (landless peasant) worked other people's lands. This was a hereditary position. He paid rent to his lord by giving up most of his harvest, but owed neither imperial taxes nor civil service. He could, however, be called for military service. His main obligation was to his landlord.

In many ways, the peasant suffered more than the slave. The *maceualli* kept only enough of the harvest to sustain his family for a year. Everything else went to his lord. In addition, he still owed his lord whatever goods his province produced, such as gold, mantles or wood. If he could not pay, his overseer would often take him to the market to be sold as a slave, the proceeds being used to cover his tribute debt.



Cleanliness

The citizens of Tenochtitlán kept themselves and their homes obsessively clean. They polished their teeth with salt and powdered charcoal, and bathed often in the waters of the lakes, rivers and ponds using soap made from the soapbark tree. Moctezuma washed himself at least twice a day.

Baths served ceremonial purposes as well, such as the merchant slave-bathing ritual (p. 87). Remaining dirty was considered penance and priests commonly went bathless as a sign of devotion to their deities.

Octli

Octli, also known in Spanish as *pulque*, came from the heart of the *metl* plant. Women typically fermented the juice in their mouths with liberal doses of saliva. So the drink was foul-smelling. But it tasted great, especially when poured down the throat quickly from small bowls.

This drink was no stronger than beer and one had to drink many small cups to become drunk. Still, laws on its use were very strict. The sick, the elderly, men who transported heavy materials and women during the first few days after giving birth could drink only three small cups at a meal. During festivals and weddings, everyone over 30 could drink two cups while the elderly could drink themselves into a stupor. Most Aztecs considered drunkenness disgraceful, except in the aged.

Feasts

Many celebrations involved overnight feasts with elaborate preparations and protocol. Guests first gathered outside the banquet hall and were then led in by servants. Each received tobacco pipes, flower crowns and garlands. Food then followed. After the meal came a chocolate drink for men, or a gruel of amaranth and maize for women.

Guests can roll against Savoir-Faire once per hour (at the GM's discretion) to check their behavior at the festivities. The banquet-giver also rolls once per hour to ensure that the party is a success.

A failure offends one person who will have a -1 reaction to the offender until the next banquet – for instance, because cocoa was spilled in his lap. A critical failure means that everybody noticed and they will all have a -1 reaction to the offender until the next banquet – for instance, because everyone saw him spill a tray of cocoa on a noble's head!

If a guest remained dissatisfied with the proceedings, he complained loudly and went home. Etiquette demanded that the host visit the offended party at his home the next day, consoling him and persuading him to return to the festivities.

At night, servants poured *octli* in small cups, beginning with those of highest rank and proceeding downward. The old men and women indulged freely until they became drunk.

Speeches, singing and dancing were common ways to end a feast. The host then presented gifts, typically clothing, which he spread out in the sun next day for his guests to take. It was customary to have enough leftovers for guests to take some home to their servants.

Although the poor also threw banquets, they could not afford all the trappings of the rich. They frequently left out expensive niceties such as tobacco and mantles.

Slaves

Although they were the lowest social class, a slave's life was in many ways better than that of a peasant. Slavery applied only to the labor a person owed to his master. He was still free in other aspects of his life and could marry, own property, or even own other slaves. Children of a slave were automatically born free.

Slaves paid no taxes and did not owe service to the state or to the military. In addition, they received free room and board from their masters. Slaves typically acted as servants, laborers and porters. Many slaves became their master's assistants, sometimes overseeing great estates.

A slave could only be sold if he remained impertinent and lazy, and only after his master had scolded him three times in front of witnesses. Slaves for sale in the marketplace wore a wooden collar around their necks. If a slave was sold for impertinence by three different masters, he could be sold for sacrifice.

A slave could be freed by the word of his master, or by the master's death. A slave could also marry a free citizen, replace himself with a member of his family, buy himself out of slavery or escape. When a slave ran, only his master and the master's son could pursue him. Anyone else who interfered received punishment. Once a slave left his immediate vicinity (such as the marketplace) and stepped on human excrement, he or she then approached the purifier of slaves. This official washed the slave, presented him with new clothes and declared him free.

Daily Life

Agriculture

Maize, beans, and a grain called amaranth were the staples of Aztec life. Planting began the spring and harvesting ended the fall. Because Mesoamerica lacked beasts of burden, a single man with a digging stick prepared the fields. At that rate, each man cultivated only two hectares per season. The Aztecs increased their yields by classifying the types of soil and how to use them.

After the men plowed the ground, women broke up any clods and made small mounds of earth in which they put seed. Women also weeded the ground and kept wild animals away by camping near the fields with their children.

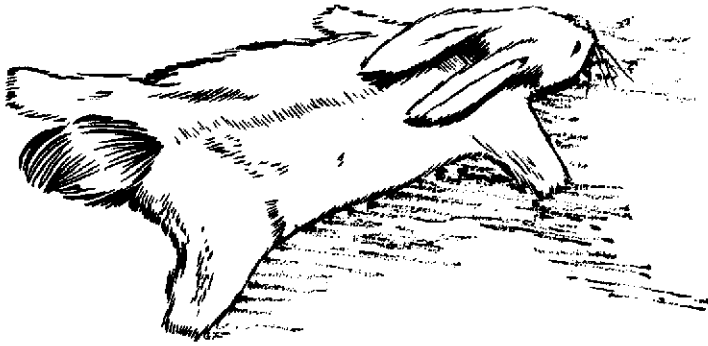
The Aztecs used many planting techniques, ranging from slash-and-burn to intensive irrigation. Unique to the Valley of México was *chinampa* agriculture. Farmers created a *chinampa* by dredging soil from the bottom of the lake. They then piled it in one area to form an artificial island. Shrubs and trees anchored the plot to the lake bottom. Because the lake waters constantly fed the soil, each plot produced two to three times the yield of normal farmland. The method is still used today in México City.

Most households and farmyards also raised turkeys and dogs. Turkey was the most important domestic animal and provided, with the dog, most of the meat on the tables of the rich and noble. Other domestic animals included the duck, the *cochineal* insects used for dyes, and bees. On the lake waters, pond scum (a nutritious algae), insect larvae and water-fly eggs were also grown as staples.

Fishing and Hunting

The lakes of the Valley of México, and the jungles and forests of the empire, harbored all kinds of wildlife. Fishermen used nets attached to circular rims and manipulated with two poles to catch many kinds of fish. Hunt-





ers depended on nets made from pine and cedar roots to capture birds. They also used bows and arrows and slings to bring in larger game such as rabbits, tapirs and coyotes. Those who killed larger animals made trophies of the heads to decorate their homes.

To preserve the dwindling supplies of wild deer, only the nobility could hunt them, though commoners received that privilege during special festivals. Deer hunting was especially important in Tlaxcala. There, Mixcatl the Deer God was especially revered, and hunting formed a bigger part of the economy.

Moctezuma II would often invite important dignitaries to hunt at his country gardens. These invitations were sought after as great honors. The emperor occasionally went alone to kill birds with a blowpipe, to relieve the stress of his job.

Food and Drink

Most people ate twice a day, in mid-morning and at the beginning of the afternoon. A few also took a liquid gruel before bedtime. The very rich held elaborate banquets at night, where feasting continued until dawn.

Staples included maize (corn), which turned into tortillas and cakes; many kinds of beans; amaranth; and *chia* (sage). Red and green peppers, tomatoes and pimientos flavored the meal. Other popular foods included squash, gourds, insect larvae, pond algae, tree moss and honey. Native fruits included avocados, melons, cherries, guavas, pineapples, vanilla and plums. *Atoli*, a porridge made out of maize and seasoned with pimento or honey, was a common breakfast item.

The rich also enjoyed fowl such as turkey, pheasant, duck, geese and crows, and meat from animals such as deer, wild boar, armadillos and rabbits. Seafood such as fresh fish and shellfish came from both coasts. Other popular meats included the *itzcuintli*, a small hairless dog; fish; newts; mice; frogs; snails; tadpoles; water flies; larvae and ants. Meats were usually boiled or grilled.

The drink of choice was chocolate or cocoa, made from the cacao bean. A variety of it was used as a medicine. Only the nobility (Status 4+) could consume this beverage.

Art and Leisure

In the Aztec world, nothing was done *only* for pleasure. Though everyone enjoyed pastimes such as art, music and games, they were always aware of how these activities served the gods.

Art

Artists and their art commanded much respect because through them, the Aztecs expressed their beliefs about religion and the order of the universe. The best artists received permanent commissions from the emperor and lived and worked at the palace. Full-time employment also came from the nobility or temples. Many artists had their own studios or wandered from place to place to earn a living.

Tobacco

Tobacco provided a pleasing smoke to pass the time. Guests at a high-class party usually received hollow reeds filled with a mix of charcoal, liquidambar and tobacco for smoking.

Tobacco also played an important part in religion, medicine and magic. Burning tobacco was a common offering to the gods. Rubbing it on an afflicted area was a common cure. Pinching it between the fingers powered many types of spells.

Color of Feathers

Different birds produced feathers of varying size and shape. Traders, hunters and artisans all dealt with feathers.

Blue feathers were produced by the co-tinga. This small bird lives primarily in the forests of Tlaxcala and Socunusco.

Red feathers came from the scarlet macaw, which lives in lowland forests from the Gulf Coast to Chiapas and Tlaxcala.

Green feathers came from the green parakeet, which lives in Socunusco and Tlaxcala.

The most valuable feathers came from the tail of the male quetzal bird, which lives in the cloud forests of Quautochco, Cuertlaxtlán, Tlaxcala and Socunusco. Each bird supplied only about two feathers and only the emperor could wear them in his headdresses.

The least valuable plumage came from common birds such as eagles, turkeys and parrots. These feathers were frequently dyed or used as background in tapestries.



Obsidian

Obsidian is a shiny, jet-black rock found only in volcanic areas. It can be sharpened to a bladed edge for use in knives and swords, or polished to reflective smoothness for use in mirrors. Many magical formulas also required obsidian.

This lightweight and useful stone became one of the earliest trade items in Mesoamerica. Its color ran pure, cloudy, streaked or spotted. When chipped, color can be seen in the thin flakes: the greenish variety is rare and more valuable than the more common grayish version.

Contests

Competitive poets may enter their works in the annual contest of Texcoco. The GM should create artists competing in the same category as the PC. Their only required characteristic is the skill they will use, though completely-formed personalities make interesting opponents!

Several weeks or days before the contest, the player states his intention to compete and describes his general composition to the GM. The GM may award modifiers based on the originality and creativity of the composition. The GM then determines the amount of time it will take to create the work. Assume a maximum of ten days minus (skill/4, rounded down). Thus someone with a skill of 16 in Poetry will take six days to compose a poem, while one with a skill of 14 will take seven days.

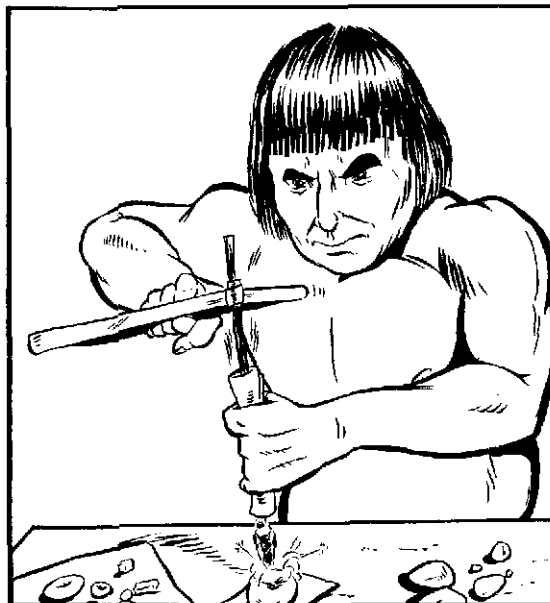
At the end of each day, roll against the appropriate skill. Success means the poem meets the schedule for the day. A failure means "writer's block" and adds an additional day. A critical failure imposes a -1 on the final work; a critical success rewards a +1. These modifiers are cumulative.

On judgment day, the PC uses a Contest of Skills (p. B87) plus all modifiers against each competitor. If he wins, his literary reputation gives him +1 for all uses of the winning skill until the next competition and a +2 for all uses of the specific composition. The GM can add suitable material awards, which should be more symbolic than valuable.

Poetic Competitions

Nobles often challenged each other to friendly competitions of poetic one-upmanship. To issue the challenge, a lord sent a messenger to his rival bearing a poem. The rival responded in kind. The messages continued over time until both nobles mutually agreed on a winner. The sex of the poet was irrelevant; men and women competed as equals. Of course, sometimes the end of the contest meant a marriage proposal and acceptance.

PCs can simulate this agreeable pastime by using a regular Contest of Poetry Skills (p. B87). To make the contest even more interesting, both poets should bet valuable possessions on the outcome.



Sculptors carved free-standing and relief statues of the gods and the famous. Painters then decorated these statues and created frescoes on the exterior walls of public buildings. Potters made vessels out of clay and stone. And weavers made marvelous realistic and abstract designs on mantles and skirts.

The Aztecs also excelled in several unique forms of art.

Featherworking

Chief among all the arts was featherworking. Using a palette of colored plumes, the featherworkers created religious, animal and abstract designs on shields and clothing.

Only the nobility could afford to wear these expensive items. The most skilled artists could create landscapes on large tapestries.

The best feathers flowed into the city as tribute from the tropical lands inhabited by colorful birds. Whenever possible, the hunters trapped their prey rather than shooting them. They plucked only a few plumes before releasing each bird.

Lapidary Arts

Jade was the most valuable precious stone, followed by turquoise. In 1519, the best jade came from the Gulf Coast. It ranged in color from apple green, the most precious, to dark turquoise blue. Either color could have strands of white. Turquoise was traded from mines in what is now Arizona and New Mexico. Both types of stones adorned not only jewelry but shields, weapons and sculpture. Mosaic masks were also a common application for these valuables.

Precious Metalworking

Gold was the most precious of all metals and skilled artisans used it to decorate everything from large stone disks to tiny earrings. Other important metals were silver and copper. The latter was not only used for jewelry but in tools such as axes and as currency.

Spoken Arts

Poems, songs, historical tales, descriptions of the world, hymns, speeches and legends formed the literature of the Aztecs. Because writing was difficult and inexact, most of these works were memorized.

The literature and poetry of Texcoco rose above all others in Anahuac. One of its kings, Nezahualcyotl, proved an accomplished poet whose compositions are still revered today. He encouraged the growth of the arts in his city by holding contests of skill where the awards were great and the prestige even greater.

Huehuetlatolli

Speech was the most highly prized of the literary arts. Náhuatl had a formal mode that promoted eloquence of speech. This mode generally elevated the person being spoken to and ranged from celebratory speeches to poetry to riddles. Well-performed speeches made listeners laugh or cry.

Banquets, public events, weddings and even council debates were occasions to show off one's skill with the language through *huehuetlatolli* (Ancient Word). These long-drawn-out speeches were full of elegance, repetition and metaphor. Roll on the Bard skill to determine success with this type of language art. This

excerpt from the *Florentine Codex* shows how a dignitary greeted the election of a newly installed ruler:

"O master, O ruler, O our lord, your vassals here take, here grasp, here rejoice in, here take pleasure in the little, the small bit of your spirit, your word, which comes forth, which sparks forth; that which our lord gave you, which he placed within you: the precious, the wonderful, the incomparable, which lies inert, lies folded in your lap, within your breast."

Poetry

Poetry, songs and hymns were important spoken forms. Lords and ladies did not belong to high society unless they showed great poetic skill. Through his work, the poet expressed Aztec feelings about gods, love, or the world. Many of these compositions were for individual performers, though some were for cho-
rales and orchestra.

New songs and hymns, especially about the gods, could not be used unless approved by the Caretaker of the Songs, as described on p. 63. Roll against the Poetry skill to determine success of a composition.

Riddles

Because riddles required a quick mind and an adept tongue, they marked their users as being well-educated and coming from good families. Here are a few from the *Florentine Codex*:

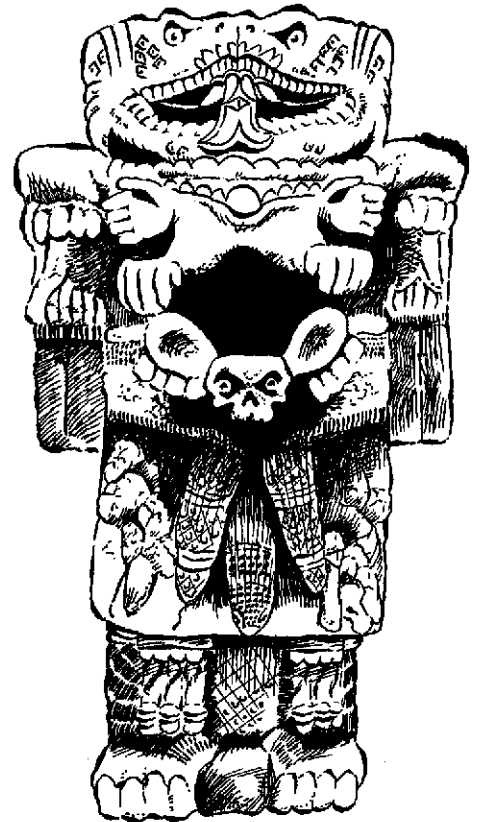
What is a small blue gourd bowl filled with popcorn? The crawling snail.

What is a small mirror in a house made of fir branches? The eye.

What is a small white stone holding a quetzal feather? The onion.

What enters the forest with its tongue hanging? The axe.

What drags its entrails as it proceeds through the gorge? A needle.



Common Metaphors

Aztec speech depended on repetition and metaphor to emphasize an idea. For example, a much-admired hero was described as "incomparable, precious, like green turquoise, like smoke and mist" all in the same sentence. Phrases like these (from the *Florentine Codex*) can impart a Náhuatl flavor to all sentences.

Reed chest: someone who can keep a secret well, as a reed chest keeps valuables.

Dusty, filthy: someone who became a ruler by deception.

Heart, blood: cacao, because it was just as precious.

In all places: someone who meddles in other people's affairs.

In the clouds or *In the mist*: great and noteworthy or something never before seen, such as the Spaniards.

Know-It-All: means the same thing as it does today.

Jaguar mat, eagle mat: a brave and unconquerable person or city.

Smoke, mist: a great person whose fame and glory outlives him.

Straw: a lie.

Swallow-mouth: someone who talks too much, like a twittering swallow.

Sweeping, gathering of rubbish: errands or service to the city.

Sweet, fragrant: a city with much happiness or a ruler that brings contentment.

Tail, wing: commoners.

With eagles, with jaguars: war.

Paper

The Aztecs developed different types of paper for use in different situations. Codex paper was made of strips of deerskin, carefully scraped, skinned and beaten until soft. The pages were covered with limewash to provide a brilliant white background for the colorful pictographs. The pages of these books were attached at the edges to form an accordion-style codex. Some of these codexes reached 20 feet in length when fully opened, with paint on both sides. The covers of the codex were made of leather or board, pasted at both ends.

Cheaper paper came from the bark of the wild fig tree or from *meil* fibers. These papers created banners, clothing for idols, insignia for priests and other disposable items used in rituals and sacrifices.

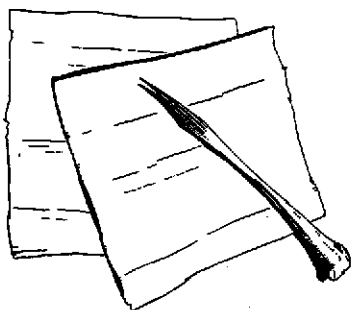
Gambling

Though gambling was a social evil, everyone enjoyed it. From a simple game of *patolli* to the more spectacular *ollamalitzli*, bettors wagered food, valuables and sometimes people. Desperate gamblers often wagered themselves into slavery or offered their lives.

Sometimes entire cities went into the pot. In one ball game, Emperor Axayacatl bet the marketplace of Tlatelolco against the gardens of Xochimilco. He lost ungracefully to the King of Xochimilco, and sent some of his soldiers to the king's palace to congratulate the victor. One of the soldiers threw a garland of flowers around the king's neck . . . and strangled him with a hidden thong.

Common Pictographs

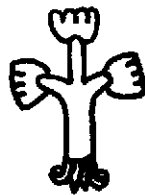
The GM can require players to use pictographs for their writings and maps to add a little flavor to the game. The writers may agree on a simple set of common symbols. Alternatively, they can research and use Aztec pictographs such as those shown in the main text. These came from Warwick Bray's *Everyday Life of the Aztecs* (Bibliography, p. 126).



The Use of Language

Aztecs can try to use either *huehuetlatolli* (Bard skill) or Poetry to impress others. The player must create and recite an impromptu composition. Once the recitation is complete, the GM rolls on the appropriate skill. A success increases the reaction of the listener(s) by 1 for 15 minutes. A critical success so dazzles the listeners with eloquence that they react to the speaker with a +1 for the entire day. A critical failure offends the listener for a -1 reaction for the rest of the day.

Pictograms



Tree/forest
(quauitl)



Teeth
(tlanthi)



Mountain
(tepetl)



Stone
(teitl)



Flint knife
(tecpetl)



Rabbit
(tochtli)



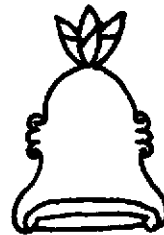
Quauhnauc



Quauhtitlan



Tepetitlan



Tecpatepec



Tochtepecan



Tenochtitlan

Written Arts

The Aztecs used three types of picture writing that did not express the language exactly but acted as a memory aid. The pictograph portrayed a realistic object such as a mountain or an eagle. The ideograph showed ideas; a burning temple suggested conquest, a footprint indicated a journey. The final form was phonetic and used pictures that sounded like the words they wanted to express.

For example, the place Tochpan comes from two words: *tochtli* (rabbit) and *pan* (on top of, over). The closest symbol used for *pan* is either *pano* (to cross a river on foot) or *pantli* (flag). Thus, the pictograph for Tochpan shows either a foot or a flag on top of a rabbit.

While many in the nobility could read, writing was a separate skill that required not only literacy but artistic skill as well. Therefore, scribes were a highly regarded group.

Quick drawings in black lines with a reed pen were sufficient if a scribe took notes from court. But they were incomplete without the carefully applied details and color that made each pictograph a miniature painting.

The colors came from natural materials and were never mixed. Red was made from cochineal, a scale insect. Green came from plants or minerals. Blue came from chalk dyed with flower petals, or a clay. Yellow and orange also came from minerals. The rare color purple came from a shellfish off the coast of Oaxaca.

Performing Arts

Daily religious celebrations demanded performers ranging from accomplished solo singers to casts of chorales, musicians, actors and dancers. Secular performances were also popular entertainments in the marketplace and during banquets.

Emperor Moctezuma, among many, took music very seriously. Only the best of the city played before him. An excellent rendition meant lavish praise and gifts for the performers. A bad one (critical failure) meant death.

Most Aztec instruments were rhythmical or percussive. Rattles, bells, whistles, gourds with seeds and the conch shell were popular. Rhythms were struck out on a two-tone log drum, or *teponaztli*, with a rubber-tipped mallet, or a smaller, upright drum, the *ueuetl*, using both hands. The melody was provided by the human voice or by flute.

Professional dancers, sometimes elaborately costumed in the regalia of gods or animals, performed in the marketplace, on public stages, or in private homes. Dancers often wore bells or other musicmakers on their clothing. Props in the form of artificial trees, mats, or furniture decorated the stage. Every class of society, including the emperor, participated in these spectacles at times, but each person danced according to his place in society. For example, in a circle, important people danced near the center, so they could move slowly and with dignity. Commoners danced toward the outside, which required more effort to keep up.

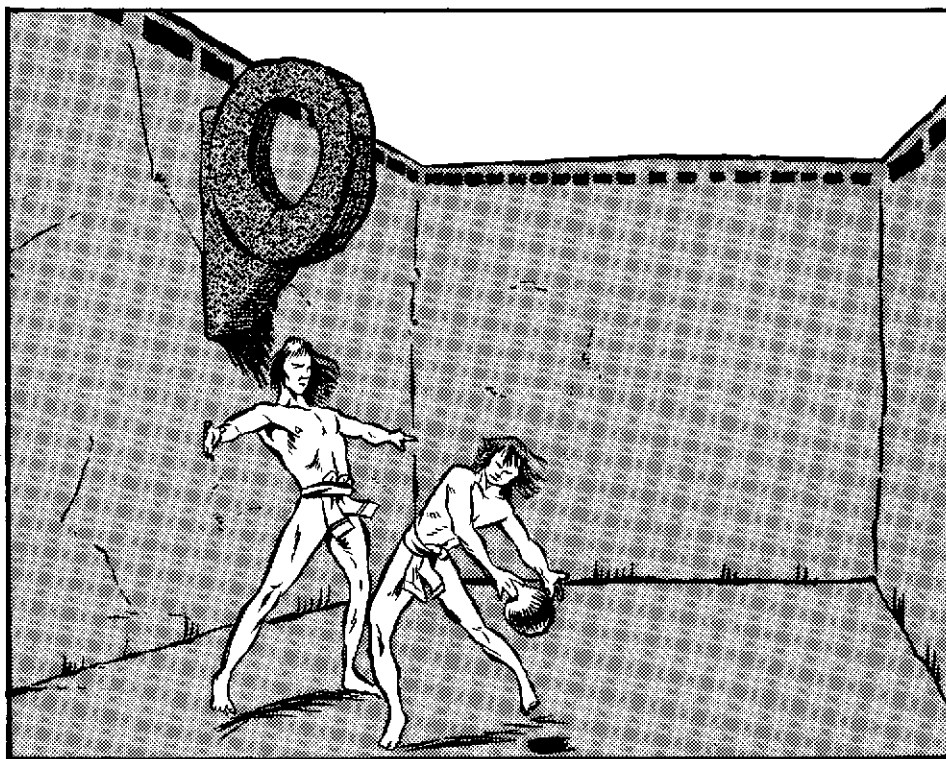
Volador

Volador, meaning “flyer” in Spanish, was executed from a tiny platform at the top of a high pole. The pole was ritually prepared from the finest tree of the forest and christened as a deity.

One performer danced and played the drum on the high stage. Four others, dressed as macaws to symbolize the sun, tied their feet to the pole and hurled themselves into the air. Each “flew” around the pole 13 times while playing a flute. The flights totaled 52, equaling the 52-year cycle.

Sports and Games

Aztec life was not all fatalistic or routine. Many sports and games were popular.



The Importance of Weeping

Shedding tears showed that a person was honorable, humble and penitent. Tears proved suffering and perseverance. Thus, weeping was an appropriate emotion for anyone under appropriate circumstances. Gods might require a sacrifice of tears. A person often showed his devotion to Tezcatlipoca, for example, by “weeping and sighing for [the god’s] sake.”

A PC may attempt a +1 reaction by weeping under such appropriate circumstances as begging for forgiveness, losing a battle, hearing a moving elocution, or under great suffering. (Weeping in the middle of combat, bargaining, or in the middle of a celebration is childish and lunatic.) Roll against Acting skill to produce appropriate tears.

Alternatively, the GM may allow the *player* to act out the attempt to weep. No roll is needed – but if the *player* is unable to produce tears to the GM’s satisfaction, the character suffers a -1 reaction for being insincere.

Social Ideals

Toward the end of the 15th century, the Aztecs developed an ideal of law and order to counter hundreds of years of savagery and disorder. The ideal man or woman maintained self-control and discipline, was reserved and composed, respected and had a sense of responsibility for other people, especially elders. Those who behaved boorishly and loudly, regardless of rank or breeding, were criticized as buffoons.

Courtesy and politeness were valuable traits, and the higher the class, the more severe, humble, self-controlled and moderate the person had to be. When addressing one of higher status or the elderly, one had to use the polite form of the language. Manners were everything. The ideal Aztec washed his hands before and after a meal, and ate slowly and carefully.

Courage was also a highly-valued trait. The most honorable way to die was on the battlefield or as a war captive sacrificed at a temple.

But the Aztecs were not always stony-faced. Appropriate circumstances called for appropriate emotions. For example, after a victory or during a dance for a religious festival, warriors needed to celebrate and to show joy.

Wise Men

The wise *tlamatinime* (Knowers of Things) embodied the best of Aztec knowledge. They were the best users of spoken and written Náhuatl. These philosophers composed and sang songs and poetry to discover the truth. As teachers, they reproached and asked questions of all people, to help them find themselves.

Unfortunately, some wise men were charlatans who faked the knowledge they did not have. Worse yet were those scholars who used their discoveries for selfish gains. Many purported to be sorcerers, or controllers of the dark arts, who paralyzed people to rob them.

Adventurers can attempt to find the meaning of life or other questions from these philosophers. A small village might have no true scholars at all, but if there is such a person, he will be easy to find. Large cities can have hundreds of learned men of unknown background, each with specialties in common and esoteric subjects.

Use the Streetwise skill to locate an appropriate scholar. The GM should give bonuses for intelligent questioning and large cities. The city of Malinalco (p. 26) gives a +1 to any such search, or a +2 for diviners and sorcerers. See also *Hirelings*, p. B195.

Once located, the philosopher may be genuine or a charlatan, wise or foolish. (The GM should roll for appropriate characteristics.) Detect Lies can be useful in determining if the scholar is a phony. But only an appropriate knowledge skill roll or an actual test can decide if the answer given by the *tlamatinime* is correct.

Crime and Law

Laws were just and harsh in Aztec society. The higher the status of the offender, the more severe the penalty. For example, a commoner who became drunk in public received a stern warning. A noble was executed. Punishment came only after a fair trial.

Courts

Court officials consisted of the judge who decided each case by questioning the witnesses, (there were no lawyers); his constable, who actually went out and arrested any criminals for trial; scribes, who took meticulous notes of each trial; and finally, messengers and announcers, who delivered all edicts.

Continued on next page . . .

Ball Game

The ball game of *ollamalitzli* had its roots in antiquity. Courts are prominent in many ruins. The game was played on a *tlachtli*, a long stone court, flanked with two high walls on which spectators sat. A small stone ring jutted out from the center of each wall. Only nobles played the game.

Two teams of from one to six players used only their hips, knees and elbows to shoot a rubber ball through the ring. They wore padding, kneecaps, leather aprons, half-masks, chin pieces and leather gloves. Still, the game was brutal. Hits to the stomach or belly were common, causing internal injuries. Excellent players received insignia and the honors of royalty.

The game depicted the struggle of the sun. One ring represented the entrance to the underworld and the other the exit back into the world above. During important games, a sacrifice could rededicate the court to the sun god. After such a game, the losing players were also sacrificed!

The game had its divinatory side. A few years before the Conquest, Nezaualpilli, king of Texcoco, had predicted that the kingdom of Moctezuma II would be destroyed by strangers. To test whether this prophecy was true, Moctezuma challenged the king to a match. The Texcocan was so sure of his prophecy that he bet his entire kingdom against three turkeys. Though the emperor won the first two matches, Nezaualpilli won the last three to prove the truth of the prophecy.

Patolli

All classes played the board game *patolli*, which was similar to parcheesi. A pattern of 52 squares in the shape of the letter X was painted on a reed mat or wooden board. Each square represented a year in the combined solar and secular cycle. The throw of dice-like beans determined the movement of stones from square to square. The first player to move his stone back to his starting square won. If one or more beans stood on end after a throw, the roller also automatically won. Some people became so addicted to the game that they always carried the board and materials with them, playing on any excuse and betting themselves into debt.

Life Stages

Each stage of life had its own set of rituals.



Birth

Because the Aztecs valued their children greatly, a pregnancy occasioned banquets, parties and speeches by friends and relatives. The midwife constantly accompanied the mother at this point. She constantly diagnosed the condition of the pregnancy by feeling the belly, prescribing herbs and medicine, and advising the patient to avoid certain behaviors and bad omens.

When the child was born, the parents consulted a soothsayer to find the daysign under which it was born. Twenty days after birth, the parents presented gifts to the schoolmasters so the child would be accepted at an appropriate school when it came of age.

Childhood

Children received their first education at home. A boy learned to carry water and wood and to go to the marketplace. From ages 7 to 14, he learned the family trade such as fishing or hunting. A girl learned spinning and weaving, food preparation and cleaning the house.

Self-discipline, practical arts and hard work formed the foundation of all education. The children led a severe life, receiving only half a tortilla per meal at three years of age – increasing gradually to two tortillas at 13. Punishment reinforced all lessons: impertinent children were scratched with thorns, held over the fumes of burning red peppers, or bound and forced to sleep on the damp ground.

Education continued later in life at two schools. The children of commoners studied at the *telpochcalli*; those of the nobility went to the *calmecac*. Pupils of one school disliked the students of the other. This antagonism burst forth during Falling Water, a month in which boys fought each other in mock battles.

Boys from both schools wore a single lock of hair that sprouted from a bald head. This lock was shaved off only if the youth captured an enemy in battle.

Telpochcalli

From age 15 to 20, the children of commoners attended the *telpochcalli*, if they were male, and the *ichpocacalli*, if they were female. Every city district had one of each. The school was administered and taught by distinguished local men who had proven themselves in war, religion, or commerce.

At the boys' school, students learned how to fight in war, serve their gods and become good citizens. They practiced combat with blunt weapons and shields made out of wood. Boys could interrupt their schooling any time to act as bearers or pages for warriors during battle. These bachelors lived in the community house for males.

At the girls' school, students learned the domestic arts of cooking, cleaning, and serving man and family.

Calmecac

Children of nobles and traveling merchants, and those aspiring to priesthood, attended a more rigorous school, the *calmecac*, beginning at age 5 or 6. Unless the child was very young or the child of the king, he or she also lived there. Tenochtitlán had six such schools, with the most important located within the Temple District.

Students learned all the lessons of the *telpochcalli* as well as literature, art, songs, reading, religion and sometimes writing. Most of the instructors were priests or knights. Women additionally learned how to embroider beautiful designs.

When the boy was ready to go to war, usually at age 20, his parents offered gifts to a veteran warrior so that he would take charge of their child during battle.

Marriage

Between age 20 and 22, most Aztec men married, except for priests or children of great lords. (Most females married at 15.) They entered full adulthood at this time, entitled to a plot of land and occasional distributions of food and clothes.



Crime and Law (Continued)

The first courts were usually at the towns, villages and individual city districts. Judges at these courts arrested criminals, presided over somewhat less important cases, or did fact-finding for difficult and complex cases. More important cases went to the regional courts at Tenochtitlán and Texcoco.

The final court for the entire empire was the court of appeal, which sat at Texcoco. In each session of 80 days, 12 judges met every day to decide important and difficult verdicts. A case lasted a maximum of one session, because all business had to be concluded before the next tribunal could convene. Sentences were carried out immediately.

Punishments

This list of crimes and punishments is not comprehensive. The GM is free to create his own penalties.

The first offense of public drunkenness brought a public head-shaving for commoners and the loss of office and titles for nobles. Continual abuse brought public strangulation for commoners (as an example to children) and private strangulation for nobles.

For stealing, commoners became slaves of their victims until they repaid double the loss – once as compensation and another as fine. Nobles received death.

A judge who took bribes was reprimanded for small offenses. On the third offense, his head was publicly shaved and he lost his office and any chance at future offices. Serious bribes brought immediate dismissal or execution. High government officials convicted of bribery or backsliding were also killed.

Parties found guilty of adultery were stoned and then thrown in the river. However, impartial witnesses had to support the accusation. The word of one spouse over the other was not enough.

Other crimes which carried the death penalty for all social classes included treason toward the empire, creating a public scandal and pandering. Men who entered chambers that sequestered maidens, and the women who invited them, also died.

Science and Technology

The Aztec's sophisticated architecture and mathematics were Tech Level 2. Their weaponry, without metal, was only TL1. Their government, law and art would have been the envy of cultures with much higher tech levels!

The Spanish conquistadors were at TL4, with gunpowder weapons, sailing ships and cannon.

Numbering System

The Aztec counted by 20s. The numbers 1 to 19 were written as filled circles. A flag represented 20, a feather 400 (20×20) and a pouch represented 8,000 (20×20×20) or the number of cacao beans it held.

Measurements

The Aztecs measured items by number or by volume and not by weight. Basic measures of length included the hand and a man's armspan. A common gauge of height was from the ground to as high as a person could reach above his head.

Transportation

Because Mesoamerica lacked beasts of burden, everyone traveled on foot. Those near lakes or rivers relied on pole- or paddle-driven canoes. Only noblemen could afford to be carried around in litters borne by groups of porters. The emperor himself was always borne by high-status nobles whenever he left the palace.

Communications

Though most people did not write, graduates of the *calmecac* could read. Thus, most communicated through memorization and word of mouth. Messengers stationed at three-mile intervals ran messages or transported light cargo so quickly that the emperor, in the center of the Valley, could have fresh fish from the Gulf Coast. The travails of such a messenger make a good solo adventure.

Power and Light

Slaves and citizens provided much of the muscle power needed for construction and maintenance. Light came from the sun. During the day, the sunlight of the central courtyards flooded the surrounding rooms. At night, clay or stone braziers and pine torches provided illumination. Because pine torches sputter and crackle noisily while throwing hot pitch about, they are not a suitable light source for explorers wanting to venture quietly among ruins.

They were entered into the *calpulli* register, with the land they got, the tribute they owed and their professions.

Though proposals always came from the man, both families arranged the marriage after consulting a soothsayer. Because the parents of both parties owed each other dowries, they bargained heavily. In fact, by custom, families would never accept the first offer. The families communicated through an old woman, a go-between. When the time was right, the family of the man asked the family of the woman for permission to marry at a banquet thrown by the man's family.

A couple who wanted to skip parental consent ran off together, especially if they could not accumulate all the gifts and material needed for a wedding. After a period, the young man visited the woman's family, begged forgiveness and promised to live as husband and wife.

In both cases, the wedding involved much feasting, drinking and gift-giving. The go-between or a priest tied together the man's mantle and the woman's blouse to signify wedlock. In the coming days, the relatives of the couple would help them build a house on their allotted land and furnish it.

Either the man or wife could divorce if deserted or abused by the other. Women received custody of the children and property was equally divided. Both parties could then remarry.

A man could have one official wife and several concubines. Although only the children of the official wife inherited, the other children were entitled to all respect and consideration. A concubine often plotted to sow discord between a man and his wife, so the concubine's children would inherit instead of those of the official wife.

Old Age

Those who survived beyond the average lifespan of 40 years received much honor and respect. They received pensions, sat on councils and advised the young. At gatherings, they got shamelessly drunk on *octli* and recited long-drawn-out speeches that advised, warned and castigated the attendees.

Medicine

Medicine mixed religion, magic and science. Religion blamed disease and sickness on the wrath of deities. Magic used spells and incantations to cure curses from evil sorcerers. Science applied the healing chemicals of herbs or first-aid techniques such as splinting to injuries.

Because most Aztecs knew at least basic herbalism and first aid, medical professionals were varied and highly specialized. Midwives helped women in childbirth; diagnosticians divined illness with sorcery and priests healed through the power of the gods. The professional physician usually combined both sorcery and herbalism to treat a patient. Though quacks and charlatans were severely prosecuted, they were common.

Healers usually diagnosed a problem by visual inspection. The diagnosis and cause was confirmed by fortunetelling, such as by reading maize kernels or by measuring the length of the patient's arm with the physician's hand. Some wounds had obvious physical causes such as a combat injury. Others stemmed from religious causes. For example, Tlaloc caused respiratory ailments and Tezcatlipoca induced contagious diseases.

If the disease was neither physical nor religious, it was assumed to be caused by an evil sorcerer. Diseases could be left on the road or placed in an object to be picked up by an unfortunate person, or cast directly on a victim by a vengeful foe. Diagnosis generally involved a public identification of the mysterious sorcerer. This often led to family feuds and long-standing vendettas.

Cures combined spells, herbs such as tobacco, prayers to the offended god and common sense such as bandaging an open wound.

Common New World diseases before the Conquest included dysentery, influenza, pneumonia, arthritis, viral fevers, worms, nutritional deficiencies such as goiter, food poisoning and tuberculosis.

TENOCHTITLÁN

Tenochtitlán (Place of the Prickly-Pear Cactus) was the capital of the Aztec empire. This island-city boasted canals, temples and clean streets, and a population of over 300,000. Most of its citizens proudly proclaimed their Aztec heritage, but the rest hailed from every area of the empire. The population rose to 1,500,000 with the inclusion of the surrounding lakeshore towns.

2



Government and Bureaucracy

The capital suffered under the worst bureaucracy of the empire. An army of religious and civil officials erected departments around the smallest tasks. (The Spanish complained that even the sweeping of streets was governed by a priest.) Most of these administrators lived and worked in the palace.

Succession

Many high offices were hereditary in practice, including those of emperor, city ruler and district chief. Succession usually fell to the eldest son. If no immediate male descendants were available, the position went to the eldest son of a daughter. Women could not inherit positions.

If the official lacked any descendants, succession passed on to the closest male relative. As a last resort, an unrelated noble of the same status filled the office.

In all cases, the heir had to have the talent to administer and rule. Otherwise, he was unceremoniously replaced by a more competent official.

If the heir was too young to rule, an older male relative became his regent. Regency was a lifetime position – the heir did not rule until the regent died.

The Emperor

The emperor stood at the apex of this bureaucracy, ruling the city and the empire that were granted to him by the gods. Theoretically, he was selected from a pool of qualified individuals. In practice, all the emperors were related. As the *Huey Tlatoani* (Revered Speaker), his primary mission was to serve his divine patrons and to protect and defend the people.

As an inspiring example, he obeyed all laws and practiced moderation and generosity. After floods or bad harvests, he distributed grain and clothing from his personal stock. He only appeared in public on very important occasions. For the

Moctezuma II

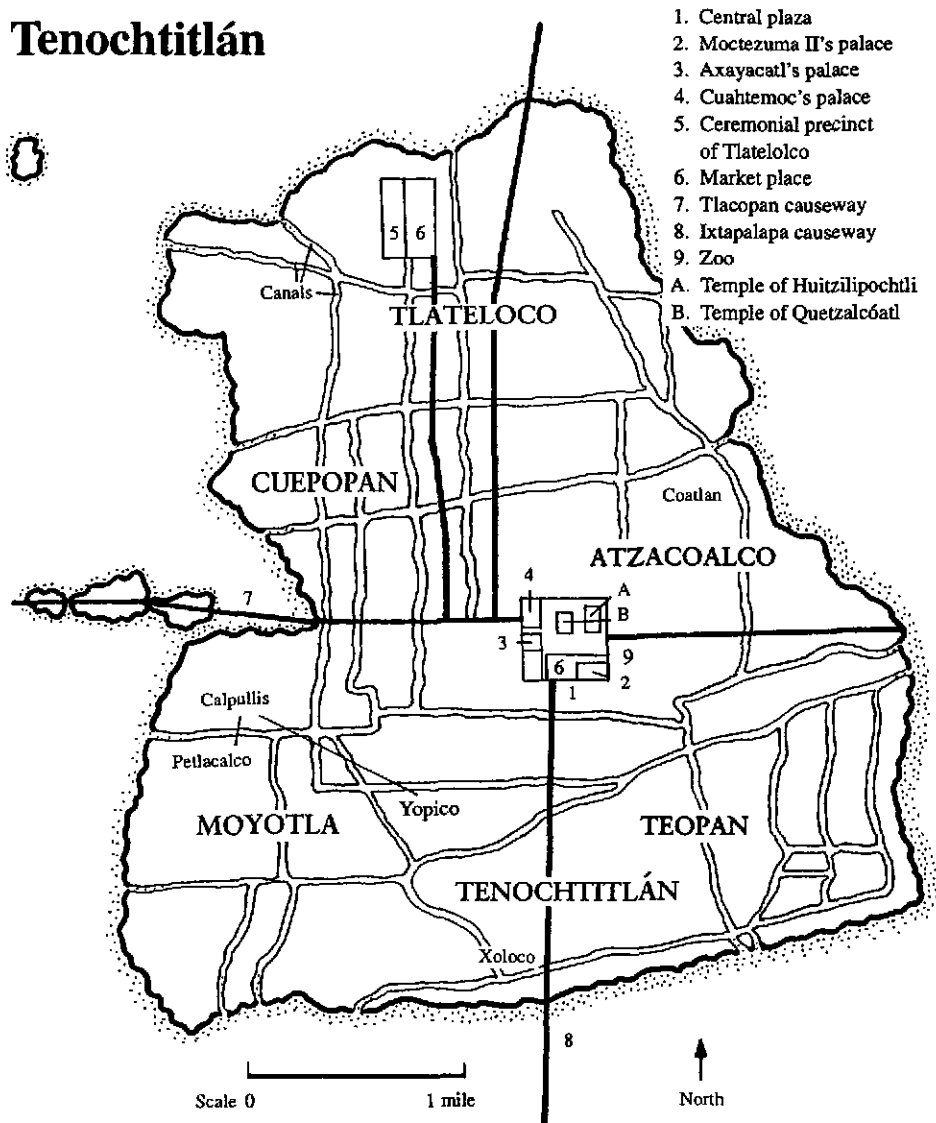
Moctezuma II ruled the empire from 1502 to 1520. Besides expanding its boundaries as his predecessors had done, he changed the laws about clothing to make himself and his warriors appear more powerful. For example, he ordered that all his visitors dress in poor *metl* clothing and appear barefoot.

To ensure the loyalty of his tributaries, he invited the sons of nobles from cities throughout the empire to study at the capital. There, he supervised their indoctrination into the Aztec way of life and held them hostage against rebellion by their home cities.

Moctezuma fit the Aztec ideal of an emperor. He was austere, proper and just. He was lavish with his punishments and rewards. Once, while visiting tribute farmlands, he absent-mindedly picked an ear of corn to eat. A tenant farmer popped up among the stalks and chastised the emperor for disobeying his own laws and stealing corn. The emperor praised the courage and impartiality of the peasant and made him a department minister.

Like many of his subjects, the emperor held strong religious beliefs. His faith foretold the fall of his empire long before the Spanish arrived. Resigned to fate, he welcomed the strangers into his capital and died trying to convince his subjects to do the same.

Tenochtitlán



most part, all the Aztec emperors lived up to their ideal and expected their subjects to do the same.

In exchange for this responsibility, the emperor received many privileges. He ruled absolutely and controlled all administrative and military affairs. Only he could wear certain types of clothing and jewelry. He also had first choice of all tribute items that flowed into the city, to keep or to personally award to valiant warriors or deserving citizens. He commanded the respect, loyalty and obedience of everyone in the empire.

The Snake Woman

The *ciuacóatl* (Snake Woman) was the male vice-emperor whose title came from the goddess of war. He alone appeared before the emperor without removing his shoes. He received second pick of tribute items and was the supreme judge of all law. He was also the emperor's advisor and acted as emperor on his death. He convened the council to elect the new emperor.

Councils

The empire supported two important councils. The Great Council or *Tlatocan* consisted of a dozen nobles who advised the emperor on matters of state. These included the top judges, merchants and market supervisors. The War Council consisted of the top generals and distinguished warriors who helped the emperor plan military campaigns.

Quarters of the City

The capital embraced two major cities on the same island. Tenochtitlán, the capital, occupied more than two-thirds of the land and was the center of imperial government and the military. Tlatelolco had been an independent city before it was swallowed up and stripped of self-rule by the Aztecs. It remained the seat of imperial trade, containing both the largest market in Anahuac and the trader's guild headquarters.

As the map shows, Tlatelolco contained two parts. Tenochtitlán had four quarters: Atzacolco (Place of the Herons), Cuepopan (Place Where the Flowers Bloom), Moyotla (Place of the Mosquitoes) and Teopan (Place of the Gods). These names described the chief characteristics of each quarter. For example, Teopan contained the Temple District, home of the Aztec deities.

Calpullis

Each quarter was organized into *calpullis*, which roughly translates to "district" or "clan." Each *calpulli* contained members who shared a mythical common ancestry and belonged to the same profession. Occasionally they accepted outsiders as members but this was discouraged. Even young people were encouraged to marry only from within their district. A person's primary loyalty after his family was to his *calpulli*, even above that to his ethnic group, city, or nation.

A typical district would have a community center or *tecpan*, a *telpochcalli* and *ichpocacalli*, and at least one temple devoted to the district's chief god or *calpultéotl*. This god was more important to the *calpulli* member than any of the other gods of his city or nation, because this deity watched over his clan.

The *calpulli* was a self-governing body that had its own rights separate from the city. In fact, a district could withdraw from one political unit and ally with another, sometimes with violent effects. Military units were organized by *calpulli*, and when traveling, citizens tended to stay within their clans.

Calpulli Officials

The district was governed by a *calpullec* or district chief, who served for life. He did not make any decisions without consulting his council of elders. This body's primary duty was to track the population and lands under their jurisdiction.



Finding A Location

The Aztecs did not name streets or buildings, or otherwise identify locations with signs. Most structures presented the same blank, white facade to the street.

Locations can be referred to by city, quarter, and *calpulli* and by their distance from a major landmark. For example, a house can be described as near the temple of Xipe Totec in the Yopico district, in the Moyotla quarter of the city of Tenochtitlán.

Land Ownership

Land could not be privately owned. All land belonged to a *calpulli*, a temple, or the state. Any of these entities could grant ownership of a piece of land to an individual, who kept it so long as he put it to good use and could pass it on to his sons. However, if the person moved away or if his land remained unused for three consecutive years, it went to a more deserving person. Land was never redistributed if its owner was ill, elderly, widowed, or a minor. It was simply worked for the disabled owner.

If too few people were available to work the land, or if the district needed to raise funds, the district rented its land to outsiders for a share of the harvest.

Every adult male received a piece of land from the *calpulli* once he married. By 1519, almost no such land existed in the city. Many city dwellers had to travel to the lakeshores or to the country to obtain land. State holdings were usually granted by the emperor to nobles or valiant warriors. These estates usually lay far from the city and were overseen by a helper and worked by field hands.

Populating the Calpullis

We know the names of some of the districts, the professions associated with them, and whether they supported a *calmecac* and temples. The GM can populate other *calpullis* freely because no records of them have survived.

Axotlán: *Pochtecas* (traveling merchants).
Amanla: Featherworkers, painters, seamstresses, dyers.

Atempan: Healers, soothsayers.

Atlauco: *Pochtecas*.

Auchtlan: *Pochtecas*.

Huitznahuac: Nobles, fishermen. Contains a *calmecac* and temples to Huitzilopochtli and Xochiquetzal.

Itepeyoc: Nobles.

Itzulco: *Pochtecas*.

Pochtlan: *Pochtecas*.

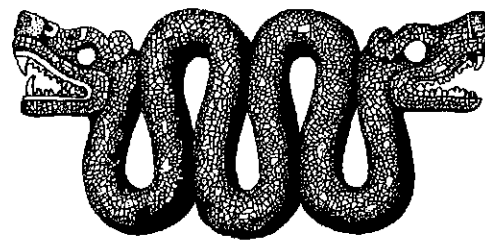
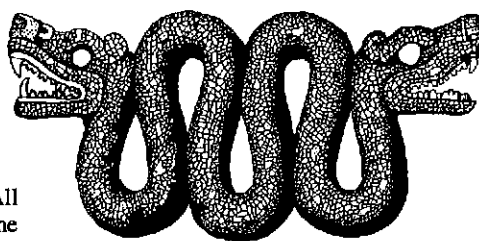
Tepetitlán: *Pochtecas*.

Tlamatzinco: Pulque sellers, drink sellers. Contains a *calmecac*.

Tzonmolco: Dressmakers for nobles, merchants. Contains a *calmecac* and temple to Xiutecutli.

Tzapotlán: Medicine sellers.

Yopico: Goldworkers, florists, water dealers, nobles and kings. Contains a *calmecac* and temples to Xipe Totec and Tezcatlipoca.



District records included a map of all parcels and their boundaries and who was responsible for what land.

One of the chief's dubious privileges was to feed and entertain the council, who met frequently at his house. In exchange for his services, the district chief did not have to pay tribute, as this was supplied by his *calpulli*.

Another important district official was the judge, who presided over relatively unimportant cases. He used the services of a constable to apprehend criminals.

Infrastructure

The surrounding Lake Texcoco provided only salt water to the capital. Fresh water came from two aqueducts: one connected to the two freshwater lakes, another joined to a spring at Coyoacán. Large, hollow bridges spanned several points in the aqueducts to allow people to cross. Watersellers straddled these bridges and for a fee, poured fresh water into the jars of the waiting boatmen beneath them. The canoeists transported the water to various parts of the city. At least one public fountain supplied drinking water in the city center.

Four causeways connected the city to the mainland. Made of a soft, volcanic stone called *tezontli*, each measured 21 feet wide and stood 15 feet above the lake bed. Occasional gaps allowed canoes to travel from one lake to another and allowed water to pass through during storms and floods. These gaps were bridged with large cypress and cedar timbers that could be removed for defense. The causeways connected to other parts of the empire through well-drained but unpaved roads. Where paths crossed mountains or steep hills, ropes provided handholds.

For a long time, even the causeways were not enough to prevent flooding in the city during the rainy season. To prevent these annual deluges, Moctezuma I built a ten-mile-long dike in 1449, using a plan developed by the King of Texcoco. Nezaualcóyotl's dike ran north and south from Atzacualco to Iztapalapan, protecting the city from lake overflows. The dike also decreased the salinity of the water so that it could be used for irrigation.

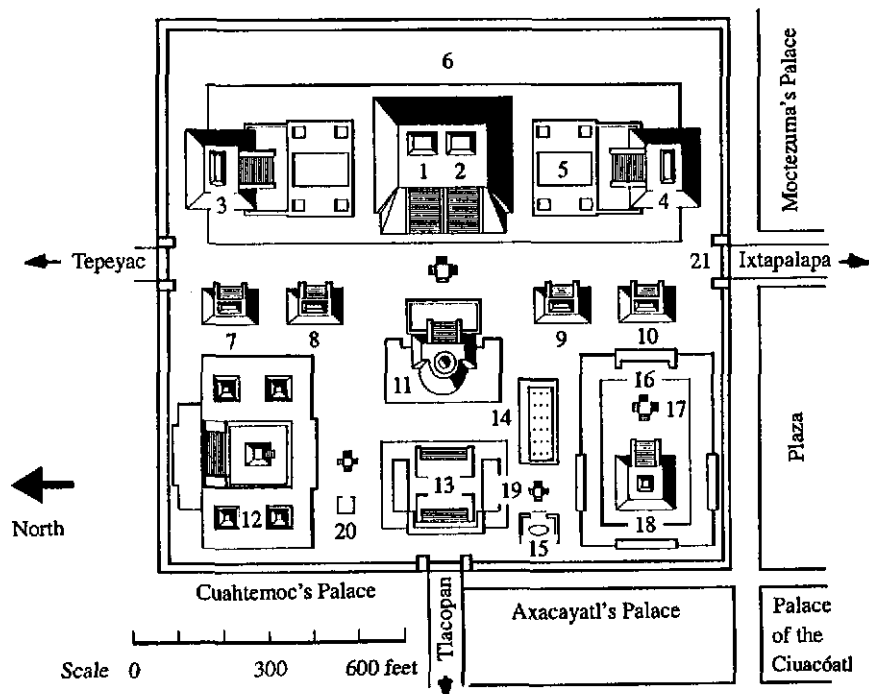
Dozens of canals, each with accompanying footpaths, crossed the city, allowing thousands of canoes to enter. The boats carried bulky goods to market or to individual homes, most of which had a dock or fronted at least one canal. Because canoes were either poled or paddled, they went no faster than a walker. Thus, they rarely transported people and usually only to outlying islands that were not connected by road to the city.

Officials guarded all entrances and ports to the city. They collected a duty on all items brought inside.



Map of the Temple District

The map is from a model by the architect Ignacio Marquina, on display at the National Museum of Anthropology in México City.



- 1-2. Great Temple to Tlaloc (1) and Huitzilopochtli (2)
3. Unknown temple
4. Temple of Tezcatlipoca
5. Assembly rooms
6. Houses and gardens of Great Temple priests and servants
7. Tlillan or Temple of the Foreign Gods
8. Temple of Cuauacatl
9. Temple of Chicomecatl
10. Temple of Xochiquetzal
11. Temple of Quetzalcatl

12. Calmecac
13. Ball court
14. Tzompantli or skull rack
15. Toxpalatl or holy waters
16. Temple of Xipe Totec
17. Platform for gladiatorial sacrifice
18. Temple of the Sun
19. Raised platforms for performances
20. Teutlalpan or sacred garden
21. Gate of Eagles

The Temple District

The most important district in the city was the Temple District, which contained all the important religious buildings of the empire. The precinct was surrounded by the Serpent Wall, which ran 1,320 feet from east to west and 990 feet from north to south. The wall was decorated with carvings of snakes devouring humans. Three of the four great causeways ended at the gates of this wall. The most important entry was the Eagle Gate, above which stared a stone eagle, flanked by a bear and a jaguar. Sahagún reported over 70 buildings in this district. We know the exact locations of only about 30, shown on the map.

The Great Temple

The Great Temple stood over 10 stories tall and dominated views of the city. Over 100 twin steps ran down the western flank. This edifice was crowned with two sanctuaries. The one for Huitzilopochtli had a red, pyramidal roof decorated with white stone skulls. That of Tlaloc had a roof with vertical blue and white stripes. Typical of all Aztec temples, each sanctuary contained only one room, with a statue of the associated deity raised on a platform of stone.

In front of each sanctuary was a 18"-square *tezontli* stone. Priests laid each sacrificial victim here on his back, stretching and bending his body to expose the

Tezontli

Tezontli is a volcanic stone that is light, durable, porous and easy to cut. Its strength made it a favorite building material in the city, especially for roofs or any areas where weight was a consideration.

Layers of the Great Temple

In 1978, cable diggers in the main plaza of México City stumbled upon the circular stone statue of Coyoxauqui. That discovery led to the remains of five Great Temples, each building on the foundations of the previous one. The earliest foundation, erected in 1400, already boasted two shrines to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. Seeping groundwater discouraged further excavation of an earlier mud-and-grass temple, possibly built in 1325.

Other Palaces

Each of the previous emperors, as well as the *cuauacatl*, had his palace, not too far from Moctezuma's. Servants carefully preserved these historic buildings and their original contents. Foreign dignitaries often lived in these palaces, if only to be reminded that Aztec glory extended far into the past and not just the present.

The Royal Zoo

Near the palace stood a royal zoo with many buildings set in gardens of exotic plants and fruits. One aviary was devoted to the tropical birds. Hummingbirds, parrots, pheasants and cardinals, among others, provided work for more than 300 attendants. These attendants also carefully collected any dropped plumage for use by the featherworkers.

Another aviary contained birds of prey such as eagles and vultures. Over 500 turkeys fed these predators daily.

Another building housed beasts such as jaguars, coyotes and foxes. In one room, large vessels held all kinds of harmless and venomous snakes.

A final room held so-called human "monsters." These were people such as albinos, dwarfs, hunchbacks and others with physical deformities. Though an army of servants satisfied their every whim, they could not leave their cages.

A Royal Steward Explains Protocol

"This is your first audience with the emperor? How nice for you. Our Revered Speaker is in a severe mood today, so pay attention to my instructions.

"Remove your sandals. I would not care if you were the emperor of the Otomís, you must appear barefoot in his presence. Now change into those mantles. Yes, those poor, *meñ* ones. No one can appear better dressed than the emperor.

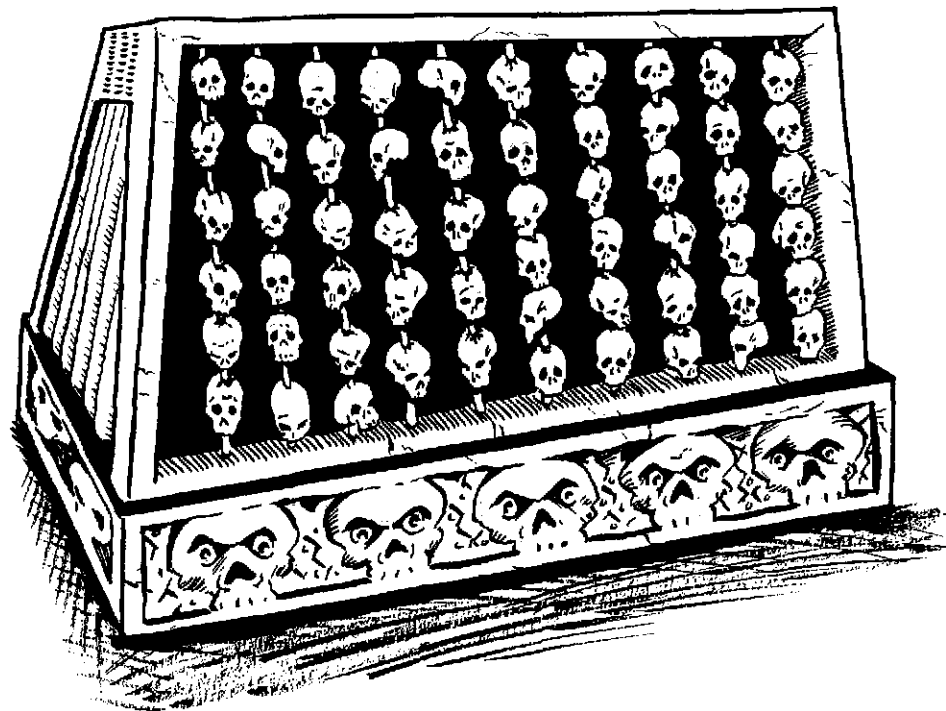
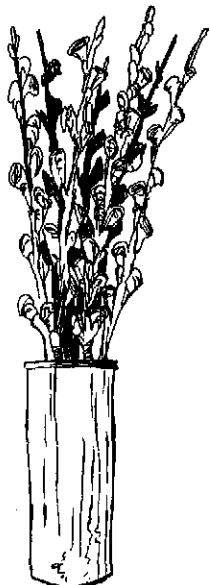
"Let me see you crawl. Bow your head to the ground a bit more. This is how you approach our Highness. He will eventually order that you rise, but you must remain in a squat and avert your eyes from his blinding glory. Your first words to him must be 'Lord, my Lord, my Great Lord.'

If your father ever taught you humility, this would be the time to practice it: use the respectful form of Náhuatl and invent as many titles as you want. 'Lord of the Sun' and 'Esteemed Ruler' are two you might try."

Flowers

Flowers were important to the Aztecs not only because of their beauty and fragrance but also because of their symbolism. Among other things, flowers meant poetry and death. They were common gifts at banquets; even men wore flower garlands. Gifted florists arranged blossoms into artificial arbors for ceremonies. Marigolds and other blooms grew in the courtyards or on the flat roof gardens of private homes. The best flowers came from the *chinampas* of Xochimilco.

Aztecs of good breeding always carried a bunch of flowers, occasionally smelling the sides of them. It was bad luck and bad taste to smell the center of a flower because this was reserved for bees and butterflies, who were really the gods and spirits in disguise.



chest. They ripped his body open with a stone knife and tore away the still-beating heart. The heart was thrown into a large, nearby container.

At the dedication of this temple alone in 1487, as many as 20,000 captives were sacrificed. Their blood stained the upper white steps of the Temple a bright red, which later dried to a dull brown. These steps were flanked by a balustrade of snakes, representing Quetzalcóatl. At the top of the stairs stood sculptures of humans, used to hold standards and banners for special occasions.

The Great Temple Complex

Flanking the Great Temple were two slightly smaller temples. One belonged to the god Tezcatlipoca, chief of the Aztec gods. The other remains unknown and can be used by the GM for a special deity. All three temples were joined by a complex of buildings and patios, used to plan and stage the elaborate ceremonies. Behind the complex stood the gardens and quarters of the Temple clergy.

Other Temples

Although the base of the temple of Quetzalcóatl was pyramidal, the sanctuary itself followed an unusual circular shape. The entrance formed the mouth of an enormous, multi-fanged snake, the symbol of the deity. Only nobles could enter here. Most chose to do so only when the sun completely swallowed up the Morning Star, a transformation of the deity. At such times, they sacrificed only one warrior to feed Quetzalcóatl and ensure that the god would appear again. This was the only sacrifice ever performed to this deity.

The temple of the Sun joined the temple of Xipe Totec through a patio and buildings in which the Eagle and Jaguar Knights lived. Between these two structures stood a small stage, on which combatants fought gladiatorial sacrifices.

Fronting the Great Temple were three smaller temples to various gods. The fourth temple, *Tlillan*, contained dozens of idols, each belonging to a city or nation that the Aztecs had absorbed into their empire. These deities were imprisoned here as a symbol of the superiority of the Aztec pantheon. But this sanctuary also provided foreign visitors a temple in which to worship their gods.

District Buildings

The most frightening features of the Temple District, at least to Spanish eyes, were the *tzompantlis* (skull racks). Every temple in the city had one close by. The largest of these in the Temple District had a base carved with stone skulls. Over 136,000 real ones stared from a wooden frame above the base. All belonged to victims sacrificed in the district.

Next to the main skull rack lay the most important ball court in the city. Beside it stood the best *calmecac*.

The district also held small gardens and natural enclosures. One, the *Teutlapan*, enclosed stones and cactus for hunting rituals. Another, the *Toxpalatl*, contained sacred water for official ceremonies only. Use of this water adds +1 to any spells or concoctions – for anyone, not just Aztecs!

City Buildings

Except for the temples, most city buildings stood one story tall. Toward the Temple District, the richer buildings were made of *tezontli* cemented with a lime-stone mixture. White stucco typically dressed the naked stone. Paint relieved the stark white exterior with colorful figures of gods, animals, or abstracts. Toward the outskirts of the island, poorer buildings were made of cane and clay. Wooden, thatched and stone roofs varied in shape from flat to square to conical and pyramidal.

The city was kept scrupulously clean. Workers immediately patched broken walls and applied a coat of stucco and whitewash to dull spots.

Near many temples stood the *tlacochcalco* (House of Darts), or arsenal. The most important arsenals were in the Temple District, though every quarter of the city had one.

Defenses

Though the city lacked a wall, many parts of it were defensible. An attacker's first obstacle was the moat called Lake Texcoco. The bridges crossing this moat could be removed to prevent invading armies from advancing.

Four forts guarded the causeways and main roads. These 12-foot-wide defenses were flanked by two towers and topped by a crenelated wall. Each tower used one gate for entry and a separate one for exit. A wall encompassed the Temple District.

The city itself sported many fortress-like structures. Buildings lacked windows and had only one entry leading into an open courtyard. Many had flat roofs with parapets, from which warriors could launch missile weapons at the enemy below.

Moctezuma's Palace

The emperor's palace comprised several buildings that formed a square, two stories tall and over 600 feet on each side. His private quarters and a chamber for visiting rulers dominated the second floor. The first floor featured all the government offices, the treasury, the prisons and the courts.

The palace featured several entrances and courtyards, as well as two armories. Over the main entrance hung Moctezuma's insignia, an eagle with an jaguar in its talons. Fountains and baths within were fed by the springs of Chapultepec.

Inside the palace, walls painted with frescoes supported ornately-carved wooden ceilings. The walls were also decorated with tapestries of wild animal skin, cotton paintings and featherwork. Incense burners scented the air.

Houses and Gardens

Poor urban homes and rural houses measured 10 by 15 feet with only one room. The only opening in the walls was a doorway, about five feet high, topped by a wooden lintel. Wooden beams and planks covered with thatch formed the



Stalls

The bustling *tianguis* held stalls selling hundreds of different sorts of good, grouped together according to their general class.

Raw Materials: adobe, animal skins, bricks, chalk, charcoal, colored paints, cotton, feathers, firewood, gold, grain, lime, paper, precious stones, resin, saltpeter, silver, thread, wood.

Tools: canoes, hoes, looms, metal axes, oars, punches, rope, staffs, stone knives, stoneworking tools, wooden shovels.

Domestic goods: baskets, braziers, brooms, gourds, mortars, *petlils*, pottery, stoneware.

Clothing: bells, blouses, cheap clothing, feathers, jewelry, ornamented skirts, precious stones, worked mantles.

Cosmetics and luxuries: axin, cochineal, perfumes, smoking tubes, tobacco.

Live animals: deer, dogs, doves, ducks, eagles, falcons, hares, hens, quail, rabbits, turtles.

Dead animals: birds, eggs, fish, hens, meat, mice, moles, rats, snakes, toasted ants, venison, worms.

Foodstuffs: amaranth, beans, berries, cacao, cherries, chiles, garlic, guavas, herbs, jicamas, leaves, leeks, maize, onions, pears, pinecones, plums, salt, sapodillas, seeds, yams.

Prepared foods: *atoli*, baked goods, bird pies, chestnuts, cooked fish, cooked meat, frijoles, honey, maize, *pinole*, restaurants, squash, stew, tamales, tortillas.

Services: barbers, canoeists, carpenters, herbalists, pharmacists, porters, potters, salters, slaves, traders, woodcutters.

Drinks: cacao, *octli*.

Cities

Anahuac is rich with locations to which an adventure party may travel for trade, espionage or war. Many of these cities were capitals of provinces or nations of the same name.

Cempoala

The largest city of the Gulf region, Cempoala was the clean and wealthy capital of the Totonacs. Its ceremonial center was encircled by walls for defense and to protect against the rising river during rainy season. Many other defensive walls were scattered throughout the surrounding farmlands. The center featured circular ponds and buildings. At the time of the Conquest, the city was ruled by a ruler whose girth earned him the nickname "the Fat Chief."

Cholula

This holy city boasted one temple for every day of the year. Its most important divinity, Quetzalcóatl, was revered as the patron of merchants. Cholula was a clean, well-planned city of 150,000 with solid buildings and regular streets. The city had been a famous trading center for centuries; at the time of the Aztecs, its inhabitants crafted exquisite metalwork, fine cotton and *metl* cloth and delicate pottery. Generally peaceful, the Cholulans were sometimes accused of being effeminate.

The pyramid at Cholula was the biggest in México, made of unburnt brick almost 180 feet tall. Legend told that giants who tried to raise a structure to the clouds built this temple. Angered at this presumption, the gods cast fires from heaven, forcing the giants to abandon their attempt. Tradition held that if the city was attacked, the priests could simply remove a stone from the temple wall on top, to send a deluge of water down on the enemy.

Malinalco

Malinalco lay south of the Toluca Valley, within the domain of the Matlatzinca. It boasted the best diviners and sorcerers of Anahuac.

The city also featured a holy pilgrimage temple for warriors. Nearly 700 feet above the valley floor, the House of the Eagle and Jaguar Knights grew out of the mountain bedrock. A staircase, guarded by jaguar sculptures, led to the jaws of a snake. Within, a circular chamber held sculptures of eagles, jaguars and snakes.

Continued on next page . . .

high-pitched roof. Three or four of these houses often faced a common courtyard. Members of the same family lived together in this compound.

Homes of the wealthy had three or four wings around a central courtyard. The walls glowed with white plaster, and colorful frescoes decorated inner walls and doorways. Interior floors were made of white stucco from which wooden columns supported the ceiling. Room entrances were left open to admit light or covered by curtains or mats that tinkled with bells. Awnings of cotton also shaded the patios.

The courtyard had a floor of dirt or white stucco and could contain a garden, animals, a well, or even a fountain. Earth covered the flat roof to serve as a garden. By imperial decree, only the homes of important lords and nobles could have a second story.

Typical residences included a kitchen, a sleeping room, a shrine and a separate bathroom. Wealthier families could afford separate rooms for men and women, storerooms, servants' quarters and reception rooms.

The most common piece of furniture was the *petlatl* (reed mat), which served as bed, seat and dining table. Occasionally they were raised on a platform for formal occasions, though chairs with backs, known as *icpalli*, also existed. False walls or large wicker baskets called *petlacalli* hid any valuables.

Ornate tapestries, rare animal skins and embroidered cotton decorated the homes of the rich. Additional furniture consisted of more *icpalli*, some low tables, and carved, gilded screens for partitioning rooms. In the evening, torches or braziers supplied firelight. Other decorative items included idols of gods, pottery and lacquerware for eating, and vases for flowers.

Every home centered on a hearth, used for cooking and sacrifices. Walking on the hearth stones offended the fire god and foretold death for the unfortunate trespasser.

Markets

A market acted as trading post, rumor mill, neighborhood tavern, public stage and employment agency. Thus, many people went there daily, if only to catch up on news and gossip.

Trading was allowed only in the marketplace and specific areas such as inns and craft workshops. Although deals were made anywhere, the actual exchange of goods had to occur in the marketplace. The Spaniards told how natives that they met on the road would refuse to sell them any goods until they had reached a marketplace, even if it was many miles away.

Markets met every day in the larger cities and every fifth day for the more important, regional markets. Certain trade centers specialized in certain goods. Tepeyacac, Acapetlayocan, Otumba and Tepepulco were famous for birds; Azcapotzalco and Itzocan, for slaves; Acolman for dogs; Cholula for jewels and precious stones and rich feathers; and Texcoco for clothes and rich pottery.

The Tianguí

Although the daily market of Tenochtitlán met on the main square in front of the palace, the most important market of the empire met at Tlatelolco. Here, the *tianguí* attracted 20,000 buyers and sellers every day and 60,000 traders every fifth day. The open plaza was guarded by a wall pierced at regular intervals by colonnaded entrances.

Sellers paid part of their goods as a tax before occupying a stall. Each stall was actually a large *petlatl* unrolled on the ground. Wares were divided in an orderly manner so that like goods were in like areas. Goods were sold by count and measure, not by weight. The *pochtecas* controlled prices, although they rarely traded in the markets. Common vendors did most of the selling.

Because the Aztecs were anxious to impress foreigners with their fairness, every city had a trade supervisor, who organized and supervised all markets in the city. His controllers roamed from stall to stall to ensure laws were followed and exchanges were fair. In case of disputes, they took both parties to the market judges, who rendered decisions on the spot under a cloth canopy. The guilty party

was usually fined a quantity of mantles or had his goods confiscated. Occasionally, offenders were mutilated or executed on the spot.

Texcoco

Ethnically Acolhuan, the Texcocans arrived in the Valley before the Aztecs did, at the end of the 12th century, and built their city near the shore. As a member of the Triple Alliance, Texcoco was the second most important city of the empire, with the second strongest military force and the second most important market after Tlatelolco. It had a population of nearly 400,000. The city ruled over 66 other cities and towns. Texcoco reigned as the center of culture and art and boasted that its Náhuatl accent was the most refined.

Along with its councils of finance, war and justice, the city boasted a council of music and sciences which judged all works on astronomy, history and art before they could be made public. The council also organized competitions for poetry and song. The king himself presented prizes to the winners. Punishment was meted out to those entertainers or artisans whose work fell short of established standards.

Tlacopan

Once the principal city of the Tepanec empire, Tlacopan "surrendered" without a fight to the Aztecs during the Aztec-Tepanec war. The king of the city was a son of Tezozómoc who coveted the Tepanec throne that belonged to Maxtla. In exchange for his support, the king was granted the crown of the Tepanec empire. This empire became an Aztec tributary and the city became the third member of the Triple Alliance.



Other Cities and Villages

Other significant Aztec cities are described in the sidebars on pp. 26-27. Even the smallest Aztec settlements had a temple, which could be in a small hut or a stone pyramid. This structure, typically located in the center of town, was closely guarded – destroying it would be tantamount to conquering the town. Near the temple was the town arsenal.

Larger cities would have a palace for the ruler, in which important government offices were located. Separate buildings might house the treasury, the public schools and public meeting rooms. In small villages, these functions were concentrated in the *tecpan*.

Tecpans

The *tecpan* or community center was the most important building in *calpullis* and small settlements. Like a city palace, it housed the local ruler, his family and government offices. However, while a palace was normally off-limits to the average citizen, the *tecpan*'s public spaces were open to all. This one-story building also housed the treasury, the community school, food storage for the town, meeting rooms and public sweatbaths.

This building was usually the most ornate and best-maintained of the settlement, even surpassing the temple at times. Many a *tecpan*'s structure and decoration were sources of civic pride to members of a settlement.

Cities (Continued)

Tlaxcala

Tlaxcala was the populous capital of a hostile nation of about half a million. Its market attracted 30,000 people on trading days. The city was split into four quarters, each under a separate ruler. The streets were dark and narrow, and the city was frequently plagued by thunderstorms.

Tulum

The Mayan town of Tulum was defended on three sides by a wall and on the fourth side by the sea. Compared with earlier Classic techniques, the city was sloppily built, with leaning walls hidden by heavy plaster.

Its main export was honey, derived from its important beekeeping industry. The city also acted as a jumping-off point for the pilgrim island of Cozumel, just off its coast.

Tzintzuntzan

Founded in 1000 AD, Tzintzuntzan was the capital of the Tarascans and practically their only city. By 1350, it sprawled along the shores of Lake Patzcuaro with a population of 35,000.

The city was divided into four quarters for the upper lords, lower lords, commoners and ethnic foreigners. Each quarter had separated *calpullis*. The main palace stood near a set of burial-temple platforms called *yacatas*, where kings lay buried with all their retainers. The palace included government offices, courts and storerooms. Nearby was a shrine of their chief god, Curicaueri, the patron of fire.

Xicalango

A major trading port for the Chontal Maya, this city perched at the edge of a lagoon, in an area noted for salt production. Its thriving market provided jade, obsidian, copal, quetzal feathers, cacao, emeralds, salt and finished goods as trade items between the Aztecs and the Maya.

Xochimilco

Xochimilco, a staunch ally of Tenochtitlán, gained wealth from its flower gardens, some of which grew on *chinampas* and remain to this day. Xochimilco also guarded a freshwater lake of the same name.

CHARACTERS

3

Aztec characters can be built on the standard 100-point base, with a general limit of 40 points of disadvantages and 5 points of quirks. Duty to a lord, state, or religion should be taken by almost all players. All Aztecs had skill in Theology (bordering on the fanatical, according to neighboring cultures) and low levels of Sacrifice (see p. 38). Some Heraldry skill is useful for interpreting the complex dress laws. As members of the militia, all males need skills in at least one weapon. Females must have Weaving skill.



Appearance

The Aztecs were shorter and stockier than typical Westerners, with skin color ranging from light to dark brown. The average male stood about 5'4", with women 5 inches shorter. Use the height and weight tables on p. B15, with the normal modifiers for pre-19th-century characters.

Their straight, black hair was styled according to social rank and status. Most men wore it cut short at the forehead and long at the sides and back. What little facial hair they had was considered unattractive and plucked out with tweezers. However, long, thin beards on elderly men denoted wisdom and character. Men often painted their faces in black, red, white, or colors appropriate to combat or ceremonies. They also stamped their faces with patterns from a clay stamp.

Women normally left their long hair loose. For special occasions, hair was braided, sometimes decorated with ribbons, and wound around the head. Women colored their skin with a light yellow cosmetic. Cosmetics such as rouge, tooth dye and perfumes were available but used only by prostitutes. Women of class relied only on cleanliness to enhance their charms.

Dress

Dress signified social status, wealth, tribe and occupation. At a minimum, men wore a loincloth called the *maxtlatl*. This strip of cloth went around the waist, through the legs and was tied to the front, leaving two ends. Men also wore a mantle of *metl* or cotton, called the *tlimatl*, which was a simple rectangle, tied over the right shoulder. When he sat, a man brought the cloak forward to cover his knees and legs.

A woman wore an ankle-length wrap-around skirt called the *cueitl*, tied at the waist with an embroidered belt. She had to take small steps to prevent the slit at the side from opening to reveal her knees. Higher-status women and city-dwellers also wore a blouse called the *huipilli*.

Jewelry

Common jewelry for both men and women included earrings, necklaces, bracelets and anklets. In addition, high-status males also pierced the septum of their noses and the skin below their lower lips for decorative plugs. Only the nobility wore feather headdresses, though women could wear feathers in their hair and as earrings. Fans, of varying materials, were considered the height of elegance, especially when carried on a public walk.

The most valuable ornaments were made of feathers, followed by jade and turquoise. Then came gold, rubies, sapphires, opals and pearls. Cheap jewelry was made from paper, wood, bone and even maize kernels.

Laws of Fashion

Each social class could wear certain types of clothes and jewelry. Unless otherwise noted, a class can use the attire of all the lower classes. The emperor could override these laws and often rewarded worthy citizens with the right to wear otherwise forbidden clothing on certain occasions.

Weapons cannot be worn during times of peace.

Character Types

Cosmopolitan Tenochtitlán nurtured all kinds of jobs, races and deities. When creating an Aztec, character consider his daysign first (see *Sacred Calendar*, p. 80) and his religious allegiances, as these will affect his career choices and his luck. Sec-

The GM should feel free to add more laws, as many were never documented. In most cases, the penalty for violating these laws is death. Heraldry can determine the correct attire to wear, or determine a person's social status and profession from his clothing. *Savoir-Faire* rolls are needed to know how to behave after such an interpretation.

Emperor: Gold diadem, turquoise nose ornament, turquoise blue mantle and turquoise blue helmet. Sandals. Headbands, armbands and anklets of gold. Fine cotton mantles of specific designs.

Snake Woman: Animal-skin sandals in the palace.

Great Lords and Foreign Kings: Cheap and common sandals in the city but no footwear in the palace. Headbands, armbands, neck chains, anklets and rattles of gold. Jewelry of gold, jade, precious stones and valuable feathers.

Hereditary Nobles: Lip, ear and nose plugs of gold and precious stones. Mantles extending below the knee. Mantle designs as specified by the emperor.

Knights: Cotton clothing. Eagle and Jaguar Knights: animal-skin war suits. Otontin knights: hair in a tassel, bound with red ribbon, feather war suits. "Shorn Ones": Shock of hair over the left ear, braided with red ribbon; blue paint on the left side of the head, red or yellow paint on the other side; open-weave mantles of *metl* fiber; feather war suits. Note that knightly attire may only be worn by members of the order. It may never be worn by non-members, even of higher status.

War Leaders: Gold diadem, but only on the battlefield, as the emperor's representative. Leather bracelets. Hair style as per Otontin knights. Animal-skin sandals in the city, but not in the palace.

Valiant Warriors: Cheap and common sandals in the city, but not in the palace. Hair style as per Otontin knights.

Warrior: Lip, ear and nose plugs of bone, wood, seashell, or cheap stones. Hair style depends on rank. Jewelry with common feathers such as those of the eagle and macaw. Lowest rank can grow a shock of hair on the right side of the head. During war, sandals and insignia as awarded. Short-sleeved tunics. Cotton mantles of the simplest type, extending below the knee only for warriors with disfiguring leg injuries.

Priests: Short-sleeved tunics. Jewelry according to priestly rank. Hair shaved at the front and the sides with a tuft at the top. Black body paint.

Traveling merchants (pochtecas): Poor *metl* fiber capes in public. In private or during special holidays, as per great nobles.

Commoners: *Metl*-fiber clothing. Cotton clothing is prohibited. Sandals of woven reeds, only on the highways.

Women: A blouse and skirt. The skirt begins short in childhood but grows longer with each passing birthday.

Boys: Under 13, they may go naked or wear a small mantle. At 13, they must wear a loincloth. They must shave their head except for a shock of hair grown on the left side. The hair was cut when the boy captured his first enemy and could then be worn in the style of a warrior.

ond, decide whether he was educated in a *telpochcalli*, *calmecac*, or not educated at all. The choice of schools affects the skills he learns. Third, choose the guilds, *calpulli* and lords to which he

owes duties and allegiances. This determines the paths he needs to take to rise in society.

Unless otherwise noted, jobs are open to male characters only.

The advantages, disadvantages and skills listed for each character type are merely suggestions unless they are specifically noted as being required.

Ambassador

The Aztec tributaries and enemies provided plenty of work for the ambassadors who negotiated alliances, tribute demands and war terms. Although the emperor could send anyone as an emissary, he most often used professionals who knew what they were doing and could also spy.

Advantages: Status 4+; Patron such as a lord or the emperor. Other advantages include Charisma, Danger Sense, Empathy, Intuition, Language Talent, Literacy, Reputation and Voice.

Disadvantages: Cowardice is easily hidden because emissaries need to stay alive to deliver information to their employer. Honesty is a true disadvantage for a representative of a devious lord or king.

Skills: Acting, Bard, Detect Lies, Diplomacy and Social skills for dealing with people. Area Knowledge, Heraldry, History, any Language (often several) and Law will help in dealing with foreigners. Combat skills, Escape, Holdout and Strategy are useful in case diplomatic negotiations break down!



Artisan

Artisans turned the raw materials imported by merchants into luxury goods for the nobles and anyone who could afford them. Craftswomen included weavers, seamstresses and cooks; few if any men held these positions. Expert artisans found permanent work with temples, lords, or the emperor.

Advantages: Wealth and Reputation, varying with experience and expertise. Featherworkers, goldworkers and jewelers have the most wealth and the highest status.

Disadvantages: Dependents, Overconfidence.

Skills: Depending on the Craft specialty: Armoury, Artist, Beverage-Making, Carpentry, Cooking, Featherworking, Flower Arranging, Jeweler (specializing in gold, silver, copper, jade, turquoise or any precious stones), Masonry, Metalworking, Sculpting and Weaving. For trading in the marketplace, important skills include Diplomacy, Merchant, Detect Lies, Politics (dealing with the nobility and guild members) and Teaching.

Bureaucrat

Though not a typical PC, the civil servant is encountered often as an NPC by adventurers who need to do anything in the city. Bureaucrats supervised everything from the trivial (sweeping of streets) to the important (collection of tribute).

Advantages: Alertness, Lightning Calculator, Literacy, Mathematical Ability and Patron (the city or a lord). Wealth and Status depend on the level of the bureaucrat in the administration.

Disadvantages: Addiction, Compulsive Behavior, Dependents, Duty (to the state), Greed and Miserliness. A bureaucrat with Alcoholism may be put to death if found drunk in the palace.

Skills: Accounting, Cyphering, Detect Lies, Heraldry, History, any Language (often several), Law, Research, Scrounging, Social skills and Streetwise, for some positions. Picture-Writing can be useful.

Constable

Every judge used at least one constable to gather evidence and to track down and arrest suspects. Constables carry a staff and usually range as far as the judge's jurisdiction, so a constable for the high court of Texcoco can arrest anyone in the empire. A PC constable can use a group of adventurers for support in long-distance arrests. Or a group of PC constables can work together to track criminals.

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers and a Patron (the judge) are required. Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Intuition and Reputation are valuable.

Disadvantages: Enemy (sometimes several), Stubbornness, Duty (to a judge or to the law).

Skills: Law is required. Brawling and perhaps other combat skills are necessary. Any Social skills, Acting, Disguise, Fast-Talk and Streetwise can help in gathering evidence.

Courier

Couriers took everything from messages to valuables to fresh fish between cities and villages. On the road they experienced dangers from wild animals, natural hazards and bandits. They were typically stationed every three miles, handing over their messages in relay. Sometimes a single messenger carried valuable cargo from the source all the way to the recipient.

Advantages: Eidetic Memory is useful for memorizing especially delicate messages and repeating them verbatim. Alertness, Danger Sense and Peripheral Vision would help in avoiding dangers. Absolute Direction will prevent getting lost. Night Vision might be useful for the rare night runs. A Patron is the one who hires the courier. Literacy would be rare though useful.

Disadvantages: Duty and Sense of Duty are common disadvantages. Cowardice can be hidden under the guise of needing to get the message through. Overconfidence can prompt the messenger to take unnecessary risks.

Skills: Running and Area Knowledge are necessary. Social skills are useful for getting along with the senders and receivers. Also useful are combat skills (for use against bandits), Holdout (for hiding valuables), Languages (sometimes several), Naturalist and Survival.

Courtesan

Female courtesans practiced their trade either as civil servants or freelancers. As civil servants, they worked for the city by accompanying unmarried warriors. Freelancers offered their services in the marketplace and streets.

Advantages: Appearance, Charisma, Common Sense and Intuition.

Disadvantages: Dependents (usually a child), Shyness, Youth.

Skills: Acting, Fast-Talk, Sex Appeal and Streetwise. Civil courtesans also need Dancing, Savoir-Faire and Singing for accompanying bachelor warriors to festivals.

Entertainer

Entertainers worked for themselves, a specific temple or lord, or if they were very good, for the emperor. Poets, buffoons, actors, singers, musicians, dancers and bards performed in the marketplace or at private parties, or emulated the gods in religious ceremonies. Most revered of entertainers were poets, singers and storytellers.

Advantages: Because most stories and compositions were memorized and not written down, Eidetic Memory is a powerful advantage. Other advantages include Attractiveness, Charisma, Empathy, Language Talent, Musical Ability, Reputation and Voice. Only rarely does an Entertainer need Literacy.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior, Compulsive Lying, Laziness, Lecherousness, or Overconfidence. For buffoons, certain physical deformities such as Dwarfism or being Hunch-backed (see p. 36) increase a crowd's reaction to performances by +2.

Skills: Depending on the type of entertainment: Bard, Dancing, Disguise, Fast-Talk, History, Languages (several), Literature, Musical Instrument, Poetry (for composing songs and poems), Singing, any Social skills and Streetwise. A traveling bard may find combat skills useful.

Farmer/Hunter/Fisherman

The producers of food made up the bulk of the population, even in the city, where many households had a small plot of land for farming. Many farmers worked only for themselves. Others were tenants, renting land from the lord and paying him a portion of the harvest. Worse off were the landless peasants, who owed everything to their master and could keep only a small part of the harvest for their sustenance.

Skills: Agronomy, Animal Handling, Fishing, Naturalist, Survival. Tracking and Traps, specializing in birds (whose feathers were a valuable commodity). Typical weapon skills include Knife, Bow, Blowgun, Darts, Spear Thrower and Spear Throwing, all for hunting. Hunting and animal control spells are useful!

Judge

The bloated bureaucracy, coupled with unwritten social and religious customs, created many laws that citizens obeyed . . . sometimes. This litigious society guarantees that the heroes will encounter a judge at least once. This position was usually awarded to citizens who were not nobles but who demonstrated keen legal skills.

Advantages: Appearance, Charisma, Literacy (for paperwork), Reputation (for impartiality), Status and Voice. Legal Enforcement Powers are also needed.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Lying, Honesty, Truthfulness, Stubbornness and a bad Reputation.

Skills: Law and Theology for interpreting both civil and religious custom. Acting, Bard, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk and any Languages are useful during court arguments. Social skills and Streetwise are needed for gathering evidence.

Noble

Though lords and ladies had many privileges, they also owed many obligations to their vassals had to follow a strict code of laws. Nobles held all top positions in government, law, religion, trade and the military.

Advantages: Patron (usually the emperor or a higher noble),

Wealth (in the form of lands and vassals) and Status of 4+. Most have the Literacy advantage.

Disadvantages: Alcoholism, Bully, Code of Honor, Duty, Enemy, Greed, Honesty, Megalomania and Sense of Duty.

Skills: Administration, Area Knowledge (of areas where his lands lie), Dancing (for festivals), Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, Heraldry (required), any Language (often several), Leadership, Picture-Writing, Politics, Religion, Savoir-Faire and any Social skills. Those with Bard and Poetry skills are highly esteemed. Lords need skill with high-status weapons: Axe/Mace, Spear, Spear Thrower, Sword and Shield. Their leisure skills include Ball Game, Gambling, Patolli and any of the honorable crafts: Agronomy, Featherworking, Goldworking and Jewelry.

Philosopher

The wise man, philosopher, or scholar was good at poetry, philosophy and literature. He memorized traditions to preserve them and taught them, usually under a temple, school or lord. False wise men only pretended to have knowledge, or if they did have such talent, they used it for personal gain.

Advantages: Alertness, Eidetic Memory, Intuition, Language Talent, Lightning Calculator and a Patron. True philosophers develop both Status and Reputations. Literacy is useful but not required.

Disadvantages: Age and any kind of physical disadvantages. Absent-Mindedness, Delusions, Gullibility, Honesty, Pacifism, Phobias, Shyness, Stubbornness, or Truthfulness are all appropriate. For false wise men, Greed is a common motivator.

Skills: Literature, Poetry, Theology and Bard are the most common. Other skills include Administration, Cyphering, Heraldry, History, any Language (often several), Law, Linguistics, Mathematics, Naturalist, Picture-Writing, Research and Teaching. Scientific skills are also common. False wise men might find Acting, Fast-Talk and Thief skills useful.

Physician

Many types of male and female physicians kept the Aztecs healthy. Some used magic exclusively, others concentrated only on scientific methods. The best physicians combined elements of both disciplines. The spells necessary for healing are described on p. 73.

Advantages: Empathy, Strong Will and Magical Ability.

Disadvantages: Addiction (to certain herbs such as tobacco), Dependents, Pacifism, Sense of Duty (to the patient or a deity). Physical disadvantages are common because they marked a person as having supernatural healing powers.

Skills: Medical skills, Naturalist and Area Knowledge (for herbs), high Theology (to consult the gods), Research and Diplomacy (for dealing with patients).

Priest

Many male and female priests acted as both clerics and administrators; this was the position in which a woman could rise to great power. A few priests fought wars in the name of their gods. They were part of a rigid religious and governmental hierarchy.

Advantages: Clerical Investment (required), Clerical Rank, Empathy, Literacy (required), Patron (the order or god) and Voice. A high-ranking priest may have both Status and Wealth. Magical Aptitude may be helpful.

Disadvantages: Addiction (to certain herbs), Duty, religious Fanaticism, Intolerance, Sense of Duty and Vows. A Vow of Chastity is required. Pacifism is a big disadvantage for those who feed blood to the gods. For those eager to sacrifice captives, Bloodlust is a common disadvantage.

Skills: Theology and high Sacrifice skills are required. Singing, Dancing and Disguise (to assume the guise of a god) are useful during the many public celebrations. Bard and Poetry are needed for sermons, creating new hymns and retelling myths. Magical and medical skills are also useful. Other skills depend on the specialty of the priest: Administration, Astronomy, Cyphering, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Heraldry, History, Law, Picture-Writing, Politics, Research, Savoir-Faire and Teaching. Those priests wanting to go into combat require skills usually afforded only to nobles: Axe/Mace, Sword and Shield.

Scribe

Writing was a difficult and time-consuming task done mostly by professionals. Scribes worked in law, government, or religion. Freelancers were rare. Scribes were in a unique position, being able to sit in on important negotiations or closed-door meetings with high-status citizens. Scribes are mostly encountered as NPCs, though adventuring groups may consider such a PC for his skill in drawing maps or reading obscure glyphs.

Advantages: Eidetic Memory, Literacy, Language Talent, Lightning Calculator and Mathematical Ability (for working with accounting or drawing daybooks), Patrons (the temples or lords who need writing) and Reputation.

Disadvantages: Duty, Gullibility, Honesty, or Impulsiveness.

Skills: Artist and Picture-Writing are required. Other useful skills are those related to the job, such as Law for the courts, Theology for a temple, or Administration and Politics for the government. Also useful are Languages (often several), Diplomacy, Heraldry, History, Literature, Mathematics and Psychology.

Soothsayer

Soothsayers predicted the best days for actions and were consulted almost daily by most Aztecs. Many different types divined the future in different ways, working either for a temple or for themselves (see *Divination*, p. 73). The most important soothsayer was the daybook reader (*tonalpouqui*).

Advantages: Eidetic Memory (to remember the signs and their meaning), Literacy (required for the daybook reader), Magical Aptitude (for Divination spells), Patrons (such as a temple, a *calpulli*, or a noble), Reputation (if good).

Disadvantages: Addiction (to herbs) or Compulsive Lying.

Skills: Any *real* soothsayer will have at least one Divination spell and Theology, for interpreting the will of the gods. Acting and Bard might be useful for embellishing prophecies, Diplomacy and Politics for telling unwelcome news, Diagnosis if the spell is used for illness and Naturalist for knowing the herbs to use. Psychology and Streetwise are also useful.

Sorcerer

Good and evil sorcerers were both everyday encounters. The public saw those connected to religion, medicine, or fortune-telling as good. Most others were considered evil.

Advantages: Magical Aptitude is required. Reputation and Status if good. Some sorcerers had Literacy.

Disadvantages: Physical disadvantages are common because they marked a man as having supernatural powers. Addiction is a common problem.

Skills: Any magical skills; all social skills might be useful. Skills would be related to the specialty: for example, sorcerers interested in thievery need Thief skills while those interested in enchanting might also have Armoury and Jeweler skills.

Spy

Spying was a dangerous though well-paid profession. If discovered, spies were usually killed on the spot. Those who returned from a successful mission often received lands as a reward.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Absolute Timing, Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Double-Jointed, Eidetic Memory, Language Talent, Literacy, Patron (usually the emperor or a lord) and Strong Will. Wealth and Status accrued to successful spies.

Disadvantages: Enemy and Overconfidence. Because spies had to stay alive and return with information, Cowardice is easily hidden in this profession.

Skills: Acting, Area Knowledge, Disguise and Language skills needed to pass as a native of an area. Any Thief/Spy skills. Other important skills include Acrobatics, Carousing, Climbing, Combat/weapon skills related to class, Cyphering, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Heraldry, History, Jumping, Law, Research, Savoir-Faire and Strategy.



Thief

Thieves can be common burglars or highwaymen. Some thieves are also sorcerers who paralyze victims before stealing their goods. Convicted thieves are either enslaved or killed.

Advantages: Alertness, Danger Sense, Double-Jointed, Luck, Night Vision, Luck – and for sorcerer-thieves, Magical Aptitude.

Disadvantages: Enemy (the law), Greed, Kleptomania, Overconfidence, Poverty and low Status.

Skills: Any Thief skills (except for Lockpicking, because locks did not exist), Acrobatics, Area Knowledge, Carousing, Climbing, Fast-Talk, Gambling, Jumping, Running and Throwing.

Vendor

Vendors are not traveling merchants such as the *pochteca* described in Chapter 7. Rather they are common peddlers in the marketplace. Many artisans were also vendors. The sex of the vendor can vary depending on the type of goods sold. For example, vendors of embroidered goods and foodstuffs are usually female.

Advantages: Alertness, Common Sense, Eidetic Memory, Empathy, Intuition, Lightning Calculator, Reputation and Wealth.

Disadvantages: Dependents, Greed, Miserliness, Overconfidence and Pacifism.

Skills: Merchant, Accounting and skills related to the merchandise (such as Cooking, for sellers of tortillas). Other important skills include Cyphering, Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, Holdout, Law, Scrounging and Streetwise.

Warrior (Knight)

War was a secondary vocation for most Aztec males. The only professional warriors were knights, who worked as trainers and

bodyguards when not at war, although non-professionals received the titles as well. Most other warriors were members of the militia who had other jobs in times of peace. PCs with other jobs can consult this category if they want to rise in the military as well.

Advantages: Common Sense, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Military Rank, Rapid Healing and a Reputation, if good. For knights or high-status warriors, Duties, Patron, Status, Vow and Wealth are common.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust is a bad disadvantage. Warriors who killed rather than captured would never advance in rank. Other disadvantages include Code of Honor (for knights and higher), Cowardice, Greed, Honesty, Megalomania, Overconfidence and Truthfulness. A warrior can also have an Enemy or go Berserk at times.

Skills: Combat/weapon skills appropriate to class are necessary. Also useful are Armoury, Climbing, Heraldry, Jumping, Law, Leadership, Running, Sacrifice, Strategy and Tactics.

Aztec Names

Aztecs had two names: the daysign name, such as Ce Calli (One House), and a nickname, such as Acolmiztli (Cat's Paw). They were typically referred to by the nickname, with the daysign to distinguish similar nicknames. Daysigns are explained under *Sacred Calendar*, p. 80.

Aztecs might use almost anything for a nickname – an object

like *Brilliant Jade*, a quality like *He Who Is Frequently Angered*, a plant or animal like *Rain Flower*, or a symbolic action such as *Eagle Going Into The Fire*. All names can be illustrated by a pictograph. Players may want to create pictographs for their PCs for use in scrolls and messages.

Aztec Male Names

Acacitli (Reed Hare)
Acamapichtli (Handful of Arrows)
Acolmiztli (Cat Paw)
Ahexotl (Water Willow)
Amacui Xolotl (Water-Taker Twin)
Auftzotl (Otter)
Axayacatl (Water Face, Water Fly)
Axolohua (Salamander)
Cacama (Little Ear of Corn)
Chalchiuhtlatonac (Brilliant Jade)
Chimalpopoca (Smoking Shield)
Citlacóatl (Snake of Stars)
Coatzontli (Snakes' Beard or Snakes' Hair)
Copil (Crown)
Cuitláhuac (Keeper of the Kingdom)
Cuaucoatl (Eagle's Snake)
Cuáutemoc (Descending Eagle)
Cuautlequetzqui (Eagle Going into the Fire)
Huémac (Big Hand)
Huicton (Little Digging Stick)
Huitzilfhuitl (Hummingbird Feather)
Ilhuicamina (Sky Shooter)
Itzcóatl (Obsidian Snake)
Itzquemitl (Knife Cape)
Iztahuatzin (Possessor of Salt)
Meconetzin (*Metl* Child)
Moctezuma (Angry Lord)
Nezaualcóyotl (Hungry Wolf)
Nezauallpilli (Hungry Prince)
Ocelopan (Jaguar Flag)
Opochtli (The Left One)
Popopoyotl (Maize Eaten at the Time of Poverty)
Quahcóatl (Eagle-Snake)

Quauhtlatoa (Speaking Eagle)
Quimichetl (Mouse Bean)
Ténoch (Stone Cactus)
Tenzacatetl (Lip Ornament)
Tezozómoc (He Who Is Frequently Angered)
Tizoc (He Who Made People Bleed)
Tlacahuepan (Human Beam)
Tlacatéotl (Godlike Man)
Tlacayeletl (Clear Is His Liver)
Totoquihuaztli (Repeatedly Stirred Fire)
Tziutecatli (He Who Takes Care of Green Herbs or the Turquoise)
Tzompan (Beard Flag)
Xiucaque (Owner of the Blue Sandals)
Xiucozcatli (Turquoise Necklace)
Xocoyol (Ankle Bell)
Xomimitl (Lower-Leg Arrow)



Aztec Female Names

Acaxóchitl (Lobelia Flower)
 Atototl (Water-Bird)
 Atotoztli (Water Parakeet)
 Cacauaxóchitl (A native flower.)
 Cuetlaxóchitl (Poinsetta)
 Eloxóchitl (Magnolia Flower)
 Icxoxóchitl (Yucca Flower)
 Ilancueitl (Old Skirt)
 Izquixóchitl (A native flower.)

Miahuaxiuitl (Turquoise Maize Flower)
 Nopalxóchitl (Nopal Flower)
 Omixóchitl (Tuberose Flower)
 Quauh-xóchitl (Plumeria Flower)
 Quiauhxóchitl (Mell Flower)
 Tiacapan (First Born)
 Tlaco-xóchitl (Bouvardia Flower)
 Uacalxóchitl (Philodendron Flower)
 Xiloxóchitl (A native flower.)

Advantages, Disadvantages and Skills

Most of the standard advantages, disadvantages and skills are available in an Aztec campaign, but some are used or interpreted in special ways, and several new skills are available.



Advantages

Allies

see p. B23

Allies include not only family and friends but members of the *calpulli* as well. They appear often to almost always. Other possible allies include guild associates, family in other districts, towns, or cities, or even an old teacher in the *telpochcalli* or *calmecac*.

Clerical Investment

see p. B19

The hierarchical Aztec clergy was as numerous as its gods. Most priests receive several spells, as well as advantages and disadvantages, depending on the gods or goddesses they serve. For information on the religious orders available and Clerical Investment costs, see pp. 66-70.

Literacy

see p. B21

Only the nobles, priests and merchants who graduate from the *calmecac* know how to read. This advantage costs 10 points. Note that Picture-Writing (p. 38) is a separate, artistic skill that is usually practiced only by scribes. Literacy is a prerequisite for that skill.

Military Rank

see p. B22

Military Rank in the Aztec army is equivalent to Social Status at no extra cost. A commoner can be a nonprofessional soldier

and still have military rank, although most of the higher ranks are held by nobles and professionals.

Note that all males are automatically a member of the militia and that this is not a military rank. For more information on military ranks, see pp. 50-51.

Level	Rank
7	Commanding General
6	General
5	Great Captain
4	Sharer, Veteran Warrior (Four captives)
3	Leader of Youths (Three captives)
2	Leading Youth (Two captives)
1	Captor (One captive)
0	Warrior

Those wanting to roleplay a rise in rank (by capturing several enemies, for example) may want to keep some points in reserve to pay for the new rank.

Patron

see p. B24

A patron can be a *calpulli* or its head (5 points), a temple or its priest (10 points), a lord or lady (10-15 points, depending on rank), the king of another city or town (20 points), or the emperor himself (30 points). Adventurers who have a Patron will typically need a Duty disadvantage to that patron.

New Advantages

Shapeshifting

15 points

Though typically a magic spell, the power to change one's shape to that of an animal can be inborn. As such, it is an advantage. However, most Aztecs consider shapeshifters to be evil. See p. 75 for more information.

Merchant Rank

10 points/level

Each rank has authority over lower ranks – regardless of individual skill. Because each merchant rank can also increase status and wealth, it costs 10 points/level. Merchant Rank is equivalent to Social Status and the indicated Wealth at no extra cost.

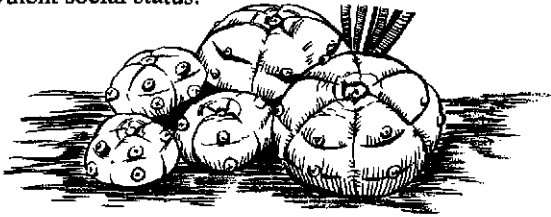
Rank	Title	Wealth
7	Supreme Merchant Chief	Filthy Rich
6	Market Judge, Merchant General, Chief Merchant	Very Wealthy
5	Slave Dealer, Disguised Merchant	Very Wealthy
4	Slave Sacrificer, Surrounders of the Enemy	Wealthy
3	Caravan Leader	Wealthy
2	Independent Merchant	Comfortable
1	Apprentice	Average
0	Merchant youth	Average



Religious Rank

5 points/level

Each level in the hierarchy of the clergy has authority over lower levels. Note that each order has its own ranks as well as an overall rank for all religious orders. Rank automatically awards the equivalent social status.



Rank	Title
7	High Priest of Huitzilopochtli, High Priest of Tlaloc
6	Vicar General
5	Keeper of the <i>Calmecacs</i> , Vice-Vicar
4	Keeper of Ornaments, Keeper of Performances, <i>Calmecac</i> Chief
3	Caretaker of Songs, Temple High Priests
2	Chorale Masters, Master of Youths (<i>calmecac</i> teachers), Priests
1	Deacons
0	Novitiates

Disadvantages

The Aztecs saw physical disadvantages both as weaknesses and as divine marks. Those with such handicaps were considered to have a divine nature. Because the handicap presented two faces, physical disadvantages were a double-edged sword. The deformed person was encouraged to be a healer or a sorcerer because he could share power with the gods. More commonly, because of his great religious energy, he was sacrificed when a deity was particularly hungry.

Addiction

see p. B30

Common addictive plants are tobacco (-5 points), peyote (-10 points), ololiuqui (-10 points) and cacao (-5 points). If the addict is not a noble and he is caught using cacao, he can receive the death penalty. Thus, for those of Status 3 or less, costs for addiction to cacao are doubled.

Age

see p. B27

The elderly are much respected by Aztec society and allowed privileges (such as drunkenness) not allowed to any other age group. Anyone over 50 gets +1 on reaction rolls. Anyone over 60 gets +2. This disadvantage costs -2 per year over 50.

Alcoholism

see p. B30

For those over 50, this disadvantage is worth only -10 because it is tolerated in the aged. For any others, it costs -20 because it can bring the death penalty!

Bloodlust

see p. B31

Because warriors rise in the military only by capturing enemies, not killing them, a warrior with this disadvantage may find it difficult to advance. This disadvantage is only worth -5 points to high-ranking priests, because they satisfy their bloodlust in a socially acceptable way, through sacrifice.

Code of Honor

see p. B31

Many social groups such as knights, merchants and nobles had rules of behavior that they had to follow. Disobeying these rules could mean anything from social rejection to death. See p. 51 for a short description of the rules for knights and nobles, and pp. 86-87 for those for *pochtecas*. Each of these codes is worth -5 points.

Combat Paralysis

see p. B32

A warrior who freezes in combat will survive his battle. But when he unfreezes, he will find himself securely bound, destined for sacrifice by the enemy. While veterans might ignore such a captive as being too easy, novices consider such bounty an easy entry to the higher ranks.

Dependents

see p. B38

Characters of marrying age (22 for men and 15 for women) at least have a spouse as a dependent and possibly a child. Those that do not want a dependent can take the Social Stigma of "unmarried."

Duty

see p. B39

Most Aztecs have duties, in increasing order of importance, to race or nation, city, guild, *calpulli*, and, most important of all, to family. Duties can also come from a temple, a lord, or the emperor. Even a high-status noble has a Sense of Duty to his vassals and the emperor.



Miserliness

see p. B34

Nobles must be publicly extravagant, dressing richly and distributing food and necessities to those under them, as needed. Merchants must be privately extravagant. For these two groups only, Miserliness is worth -15 points because it earns a -2 on reaction rolls.

Primitive

see p. B26

This is worth -5 points. Though the Aztecs believed all non-Aztecs to be barbarians, true primitive cultures existed all over Mesoamerica. The Chichimecs, at TL1, represent one such culture. Even within the empire, many towns existed that did not have the advanced technology of the capital.

Social Stigma

see p. B27

Unless you are a priest or the son of a noble, you must be

married by age 22 at the latest. Otherwise, you receive a -1 reaction from everyone. This is worth -5 points. Being a woman also gets a -1 reaction, except from her own sex. This is also worth -5 points.

Being a non-Aztec is worth a -2 reaction from Aztecs but +2 from others of your own kind. This costs -10 points. Being an Otomí in Tenochtitlán garners -3 from non-Otomís but +3 from other Otomís met outside your culture. This is worth -15 points.

Shipwrecked sailors and the like from outside Mesoamerica are treated as Otomís. However, reactions to Cortés and his party are treated differently, as described on p. 112.

Warriors who have not captured an enemy by their fourth battle receive a -1 reaction from everyone. This negative reaction increases for each subsequent battle that he does not get a captive, to a maximum of -3. Many warriors leave the military, rather than suffer further humiliation. This is worth -15 points.

New Disadvantages

Extravagance

-10 points

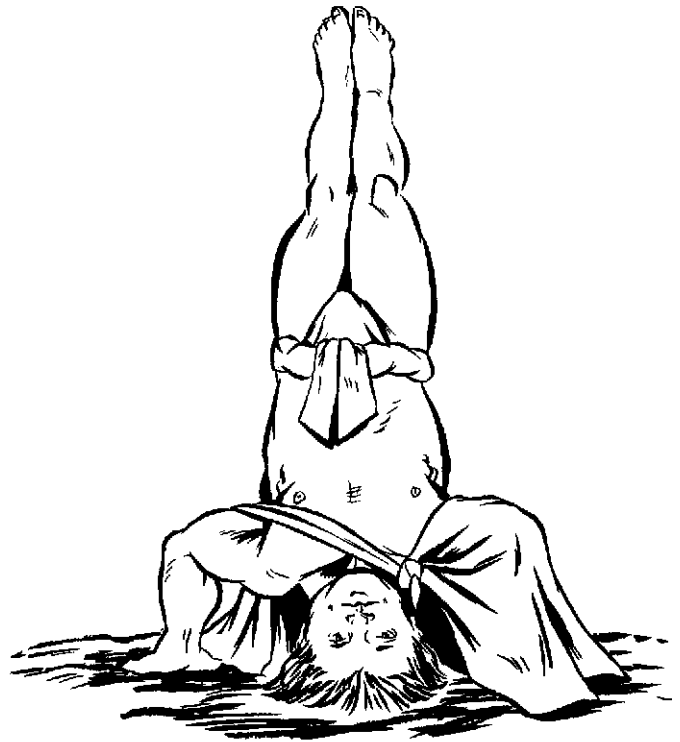
Extravagant citizens spend more money and wear showier clothes than their social class entitles them to. They often give gifts that upstage higher-status nobles. While the objects of this extravagance are grateful, higher-status nobles react to this inappropriate show of wealth with a -2 reaction. Upstaged nobles may drag such insolent citizens to court on some trumped-up charge or cause appropriate accidents and punishments.

Hunchback

-10 points

This spinal deformity is not crippling, but it is restrictive. The hunchback cannot hide his deformity, and will usually be noticeable in a crowd; he is also likely to be considered physically unappealing. A person with this disadvantage must pay double (10 points) for Attractive appearance (and that means a *remarkably* pleasant face and manner), and cannot take better than that (in fact, he is more likely to be *Unattractive*). He also cannot be better than 15 ST, 14 DX, or 16 HT, reflecting the problems of a slightly deformed physique. His height should be reduced by 6" if rolled randomly. He can wear normal clothing or armor, but it will fit badly; to look smart, specially-made garb is a necessity.

Superstitious NPCs (including any with manaphobia, and most "backwoods" NPCs in an *Aztecs* setting) will react to a hunchback at -1, as the affliction indicates a divine nature and possible danger! However, a hunchback acting as an entertainer – especially telling jokes, juggling, etc. – gets a +2 reaction from most audiences (a mixture of sympathy and comic effect).



Skills

Agronomy

see p. B59

Farmers can specialize in *chinampa* agronomy (recommended for those near the lakes) and aquaculture (for growing water edibles such as pond slime and insect eggs).

Combat/Weapon Skills

see p. B49

Combat skills must be appropriate to the class and profession chosen. At minimum, all males will have Sling and/or Bow skills as members of the militia. They may also have Spear Throwing. These are lower-class weapon skills. Graduates of the *calmecac* such as nobles, priests and some *pochtecas* can have shock weapon skills such as Axe/Mace, Shield, Spear (for the thrusting spear), Spear Thrower and Sword.

Heraldry

see p. B58

Heraldry not only covers insignia and emblems but clothing and hair styles as well. This skill lets you recognize another's social status, rank and wealth simply by the way he dresses. To react to them in an acceptable manner requires *Savoir-Faire*.

Most Aztecs will have Heraldry at low levels. Males (as part of a militia) and warriors need higher levels to distinguish the rank and titles of commanding officers. Certain artisans (such as featherworkers or weavers) will have this skill at the highest levels, to ensure their complex designs fit in with sumptuary and social laws.

Characters

Jeweler

see p. B53

Users of this skill must specialize in one or more substances: gold, silver, copper, jade, turquoise, obsidian, amber, gems, bone, wood, or shells. The GM can add other precious metals or stones as needed.

Language Skills

see p. B54

Náhuatl is spoken with varying degrees of skill by almost everyone in the empire and by many others in Mesoamerica. The Náhuatl spoken in Texcoco is admired for its grace and elegance. A Náhuatl skill of 16 or better is required to master this difficult accent.

Other languages include Totonac, Otomí, Matlatzinca, Mixtec, Zapotec, Tarascan, Huastec, Chontal, Yucatec (spoken on the Yucatán peninsula), and Quiché (spoken by highland Maya). All these are Mental/Average to Mesoamericans. Europeans can learn Mesoamerican languages, and Mesoamericans can learn European languages, as a Mental/Hard skill.

Lockpicking

Not available to Aztecs

There were no locks in Aztec society until the Spaniards came.

Poetry

see p. B47

Poetry covers the composition of poems, hymns and flower songs. Use Bard for storytelling, general speaking and for banquet speeches.

Theology

see p. B62

Most Aztecs, especially priests, specialize in one or more of the 1,600 gods in the Aztec pantheon. Theology also covers rituals, songs and dances, and the god disguises. Sacrifice is a separate skill – see p. 38.

Writing

Not available to Aztecs

The written word is not used to create or convey new information but as a record of the spoken word. Bard and Poetry skills are the spoken equivalents of this skill. Picture-Writing replaces Writing for Aztecs.

New Skills

Ball Game (Physical/Average) Defaults to DX-5 or ST-5

This is the skill of playing *ollamalitzli*. Only nobility (Status 4+) can have this skill.

Beverage-Making (Mental/Easy)

Defaults to IQ-4

This is the skill of preparing beverages such as chocolate and *octli*. It also includes the ability to identify and harvest useful beverage herbs such as *cacao* or *meil* fruit.

Cyphering (Mental/Easy)

Defaults to IQ-2

This is the ability to do simple mathematical manipulations – add, subtract, multiply, and divide. In Aztec society, where illiteracy is the norm, this skill must be specifically learned. It is necessary to any but the most primitive merchant or administrator, and is a prerequisite to Accounting and Mathematics. One who has Mathematics skill need not roll against Cyphering.

Default use of this skill is “counting on fingers,” feasible only for adding and subtracting numbers below 20.

Mathematical Ability adds directly to Cyphering skill. The Lightning Calculator ability makes this skill unnecessary.

Featherworking (Mental/Average)

Defaults to IQ-5

This is the art of decorating mantles, clothing, tapestries, jewelry, shields, headdresses and almost anything else with feathers. This skill allows the identification of feathers, their values, and the birds that produce them. Note that this skill only covers the use of feathers. A companion craft skill is needed.

For example, creating a war-suit for a noble requires the Featherworking skill for the plume decorations, Heraldry skill for an appropriate design and Armoury skill to create the suit. Those wanting to capture their own birds need Tracking and Traps as well.

Flower Arranging (Mental/Easy)

Defaults to IQ-4

This is the ability to select appropriate flowers and arrange them into displays, artificial arbors, banquet favors and stage sets. Flowers were important in many Aztec ceremonies.



Patolli (Mental/Easy)

Defaults to IQ-4

This is the ability to play the board game *patolli*. While all classes enjoyed this game, gamblers and nobles need high levels of this skill to keep from losing the large amounts that they bet.

Savoir-Faire Specialty

Defaults to IQ-4 or

Merchant Banquets (Mental/Easy)

Savoir-Faire-4

This specialty, available to the *pochtecas* only, is needed to create the banquets needed to rise in status and wealth in the merchant community. This skill also allows a merchant to behave correctly at such a banquet.

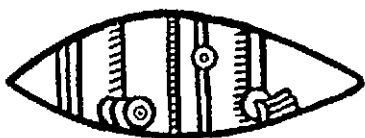
Picture-Writing (Mental/Hard)

Defaults to (Other
Picture-Writing) -3

This is the ability to draw and paint pictographs in Aztec books. A full set of writing tools and paper is required. Note that a scribe might initially sketch pictographs, for example, while taking notes in court, and later paint them in. The Literacy advantage is required for this skill.

Most Mesoamerican cultures used similar symbols in their books. For example, a burning temple was recognized as a symbol of conquest in many languages. However, because some symbols represented different phonemes or puns in different languages, a scribe needs to learn this skill at a default of -3 for every language in which he wants to write.

Mayan was an exception. The Mayans used writing that was both syllabic and alphabetic. Thus, Mayan picture-writing has no default and requires a separate Literacy and Picture-Writing skill.



Sacrifice (Mental/Hard)

No default
Prerequisite: Theology

This is the knowledge of the tools and methods to use when sacrificing blood, objects, animals and people to the gods. Higher Sacrifice skill levels allow the sacrifice of more valuable offerings. One still needs Theology to know the appropriate prayers, rituals and feast days for a sacrifice.

Most Aztecs have the Sacrifice skill at a low level. (For example, auto-sacrifice, the sacrifice of one's own blood by piercing a body part, was taught even to children.) Skill levels above 15 require the appropriate religious rank, as listed below.

Only one sacrifice per 24 hours is allowed, unless otherwise stated. A sacrifice takes 40 minutes per skill level to perform.

To use this skill, you need appropriate tools such as a knife, an object to be sacrificed and a sacrificial area. Note that the closer the sacrificial area is to the sky, the greater the chance of success.

You must then specify the 24-hour period(s) to which the good fortune will apply. This period can be set to start at a specific time (tomorrow, starting at midnight) or a specific event (when the battle begins).

Use these modifiers when rolling for success. Bonuses are *not* cumulative – use only the highest.

Description	Modifier
No shrine or hearth	-1
Shrine or hearth	0
Temple	+1
Temple of sacrificial deity	+2
Great Temple	+3

The following table describe the different levels of skill needed to perform each sacrifice. Note that some professions also require prerequisites before sacrifices of certain objects are allowed. *Description* details the type of sacrifice allowed. See *Religious Sacrifice*, p. 65, for details on performing each sacrifice.

The third column describes the modifier received if the sacrifice succeeds. This modifier applies to all the player's game rolls for the specified period, but not to bookkeeping rolls such as those for aging. A critical success doubles the period for the ben-

efit. The period(s) to which the extended benefit applies must be immediately specified by the players. Sacrifices are a good way of counteracting the effects of a bad daysign.

A failure means no benefits. A critical failure means the deity is offended and punishes the sacrificer with an appropriate penalty. For example, +2 (1 day) becomes -2 for one day. Penalties cannot be wiped out by a beneficial sacrifice.

Sacrificial benefits are not cumulative. A new sacrifice immediately wipes out any remaining benefit from a previous sacrifice.

Level	Description	If Successful
10	Auto-sacrifice: one body part (see p. 65)	+1 (1 day)
11	Auto-sacrifice: two body parts	+1 (2 days)
12	Auto-sacrifice: many body parts	+1 (3 days)
13	Cheap objects (wood, bone, stone chips)	+2 (1 day)
14	Costly objects (rubber, paper, tobacco, flowers)	+2 (1 day)
15	Animal (birds, dogs)	+2 (2 days)

The highest level of sacrifices require high skill levels, which are open only to male priests of the listed religious rank.

16	Human: drowning. Religious rank 3+.	no bonus
17	Human: beheading. Rank 3+.	no bonus
18	Human: burning. Rank 4+	Special (see below)
19	Human: skinning. Rank 5+	Special +1
20	Human: heart. Rank 6+	Special +2

Clerics sacrifice humans to honor the deities and to benefit the captor (although warrior-priests can sacrifice their own victims.) Though priests do many sacrifices in one day, they can benefit no one individual more than once every 24 hours. The name of the captor must be mentioned during the ceremonies and he must view the sacrifice; otherwise it has no effect.

Sacrifices at level 16 (drowning, usually of children) and 17 (beheading, usually of women) are strictly religious rites. They are intended to benefit the gods, or society as a whole, but bring no individual benefit to the priest who conducts them or anyone else.

Only warriors, high-status nobles and sacrificial slaves can be offered for personal benefits at levels 18 or higher. Warriors and nobles must be captured in legitimate combat (hitting a noble over the head while he's asleep does not count!), or slaves must be designated as sacrificial and purchased as such. While other types of people may be sacrificed as a sign of piety, they do not bring any benefit to the captor.

Special sacrifice bonus: At skill level 18+, the successful sacrifice of a high-status man rewards the captor with a total bonus equal to the victim's Social Status plus Military Rank plus any indicated bonus. If the total is higher than 3, it must be divided up to give a +3 bonus over several consecutive days, with a remainder for one day. Again, the captor must specify the periods used before the sacrifice. If more than one warrior is the captor, the modifier is divided equally among all captors.

For example, an Aztec sacrifices a Tlaxcalan great lord (status 6) who is a Great Captain (rank 4), for a total bonus of 10. The sacrificer has a skill of 19, which adds 1, bringing the total to 11. The bonus can be used as +3 over three consecutive days with +2 for one day.

Weaving (Mental/Easy)

Defaults to IQ-4 or DX-4

The Aztecs believed that the character of the woven article reflected the character of the woman who created it. Thus, all respectable and feminine women must have a high Weaving skill.

Economics, Jobs and Wealth

Standard starting wealth is \$1,000. This includes all possessions such as clothing, tools and perhaps a house. A character who is not a true wanderer (such as an entertainer) should spend no more than 20% of his wealth on movable goods.

Barter dominated most trade in Mesoamerica, though two forms of currency existed: the cacao bean and the trading mantle. The latter was a rectangular, white cotton cloth that was used as currency rather than clothing. Counterfeit beans made with amaranth dough or avocado pits covered with cacao husks were sometimes mixed in with real beans. (Roll on the Counterfeiting skill to determine the quality of the fake.)

For *GURPS Aztec*, a cacao bean equals \$1. One mantle, a rectangular piece of undecorated cotton about three feet by twelve feet in size, equals \$100. An individual can typically carry 20 mantles or 100,000 cacao beans of currency.

Prices

These prices are for retail goods bought and sold in city marketplaces. Wholesale prices or prices in the country can be up to 50% cheaper.

Food, Drink and Herbs

Meal	\$2-\$3/each, \$5/day
Subsistence living	\$2,000/year
Tobacco	\$3
Lodging (per person in dormitory for 10)	\$10/day
Lodging (private room)	\$60-\$100/day
Octli	\$5
Peyote	\$10
Cacao drink	\$15

Clothing

Cheap clothing is made out of undecorated *metl*. Good clothing is made out of *metl* and decorated, or made out of undecorated cotton. Rich clothing is made out of decorated cotton and can be 2 to 10 times more expensive than good versions.

Cheap clothing: loincloth,	\$10/outfit
mantle, skirt, blouse	
Good clothing	\$100/outfit
Warrior's shield and	\$2,500-\$30,000
costume (feather)	
Feather mantle	\$10,000
Feather tapestry	\$1,000-\$10,000+, depending on size
Feather imperial device	\$15,000
Feather headdress	\$15,000

Valuables

Only the nobility and *pochtecas* can afford precious metals and jewelry.

Gold diadem	\$10,000
Gold necklace	\$50,000
Lip plug, gold	\$2,500
Amber chunk	\$10,000
Jadeite necklace	\$60,000-\$600,000
Gold bar	\$7,700

Materials

Except for quetzal feathers and jaguar skins, raw materials are commonly available at the marketplace.

Canes for arrows or darts	\$100
(per porter load)	
Paints and reeds for scribe	\$100
Sheet of deerskin paper	\$3
Sheet of cheap paper	\$1/each
Deer hide	\$100
Bluebird skin	\$300
Jaguar skin	\$2,000
Rubber, loaf-shaped lump	\$5
Rubber model of a man	\$800
Yellow ochre makeup, pot	\$2,000
Feathers (handful)	
quetzal	\$200
red	\$20
yellow	\$40
green	\$50
blue	\$150
white (small bag)	\$100

Slaves

These are the costs of slaves in the capital. Slaves in the country can be had for about half the price.

Household Slave	\$1,000
Without faults, able to sing	\$4,000
and dance well	

Animals

Most valuable animals, such as tropical birds, go first to the emperor for his zoo, or to nobles. Only rarely can they be found in the marketplace (critical success on Merchant skill).

Roseate spoonbill	\$60,000
Eagle, live	\$100
Turkey	\$20
Dog (itzcuintli)	\$10



Miscellaneous

Shells and other sea life are rare and expensive in the capital but relatively inexpensive and common in the coastal towns.

Gourd cup (small)	\$1
Dugout canoe (seats one)	\$100
Hatchet, small metal	\$25
Hatchet, large metal	\$100
Rattle or bell	\$25
Shell, large red	\$2,500
Copal, unrefined ball	\$100
Palm leaf mat (<i>petlatl</i>)	\$2
Pouch, small	\$5
Rush chair	\$4
Arrow/dart	\$2
Obsidian knife	\$5
Small animal cage	\$10
Bird trap	\$20

Social Status

Social status was a complicated thing in ancient Aztec society. Wealth did not automatically mean status or vice versa. A poor noble could have a higher status than a rich merchant. A priest who had captured four enemies in war would be more respected than a rich artisan who had never been to war. And often the life of a lower-status slave seemed more desirable than that of a higher-status peasant.



Remember that a reaction to a person can be modified not only by status and wealth, but by his reputation and social stigma, if any.

Level	Description	Monthly Cost of Living
8	Emperor	\$100,000+
7	Snake Woman, Great Councilor, Kings of Texcoco and Tlatelolco, Supreme Merchant Chief, High Priest of Tlaloc, High Priest of Huitzilopochtli	\$50,000+
6	Commanding Generals, Vicar General, judges, merchant chief	\$25,000+
5	Great lords, chief royal steward, slave dealers, vice-vicar	\$10,000
4	Lesser lords (sons of nobles), tax collectors, governors, ambassadors, slave sacrificers, <i>calmecac</i> chiefs	\$6,000
3	Caravan leaders, doctors, <i>calpulli</i> heads, head instructors, temple high priests	\$4,000
2	Independent merchants, featherworkers, goldworkers, captains, daybook readers, priests	\$2,400
1	Apprentice merchants, artisans, scribes, warriors, poets, singers, deacons	\$1,200
0	Commoners, farmers, apprentices, entertainers, soothsayers, midwives	\$600
-1	Poor commoners, servants, porters	\$250
-2	Landless peasants, prostitutes, thieves	\$150
-3	Slaves (provided for by master)	\$0

Job Table

Most jobs were hereditary in practice. Most upper-class jobs (ambassadors, judges, high bureaucrats) typically went to those of Status 4+. However, deserving commoners often received civil and administrative appointments. Warriors or merchants often served in ambassadorships or high military ranks, despite their status. Slaves commonly served as field workers, servants, entertainers and occasionally estate administrators. They received no income.

Data on salaries is practically nonexistent. Published sources say the emperor garnered nearly 2,000,000 mantles per year. A poor servant got 350 cacao beans a month. The following table approximates salaries as closely as possible.



Job, (Required Skills), Monthly Income

Poor Jobs

Field Worker (none), \$250
Servant (Savoir-Faire 11+), \$350

Struggling Jobs

Apprentice Artisan (Craft Skill at 12+), \$0 (living expenses)
Bandit (Survival 11+, one Weapon Skill 11+), \$400
Fisherman* (Survival 11+, Fishing 11+), \$400
Freelance entertainer* (Bard, Poetry, or Musical Instrument 12+), \$400
Hunter* (Survival 11+, Tracking 11+), \$400
Porter* (ST 10+), \$350
Prostitute* (Sex Appeal 10+), \$250
Tenant farmer (Agronomy 12+), \$400
Thief* (at least 3 Thief skills at 13+, or 2 at 16+), \$500
Vendor* (Merchant 10+), \$500

Success Roll

Critical Failure

ST	-11/LJ, 2d
PR	-11/LJ, 1d
PR	2d/LJ
best PR	3d/3d, arrested
best PR	2d/3d, -1i
best PR	-1i/-1i, 1d
best PR	2d/3d, -1i
ST	-1i/-2i, 1d
PR	-1i/1d
PR	-1i/-2i
best PR	2d/3d, arrested
PR	-1i/-2i

Characters

Job, (Required Skills), Monthly Income

Success Roll

Critical Failure

Average Jobs

Artisan* (Craft Skill 14+), \$1,000	PR	-1i/-2i
Bureaucrat (Administration 12+, Politics 12+, Law 10+), \$1,000	best PR	-1i/LJ
Employed entertainer (Bard, Poetry, or Musical Instrument at 14+), \$75×best skill	best PR	-1i/LJ
Farmer* (Agronomy 12+, ST 10+, land or pond), \$800	best PR	-1i/-2i
Government courtesan (Attractive or better, Sex Appeal 12+), \$800	PR	-1i/LJ
Guard (Combat/weapon skill 12+), \$800	best PR	1d/LJ
Midwife* (Physician 10+), \$800	PR	-1i/-2i
Minor <i>pochteca</i> * (Merchant 14+), \$100×Merchant skill	PR	-1i/-2i
Priest (Theology 12+), \$900	PR	LJ/lost clerical investment
Soothsayer* (Divining spell at 12+), spell×\$80	PR	-1i/bad reputation, reaction -1

Comfortable Jobs

<i>Calpulec</i> , high bureaucrat (Administration 14+, Politics 14+, Law 12+), \$3,500	worst PR	-1i/reputation reduced by 1
Daybook reader* (Daybook spell at 14+), \$100×spell skill×reputation	PR	-1i/reputation reduced by 1
District priest (Theology 14+), \$2,000	PR	-1i/LJ
Doctor* (Physician 14+, Diagnosis 14+), \$100×skill×reputation	worst PR	-1i/reputation reduced by 1
Featherworker, Goldworker* (Featherworking, Jewelry 14+), \$100×skill×reputation	PR	-1i/-2i
Head instructor (Teaching 12+, skill to be taught 14+), \$2,500	worst PR	-1i/LJ
Knight (Sword 14+, Shield 14+), \$3,000	PR	-1i/demoted
Master artisan* (Craft Skill 20+), \$100×skill×reputation	PR	-1i/-2i
<i>Pochteca</i> * (Merchant 16+), \$250×skill	PR	-2i/-3i, 1d
Scribe* (Literacy, Picture-Writing 14+), \$100×skill	PR	-1i/-2i

Wealthy Jobs

Commanding general (Strategy 16+, Tactics 16+, Combat/weapon skill 20+)	worst PR	2d/4d
Lord, councilor (Administration 16+), \$5,000×reputation	worst PR	-1i/reputation reduced by 1
Prelate or other temple official (Administration 14+, Theology 16+, Sacrifice 19+), \$4,000	worst PR	LJ/lost clerical investment
Rich merchant (Slave Sacrificer)* (Merchant 18+, \$500×skill×reputation	worst PR	-3i/reputation reduced by 1

*Freelance or variable

Critical Failure Key

For two entries separated by a slash, use the second result only when a natural 18 is rolled.

"LJ" stands for Lost Job – you were fired, demoted, or lost the client. The "d" indicates dice of damage.

You were hurt in an accident or fight. The "i" indicates a month's income lost; "-2i" means two months' lost income through being fined, replacing broken equipment, etc.



Sample Character: Quimichetl (Mouse Bean)

18 years old, 5'6", 135 lbs., dark hair and brown eyes.

ST 9 [-10] IQ 14 [45] Speed: 5.25

DX 12 [20] HT 9 [-10] Move: 4.5

Dodge: 4.75 Parry: 9 (brawling)

Advantages

- Wealth [10]
- Reputation [5]
- Alertness [5]
- Patron (Lesser lord) [10]

Disadvantages

- Phobia (Blood) [-15]
- Sense of Duty (Lord) [-10]
- Impulsive [-10]

Skills

Animal Handling-14 [4]; Blowpipe-14 [16]; Bow-13 [8]; Brawling-14 [4]; Diplomacy-14 [4]; Featherworking-8 [10]; Heraldry-15 [4]; Merchant-14 [2]; Sacrifice-12 [1]; Streetwise-14 [2]; Theology (Coyotlinaual)-12 [1]; Tracking-14 [2]; Traps-14 [2].

Equipment

Tools (\$100), feathers (\$1,000), three undecorated cotton mantle outfits (\$300) – one to wear, two to sell, a small pouch



(\$5) and a *petlatl* (\$2), darts (\$25); a bow, arrows and quiver (\$100); a bird trap (\$20); and a small animal cage (\$10).

Quimichetl is the second son of a featherworker in the Amantla district of Tenochtitlán. He is not the heir.

Still a boy, his feather pictures drew the attention of a lesser lord, who became his primary customer and patron. At the request of the boy's father, the lord placed him in a nearby *calmecac*.

His phobia about blood prevented him from participating in the required auto-sacrifices. This annoyed his teachers and earned ridicule from his fellow students. He endured many fights to learn Heraldry and Diplomacy. Out of duty to the lord, he toughed it out at the school for two years but was eventually thrown out for refusing to do any bloodwork.

He returned to the *telpochcalli*, where he developed militia skills. From friends and relatives, he developed hunting skills. He soon discovered that he could enhance his work by trapping birds live and taking needed feathers. He sometimes discovered one-of-a-kind feathers on the most common birds this way.

Quimichetl's talent has brought him some wealth. Unfortunately more money escapes the young craftsman because he is also impulsive and is just as likely to leave a work unfinished to start a new one. He makes most of his money trudging to the marketplace, helping his father sell his wares.

Quimichetl's greatest dream is to travel to the coastal jungles, where he can discover the precious feathers he needs for his works.

Friends and Foes

The Aztec empire ruled over many nations and tribes. While some shared the same cultural history as the Aztecs, others practiced different customs.

The Aztecs saw themselves as the most sophisticated and civilized people of Mesoamerica. They viewed other groups with tolerance at best and contempt at worst. Though they did acknowledge their barbarian origins, most Aztecs saw themselves as far past that state. None could identify with the barbarian groups living at the time of the Conquest.

The Florentine Codex describes some of the Aztec attitudes:

The Otomís got the worst of it: Are you a miserable Otomí? Oh Otomí, why don't you understand anything? Not only are you like an Otomí, you are a real Otomí, a miserable Otomí, a green head, a thick head, a big tuft of hair over the back of the head. An Otomí blockhead.

If someone was unsophisticated and not worldly: Are you indeed a Totonac? A crude Totonac!

If someone was presumptuous or disrespectful: Are you a Matlatzinca?

Non-Aztec PCs

Because the Aztec empire spanned many races and nations, a campaign can easily include foreigners as both PCs and NPCs. Only Mesoamerican types are listed. For details on Europeans, see p. 118.

Merchants: The rich customer base of Aztec markets attracted foreign merchants such as Chontal Mayans, Tarascans and Huastecs. Merchant caravans and their attendant guards, porters and spies poured into the marketplaces especially during market days. Even those from hostile nations received protection, if they followed certain rules.

Mercenaries: The empire often required tribute in the form of combat service from many of its tributaries. Thus, mercenaries from all cities will participate in Aztec battles. Matlatzincans participated as expert slingers, and Otomí warriors hired themselves out to any nation who could pay them.

Artisans: The Aztec monopoly on trade ensured that the best artistic materials went only to Tenochtitlán. This system also meant that the only crafted goods that made money for their creators came from the city. (Because well-made foreign crafts usually became tribute, they were not saleable.) Thus, artisans who wanted status, wealth and access to the best materials had to move to the capital. Totonac embroiderers and Mixtec metallurgists can be found in the city. Crafts from the hostile Tarascans were especially desirable and expensive because they were not normally available as tribute items.

Slaves and Captives: Tlaxcalan warriors were especially desirable captives for sacrifice because they understood they were being honored. Not all foreign captives ended their lives on the sacrificial stone. Women and children generally became slaves. Warriors from cultures that did not practice human sacrifice would try to escape their deaths and blend into the vastness of the city.

Slavery applied to labor only. Thus, an adventuring party can include a foreign slave as a full-fledged character who owes his labor to another member.

Entertainers and Messengers: Good entertainers can find a ready audience and a good source of clients in Tenochtitlán. Totonac singers and dancers were especially renowned. A steady stream of messengers to the palace, the houses of lords, factories and the marketplace ensured communications.

Spies: Typically from the hostile Tarascan and Tlaxcalan na-

tions, a spy would not be recognized as such by most Aztecs. He would normally blend in with the crowd to gather information. Spies sometimes brought their families and associates as part of their "cover" and could live permanently in the city, leaving only to deliver information.

Chichimecs

The Aztecs grudgingly acknowledged descent from the barbarian tribes collectively known as the Chichimecs. These peoples lived a semi-nomadic life in the deserts and plains of northern México. They did not practice agriculture, but hunted or gathered fruit from the cactus, palm tree and *metl*. Tribes were loosely-knit groups, typically ruled over by a chief. Each member of the tribe was responsible for the food and upkeep of their immediate family.

They could make crude houses of tree branches and grass, but typically lived in caves or grottoes. They made furniture from animal skins. They usually wore wolf, puma, jaguar, or squirrel skins and palm or yucca-leaf sandals.

The Chichimecs were good artisans of flint and obsidian. They were experts at mirrors, which they carried on the small of their backs. On a journey, they traveled single-file, able to see both ahead and behind by looking at the mirrors on the marchers in front of them.

The Aztecs thought barbarian herbalists unequaled because they originally discovered *peyote*. Though the Chichimecs could often cure their sick, they showed the final mercy to those who had not recovered within four days. They inserted a bird arrow in the sufferer's throat until he died. They did the same to the very old and infirm, so they would not suffer on earth and be the objects of pity.

Chichimec Characters

All nations valued Chichimec mercenaries because they were strong, hardy and long-lived. Their daily ingestions of *peyote* reputedly gave them their courage and their battle prowess. Their primary weapons were the bow, with which they could hit a small, distant target with only one shot. They also used the *atlail* but lacked skills with the shield and *maceuail*. Unfortunately, barbarian warriors did not share the same code of combat as the rest of Mesoamerica and could fight uncontrollably to the death.

Chichimec hunters specialized in the game found in the deserts and plains: deer, snakes, birds and rabbits. Chichimec vendors often sold these animal skins or common and rare herbs, which they gathered on their wanderings.

Huastecs

The Huastecs lived on the Gulf Coast, inheriting languages and traditions from the Maya. They exported many goods to the Aztecs, including cotton, vanilla, chocolate, seafood, tropical fruit and their well-known pottery. The Aztecs dubbed the productive Huastec lands Tonacatlapan (Place of the Fruit). Xiucoac and Tochpan were two of their important market-towns.

The Aztecs regarded the Huastecs as sensual, drunken, immoral and given to sexual excess. Tlazoltéotl, the goddess of love, originally came from the Huastec region. Huastecs also had a reputation for being crazy gamblers.

The Huastecs formed sophisticated settlements like those of the Maya and the Aztec, with hierarchies and laws, but had only one or two cities. Most Huastecs lived in independent towns that sometimes allied and sometimes warred with one another. Each

town provided the jobs common to all Mesoamerican societies: administration, trade, military, industry, religion and farming.

They had a tradition of being a well-dressed people, wearing large, decorated capes and many feathers, and painting their hair red and yellow. Their distinctive attire was topped off by an unusual conical hat and teeth stained red and black. However, Huastec men often did not wear loincloths, which scandalized the average Aztec.

Huastec Characters

Most Huastecs would be encountered as either merchants, carrying goods from the tropical lowlands, or as warriors. Huastec warriors were held in low regard by their enemies. An Aztec could capture several Huastecs yet not advance in rank. Huastec warriors typically used bows and liked to cut off the heads of enemies, which they then mounted, sometimes up to five, on a stick.

Matlatzinca

The Matlatzinca occupied the attractive Valley of Toluca on the Pacific Coast of México, squeezed in by the Tarascans on the west and the Aztecs on the east. They were vassals of the Aztecs.

Matlatzinco's cold weather produced a people who were strong, hard and rugged. They grew maize, beans and amaranth but did not use chili or salt. Their method of sacrifice was unique: they placed the victim in a net and crushed him with piles of stones until his blood dripped from his splayed-out limbs.

Matlatzinca Characters

The warriors of Matlatzinco were expert slingers, capable of shooting accurately from greater than normal distances. Every male always carried a sling. A presumptuous and haughty person was called Matlatzinca because he could wound from a great distance.

Mixtecs

The Mixtecs lived to the southwest in several independent states, sometimes at war with each other and sometimes allied. The biggest grouping was the country of Tototepec.

A warlike people, many of their tribes were eventually conquered by the Aztecs in the late 15th century. They lost almost three entire tribes as sacrificial victims for the dedication of the Great Temple in Tenochtitlán. Most of the population farmed the valleys, and was scattered among small villages. Ceremonial centers were located near unusual natural formations such as a spring or cave, separate from the larger settlements.

The Mixtecs were known as the Cloud People, because they lived in the mountains. The Aztecs believed that the Mixtecs, alone among the peoples of Mesoamerica, had never been barbarians. They were excellent metallurgists and artisans, whose painting and pottery were the most colorful in México. Their extensive codexes carefully recorded genealogies and kinship relationships important to their society.

Mixtec Characters

Mixtec women enjoyed more power and freedom than other women of México. They not only ruled cities at times, but led armies and went to war. Occasionally, inheritances were matrilineal. Sometimes, the eldest son inherited from the father and the second, from the mother.

Professions normally open only to men are open to women in Mixtec society. Female warriors, generals and chiefs can provide interesting encounters for sexist Aztecs.

Otomís

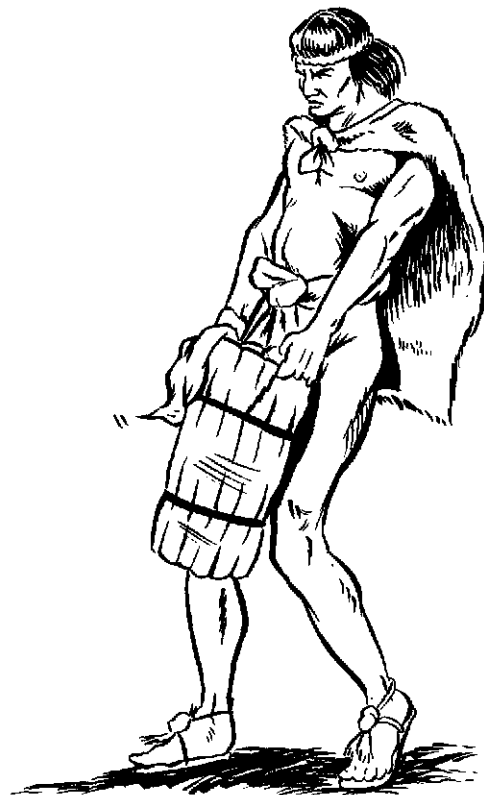
Though the Otomís were the first inhabitants of the Valley of México, most Aztecs considered them only one step above Chichimecs. That is, they were barbarians who squatted in the major cities of the empire and in their own small settlements. (Xilotepec, Hueypuchitla, the two Atotonilcos and Axocopan were predominantly Otomí provinces.) They primarily lived in houses of straw and grass, with pitched roofs. The men cut off all hair over their foreheads while allowing it to grow long in the back. They also tattooed their bodies in greenish-blue.

The Aztec mocked the more primitive Otomí as stupid, backward and crude – traits disproven by the artistic sensitivity of their many stories and poems. Their colorful but tasteless clothing branded them as greedy and vain. (They typically used only poor *metl* fiber, and not the richer cotton.) Though they enjoyed the same foods as most imperial citizens, they also ate “unclean” food such as rats and snakes. They were also considered lazy and strong. In other words, they were the oppressed underdogs of the empire – blamed for every human failing and disdained except during war. Otomís were fierce warriors, and the highest Aztec knightly order derived its name from these people.

Otomí Characters

Though Otomís exist in separate districts in many large cities, most imperial citizens will avoid those areas as disreputable. Aztecs will most likely rub shoulders with them in the army, where they serve as mercenaries for the empire and many other nations, such as the Tlaxcalans.

Those who do venture into Otomí society will find the same sort of nobles, priests and artisans typical of most Mesoamerican cultures. Their wise men, the *Tlaciuhqui*, not only possessed philosophical knowledge but were also greatly respected as seers and sorcerers. They were revered as gods and addressed their people as such. These founts of wisdom and magic were consulted before any important event or to predict the course of weather and war.

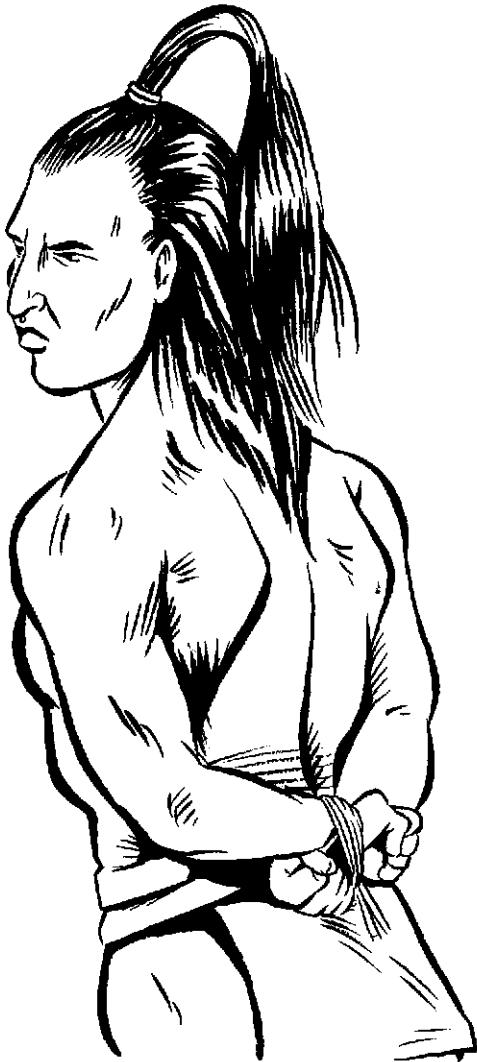


Post-Classic Maya

Once the major civilization of the area, Maya culture had largely decayed by the Conquest. Though a few of their cities were still occupied by the 16th century, most Mayans lived in small and simple villages. The great artistic and mathematical skills that once distinguished this culture had largely disappeared by the time of the Aztecs. Mayan society formed classes of priests and nobles, merchants and artisans, and commoners and slaves.

The Mayans shared many religious ideas with the Aztecs, including the thirteen heavens and nine underworlds, the four directions and colors and human sacrifice. They worshiped many deities familiar to the Aztecs under different names. For example, Quetzalcóatl turned into Kulkulkan. Their supreme god was Hunab Ku. He was so remote and impersonal that his son, Itzamna, took charge of human affairs. Over 160 other gods and goddesses crowded into the Mayan pantheon, and regional variations were common.

By the Post-Classic the Mayans had split into three subgroups: the lowland, highland, and Chontal Maya. The lowland Maya lived in the limestone plains of the Yucatán. The highland Maya occupied the area south of the Yucatán, in the higher elevations of Guatemala. Not much is known about them, except that the Spanish conquered most of their tribes in 1524. The Chontal Maya, some of the great traders of the 16th century, lived on the Gulf Coast. They acted as the conduit between the other two Maya groups and the Aztecs.



Lowland Maya

During the 16th century, the Yucatán formed 16 regional states. Each had a capital city, seat of the *halach uinic* or king, who was supported by tribute. The capital dominated many towns, each ruled by a *batab*. This was an official who combined the duties of administrator, judge and captain, supporting himself through a farm allocated by his subjects. Extensive tribute kept settlements economically tied together. Exquisite codexes recorded these details.

Chikinchel was a typical lowland province, located in north-central coastal zone of the peninsula, behind a long lagoon. It was the greatest producer of salt, its chief export. It also exported copal. Unusual for the lowlanders, the city was ruled by a council of *batabs* rather than a king.

Water was scarce in the Yucatán because rain would soak through the thin topsoil, pass through the underlying limestone, and settle on the bedrock far underground. Because lakes and rivers were non-existent, *cenotes* governed the placement of settlements. Though these natural watering holes had entrances near ground level, the water table itself might be 70 feet below. *Cenotes* opened a gate to the godly world, and Mayans frequently threw sacred objects and works of art into them. Occasionally, they also offered victims to bear personal messages to the gods. Where such natural reservoirs did not exist, the Mayans built artificial ones.

The Mayan nobility ensured the purity of their lines by passing a secret lore between father and son, unknown to outsiders. Tests based on this lore often judged a noble's suitability for office or inheritance.

Chontal Maya

Because these great traders lived between the Yucatán and Gulf Coast, they acted as middlemen between other Maya groups and the rest of Mesoamerica. The many rivers crossing their land inspired its name, Acalan (Land of the Canoes). The chief Chontal ports of Xicalango and Potonchan were neutral ground where hostile groups could meet to trade. The Chontal Maya used large 40-man canoes with sails to travel the Gulf.

Their main export was salt. Other exports included cotton, beeswax, seashells, animal skins, fish, honey and cotton goods, which they traded for obsidian, slaves, tropical bird feathers and cacao.

Highland Maya

The highland Maya were broken up into several aggressive kingdoms that warred on each other constantly. One of the largest, the Quiché, established their capital at Utatlán. To them, war meant capturing slaves, killing enemy leaders and marrying the leaders' wives into friendly ruling families. The Quiché's greatest rival, the Cakchiquels, founded their capital at Iximché, a city protected on three sides by deep ravines. This rival was also protected by a friendship treaty with the Aztecs.

Mayan Characters

Mayans are easily distinguished by their broad, artificially sloping foreheads. Parents wrapped boards around Mayan newborns' heads for five days to produce this desirable effect. Squinting and slightly crossed eyes are also considered beautiful. This effect was produced by suspending a ball on a piece of string between the eyes.

Aztecs will mostly meet Chontal Maya traders. If they continue into Maya territory, adventurers will find citizens holding jobs similar to those in all Mesoamerican cultures. The priests are the wisest and best respected members of society.

Though Mayan artists and builders exist, most will be unable to duplicate the former glories of their past.

Tarascans

The unconquered Tarascans lived in the hot lands and the cool mountains west of Tenochtitlán. Tarascans were wealthy and able, though a bit scandalous in their clothing. Abundance of wood was an important aspect of their society, and they often built huge fires on high mountaintops to appease their patron fire god.

Much of their culture showed relationships to the Peruvian Incas. Their language, for example, followed no Mesoamerican patterns but resembled the South American languages. Their pottery and great metalworking skill also probably came from South America. The Tarascans resisted Aztec advances through a series of fort cities at the border and consolidated 25,000 square miles over many ethnic and linguistic groups.

A combination priest/king/god, supported by many bureaucrats, ruled. The Tarascans built *yácatas*, ceremonial structures that combined circular and rectangular forms. Their capital, Tzintzuntzan, on the shores of Lake Patzcuaro in Michoacán, had five such edifices rising from an enormous platform.

Tradition states that the Tarascans accompanied the Aztecs on their pilgrimage from the Seven Caves. When they reached Lake Patzcuaro, the Tarascans went in to bathe, leaving their clothes on shore. The Aztecs stole the clothes and fled. The bathers then learned to go about nude and even changed their language to break any ties with the Aztecs.

Tarascan clothing scandalized the Aztecs. Men wore unique sleeveless jackets or capes but never a loincloth. Occasionally, they would wrap a cloth around their waist that left their backsides exposed. Women wore a skirt and only occasionally a shawl that still left their breasts exposed.

Tarascan Characters

The Tarascans excelled in the crafts of featherworking, weaving, painting, lapidary, woodworking and ceramics. Their metalworking in copper, silver and gold had no equal in Anahuac. Their craftwork was in great demand, especially since they were not normally available as tribute items.

Tarascan merchants grew rich on the tropical luxuries that they exported from the coastal lands. Their provinces featured many local and regional markets.

Tarascan spies commonly prowled all Aztec cities.

Tlaxcalans

The Tlaxcalan nation of 625,000 was not always the sworn enemy of the Aztecs. Up until the mid-1400s, both neighbors traded peacefully. The Tlaxcalans brought most of the lowland luxuries of the Gulf Coast to the nations of the Valley and the Pacific Coast.

In 1450, Moctezuma I conquered the Gulf Coast lands, cutting off the Tlaxcalan as middlemen. Tlaxcala was thus surrounded by the empire, and lost access to its main livelihood and to many products such as salt, cotton, gold, silver, cacao, precious stones and feathers. Since then, the Tlaxcalans have remained the empire's strongest enemy; all reactions are at -5. They hated their adversaries so much that they happily allied with the Spaniards, just to revenge themselves on their oppressors. Even the *pochtecas* were not welcome in the marketplace of the Tlaxcalan capital; they were immediately executed if discovered.

Tlaxcalan culture shared many elements with that of the Aztecs, though the empire saw them as a bit backward. Because they

shared the same ideals of combat, sacrifice, religion, trade and art, each saw the other's peoples as the most valuable sacrificial offering. The deities of both cultures understood each other and valued the same things.

The capital city, Tlaxcala, had a looser hold on its cities than did the Aztec empire. Four chiefs of equal power ruled domains of about equal size. Many frontier towns of this nation were guarded by Otomís.

Tlaxcalan Characters

Aztecs will most often encounter Tlaxcalan warriors. Periodic Flower Wars assured a steady stream of victims from this state. The Tlaxcalans used weapons and armor similar to those of the Aztecs. While Tlaxcalans did divide their army into groups that had their own insignias and leaders, ranks did not exist within groups.

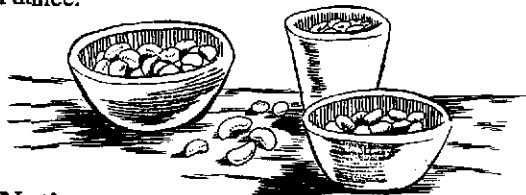
Totonacs

Occupying the northeastern lowlands, the conquered Totonac lands were hot and tropical, providing many kinds of food and fruit, but not cacao or herbs. The Totonacs were a beautiful people: elegant, tall, slender and civilized. Because they had rebelled several times against the Aztecs, the tribute demanded of them grew increasingly harsh. They were the first allies of the Spanish. Many Totonacs were multilingual, speaking Náhuatl, Otomí and Huastec, as well as their own language.

One Totonac custom offended the Aztecs. They encouraged their youth to become drunk during celebrations.

Totonac Characters

The Totonacs boasted skilled cottonworkers, known for their elegant, multicolored and well-woven clothing. They also cooked excellent food, and were renowned for tortillas and concoctions of chili, their staple. Their fondness for flowers was second only to the Aztecs'. Totonac entertainers were popular for their skill at song and dance.



Other Nations

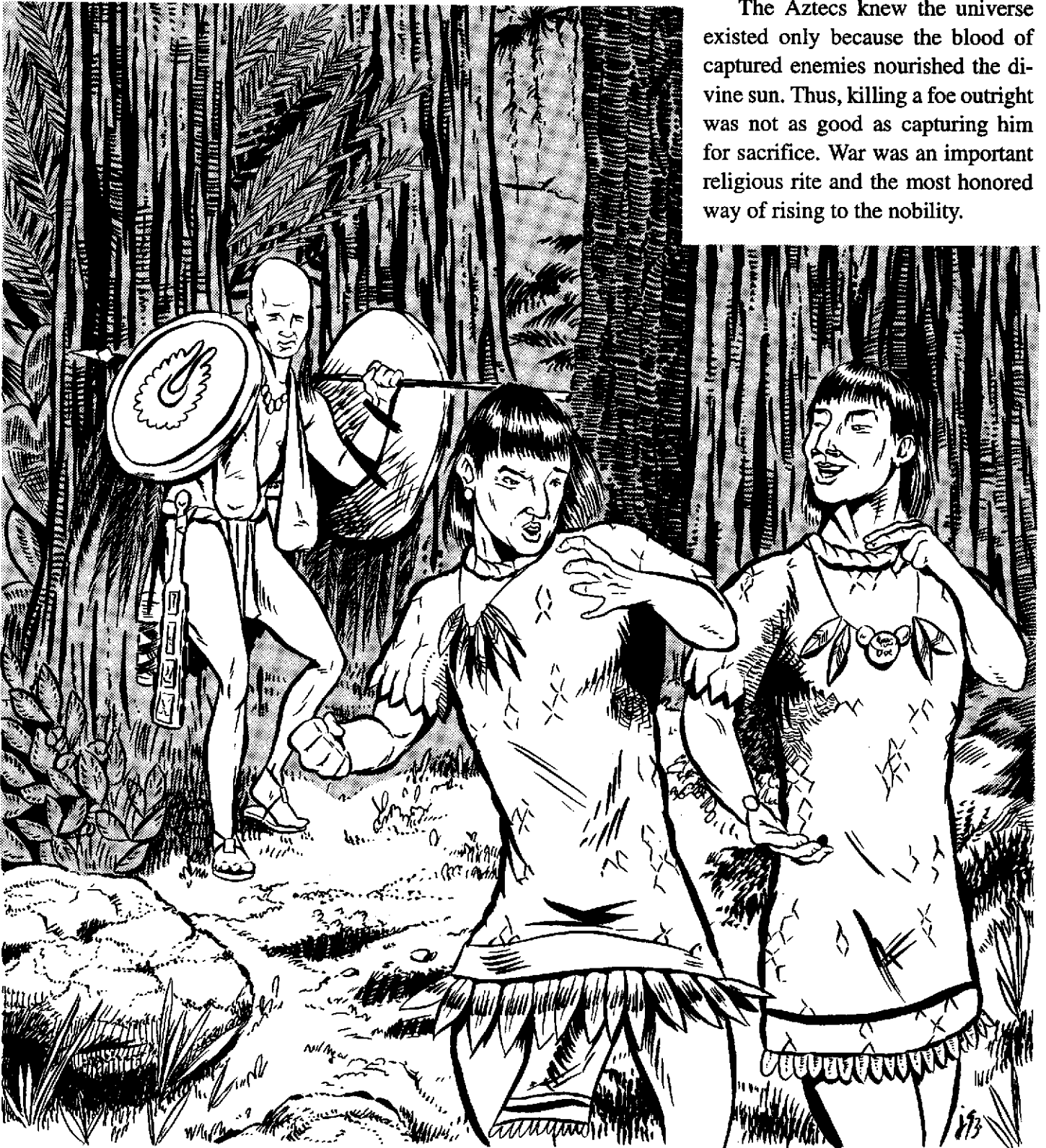
Yopitzinco was a confederation of primitive tribes located in the miserable crags and mountains of Oaxaca and Guerrero. The Yopime covered their bodies with red ochre and spoke a barbaric tongue. Because they originated the god Xipe Totec, they were seen as wise. Perhaps nothing more than tradition and respect for this deity kept the Aztec invaders away. On the other hand, perhaps Xipe Totec protected them.

The large and well-defined nation of Totopec consisted mostly of Mixtecs. Their strong military kept invaders out, and their distance from Tenochtitlán made their conquest impractical. Despite these defenses, the Aztecs gradually swallowed up many parts of their once-large territories. Totopecs were prosperous, able to export cotton and cacao. Their prized trade good was a type of sand that produced a special finish on polished stones.

The agricultural nation of Meztitlán depended on imported salt. They remained independent only because their capital of the same name hid near the center of a long, narrow valley. A small garrison easily defended the entrance to the valley. Their warriors had a reputation for persistence: they would return to battle day after day, until they won or totally lost.

4 COMBAT AND WAR

The Aztecs knew the universe existed only because the blood of captured enemies nourished the divine sun. Thus, killing a foe outright was not as good as capturing him for sacrifice. War was an important religious rite and the most honored way of rising to the nobility.



Prelude to War

Though their empire grew relentlessly, the Aztecs treated full-scale war as a last resort. Destroying a town and its people wasted potential resources and subjects. Conquered or allied towns became useful tributaries, providing the supplies, skills and slaves needed to fuel the empire's prosperity.

Emissaries

When the Emperor decided to add a town to the Empire, the first step was entirely peaceful. He sent an emissary, who tried to persuade the town to become a tributary. Offering gifts, he proclaimed the virtues of imperial association. By joining the Empire, the town would receive Aztec protection and trade while preserving its way of living and keeping its chiefs, government and religion. In exchange, the town was required only to accept Huitzilopochtli as an equal to the local god and send a small annual tribute to the capital.

Compared to war, many towns found this an attractive option. Some didn't, and might even display their defiance by returning *part* of the ambassador. This provided just cause, without which the emperor could not declare war. Other "just causes" for war included an attack on a merchant caravan, refusal to trade, or simply a break in diplomatic relations.

The emperor presented his reasons for combat to the war council. If they refused to declare hostilities, the ruler could continue to call meetings. Usually the council would yield in the end.

Before formal hostilities began, the king sent three sets of emissaries to the enemy. The first embassy came from Tenochtitlán and brought gifts to the rulers of the enemy city. After the meeting, they camped near the city, allowing the rulers 20 days (one Aztec month) to reach a decision. If the enemies chose peace, even at this stage, all would be well.

If the decision proved unfavorable, ambassadors from Texcoco arrived. After more gifts, they joined the first group and waited for another 20 days.

If necessary, a final embassy from Tlacopan warned the warriors of the city that war was near, bringing weapons to the Aztec officers and warriors in the other embassies. They then joined the two earlier groups and waited for another month.

Declaration of War

At this point the empire entered a formal state of war against the enemy. The emperor and war-leaders consulted the soothsayers for the best day to begin a campaign. The march on the foe began about a week after the formal declaration of war.

Aztec attacks had one objective: to completely overwhelm the enemy warriors, so they could see the futility of resistance. Battles usually took place away from settled areas, to protect valuable property and citizens. Only as a last resort would the Aztecs attack the town. Burning the main temple signaled conquest, proving Huitzilopochtli superior to the local god.

Military Intelligence

Because the Aztecs' far-flung tributaries lacked garrisons, intelligence was doubly important for their control. Messengers and ambassadors brought back detailed information. *Pochtecas* were also valuable because they brought back data about the politics, economics and troop strength of the towns they visited. The emperor often sent them to uncover specific information for the state.

Another important source of information was spies or *quimichin*. In disguise, they blended into a foreign country, sometimes bringing their families to complete the illusion. They often settled in towns that the Aztecs wanted to annex, or scouted cities that were about to be attacked. If caught, they went to the execution block immediately. Their families and supporters became slaves.



Marching to War

An Ambassador's Death

Hostile nations usually executed foreign ambassadors in quick and mundane ways. Occasionally, however, they added insult to injury by preparing special executions designed to humiliate the enemy.

During the reign of Moctezuma I, the Aztecs sent ambassadors to the hostile city of Cotaxtla, capital of the Totonacs. The rulers of that city shut the emissaries in a room and piled chili peppers by the door. They lit the pile, which emitted acrid fumes that suffocated the victims. Later, the corpses were stuffed with straw and richly dressed. They were then placed before a banquet where the Totonacs prostrated themselves asking why they did not eat.

Moctezuma I raged at this news and sent an army with orders to totally destroy the city. When the Aztecs won the ensuing battle, the citizens of Cotaxtla denounced their rulers for their treachery and turned them over to the empire for punishment. Though the city escaped annihilation, they suffered double tribute.

Fortifications

Although permanent fortifications were uncommon, they did exist. For example, Quauquechollan had a stone and mortar wall 24 feet high. Quetzaltepec had six concentric walls, the first five being 27 feet high and 16.5 feet wide, and the innermost one being 11 feet high and 33 feet wide.

More common was a fortress, detached from the city, and built on defensible ground such as a hill or island. Noncombatants could flee to the fortress and simply roll large stones down at attackers. Friendly warriors usually joined them only as a last resort.

Many parts of a city could also be fortified. Tenochtitlán had many defensible positions, described in *Defenses*, p. 25.

Sieges

Sieges were only practical within the Valley of Mexico, where the Aztecs found accessible supplies. In such cases, the Aztecs sent units to harass nearby towns so they could not send supplies to the besieged cities.

Because prolonged sieges were expensive, the Aztecs frequently preferred to attack a fortification with an overwhelming force. They threw lighted missile weapons over the wall. Sometimes they breached it by physical attack or scaled it with wooden ladders. Siege machines did not exist.

The Aztecs easily called up tens of thousands of troops. In the war against Coaxitlahuacan, for example, the army numbered 200,000 warriors. Thus, planning the route, supplies and strategies was a complicated affair, arranged by the emperor. When he could not lead the battle himself, he left its management to two generals.

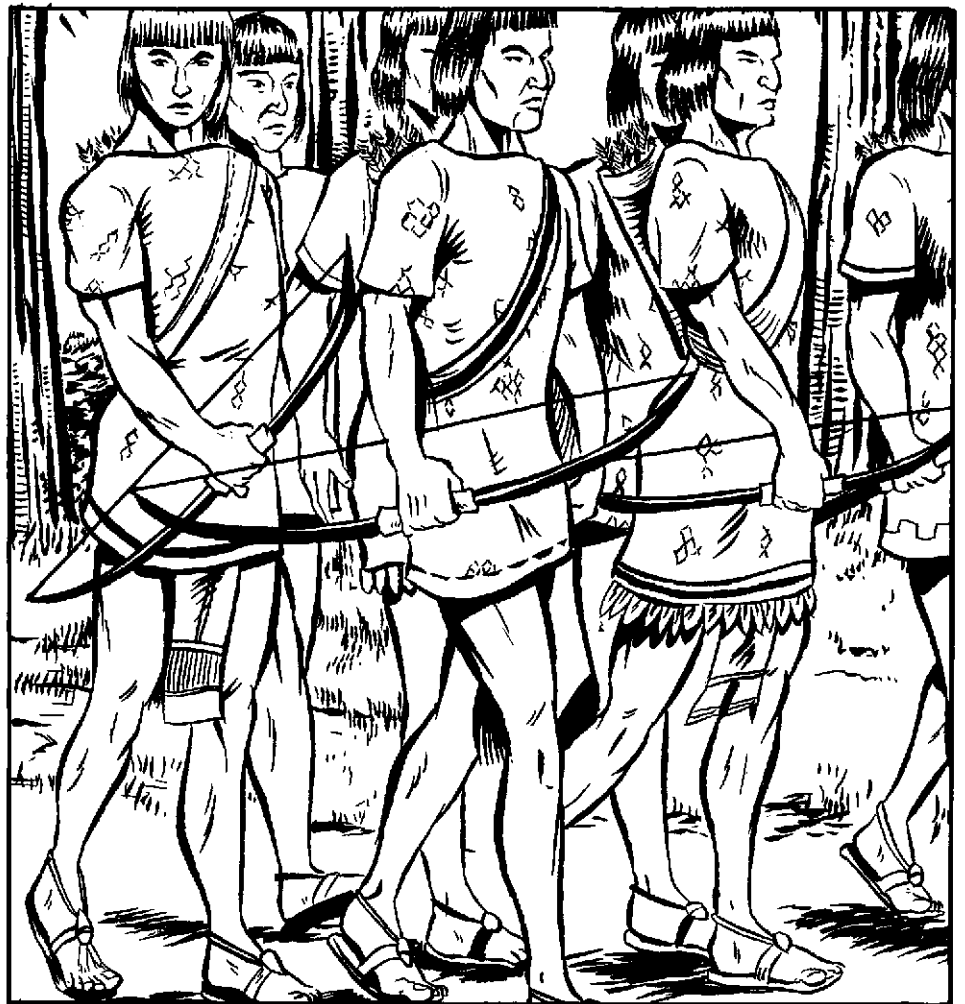
Routes were planned along the path of least resistance, using roads and tributary towns and avoiding water crossings. Though Aztec roads were kept free of debris, they were not paved. So marches were also timed to avoid wet weather, which turned a smooth path into a muddy morass.

The army used one porter for every two warriors. These human beasts of burden carried weapons, camping equipment, insignia and any paraphernalia needed by the commoners. Nobles also frequently used schoolboys as their squires, giving them their first taste of war.

Though the porters carried some food and water, most of these essentials came from the tributary towns. Two days before the march, messengers informed any towns along the route of their tribute obligations. Tributaries up to 50 miles from the route also had to provide supplies, transporting them at their own expense. The short notice period prevented any rebels from mounting a coordinated offensive against the army.

Marching Order

The army marched quietly, by units, and usually over several days. The priests went first, bearing statues of the gods on their backs. The next day, the two generals, the knights and the veteran warriors marched. A day later, the rest of the warriors went. On the final day, the troops from Tlatelolco and Texcoco led, followed by the troops of allied cities.



This time separation prevented bottlenecks on the relatively small roads. It also enabled one group to reinforce another in case of attack and spread the supply burden among several towns. All the units marched to a specific location where they re-formed into one army before the battle.

Camps

When the knights and the veteran warriors reached a safe place, they established the camp. The soldiers assembled grass mats to form tents and huts. The first structure to go up was the emperor's house, with his insignia on top. Near it came the supply tents and fortifications.

Because the two highest knightly orders were responsible for everyone's safety, they set up in the front of the camp, followed by the army leaders. Then came each unit, which was responsible for its own necessities and organization. Ditches and earthworks protected the camp.

At night, lookouts created huge bonfires but stood away from them to avoid visibility. When they needed to communicate, they did not talk but instead whistled. The following day, scouts, typically veteran warriors, brought back information on enemy fortifications and occasionally captured enemy warriors for interrogation.

Military Code of Honor

Warriors were expected to follow orders exactly. Disobedience, such as breaking formation, attacking without the leader's orders, or attacking and retreating without a signal, brought shame and possibly even the death sentence. A warrior never turned his back on the foe, even in retreat. Military tribunals judged all offenders and punished them as needed. A separate tribunal decided cases against youths.

Strategy

The missile carriers began hostilities by moving forward and unleashing a barrage of arrows, darts and pellets at the enemy. After a signal of drums and trumpets, they retreated and the shock troops moved forward in a single line to face the enemy. Archers and slingers supported these soldiers by continually launching their weapons.

Combatants met in two lines for hand-to-hand combat. During a long battle, a second line of reserves slipped between the fighters of the original force, allowing them to retreat for a rest. Because weapons damaged easily, they were replaced at this time. Retreats were signaled in the same way as advances.

Any dead and wounded were carried away immediately, to be cared for and to prevent the enemy from knowing how much damage they were doing.

Not all wars used honorable and straightforward tactics. Ambushes were a common ruse. Warriors hid in disguised foxholes and caves, only to spring up when hostile troops had passed. Another favorite tactic had a small squad or army feigning a retreat to draw the enemy into encirclement by a larger force.

After the Battle

As soon as the tide of the battle became clear, messengers ran to report to the emperor. They remained sequestered until a second group of messengers confirmed the result.

To surrender, an army sent an embassy to discuss terms, or simply laid down their arms on their leader's command. Surrendering meant submission and could salvage more favorable terms from the victor. Otherwise, the defending town was sacked. When the troops were deprived of this privilege, the emperor usually compensated them.

After the war, both sides gathered the bodies of the dead for transport home. If the battle was too far from home, the corpses were cremated at the battlefield. Otherwise, the dead were buried or cremated with their insignia either at the various *calpulli* temples or in the main plaza. War leaders visited the families of

Mass Combat Rules

GMs who want to include large scale battles in *GURPS Aztecs* can use the *GURPS Mass Combat System*, which has appeared in *GURPS Horseclans*, *GURPS Japan*, *GURPS Vikings* and *Roleplayer Magazine*; it's also available from the *Illuminati BBS* (see p. 3). Terms like Troop Strength (TS) and Troop Quality refer to those rules. Following are some additions and changes to the Mass Combat Rules to reflect an Aztec campaign.

Aztec Warriors

Shorn Ones: Well-equipped and armored with feathered war suits. TS: 5. Minimum quality: Veteran.

Otonin: Well-equipped but almost no armor. TS: 4. Minimum quality: Seasoned.

Eagle and Jaguar Knights: Animal-skin armor, helmets, shields, *macauitls* and *atlautls*. TS: 4. Minimum quality: Average.

Veteran: Cotton armor and shields, *macauitls* and *atlautls*. TS: 3. Minimum quality: Average.

Youth: No armor. Shields and *macauitls*. TS: 2. Minimum quality: Green.

Militia: No armor. Bows and arrows. TS: 1. Minimum quality: Green.

Because all males underwent combat training, no troops will have a troop quality of Raw.

Survival Roll

Because citizen warriors were not as well-trained or well-armored as the nobles, they died in proportionately greater numbers. Any character serving simply as a member of the militia suffers a -1 to this roll.

For Flower Wars, add +2 to the Survival roll. Do not subtract this modifier from the Glory roll.

Glory Roll

A warrior's chance to capture a foe or be captured depends on his Glory roll. Add the following results to the regular glory table.

Battle Skill Roll Results

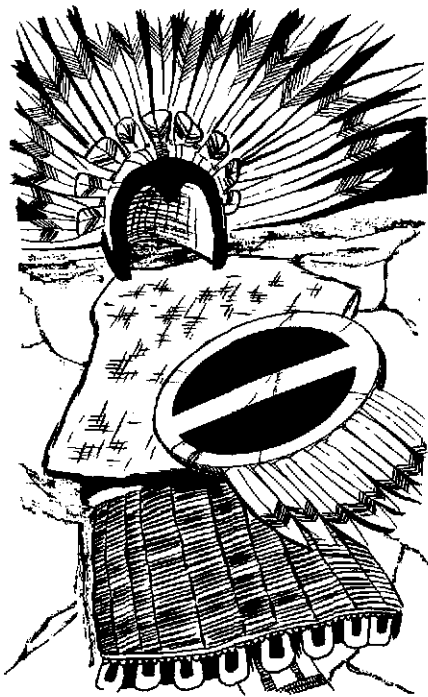
Critical success: Covered with glory. One high quality captive from Huexotzinco or Atlixco. Qualifies for valiant warrior insignia and advancement beyond Captain.

Made by 7-9: Fought with great courage and heroism. One ordinary quality captive. Does not count for advancement beyond Captain.

Made by 4-6: Fought heroically. One low quality captive or ordinary captive shared with others. Does not count for advancement beyond Veteran Warrior.

Missed by 4-6: Fought poorly. Captured by warrior of equal or greater status.

Missed by 7+ or critical failure: Captured by low-status warrior.



Spanish Forces

Use these values for Spanish forces during Mass Combat. Their native allies can use values of similarly equipped Aztec forces.

Cavalry: Moderately armored, using swords and lances. TS: 8.

Infantry: Moderately armored, using swords. TS: 6.

Arquebusiers: Moderately armored and arquebuses. Frequently experienced. TS: 7.

Crossbowmen: Moderately armored. TS: 7.

Cannon: Usual crew of 4; usually experienced. TS: 50.

Sailor: Unarmored, frequently inexperienced, using a sword. TS: 2.

Spanish Arms and Armor

Spanish weapons are available during and after the Conquest. Only Europeans have the skill to use them effectively. Mesoamericans can develop expertise in these weapons through observation or trial and error. (See *Improvement Through Study*, p. B82.)

The most commonly-used sword was the double-edged rapier; blades varied in width. Metal spears and lances were also used, frequently from horseback. The most popular missile weapons were the crossbow and the arquebus, a long, matchlock gun that had to be laboriously and expertly loaded before it fired even one ball.

Medieval armor (p. B210) and small shields (p. B76) were used by Spaniards during the Conquest. Most popular were helmets (similar to porthelms) and breastplates. However, these metal defenses felt so hot and humid in the tropical weather that many Spaniards favored the cooler native armor made of quilted cotton.

the Aztec dead and gave them the clothing, jewelry, featherwork and valuables appropriate to the rank and status of the deceased.

When the troops returned to the capital, victory brought clothing and food from joyful residents. Defeat brought weeping and sad rituals for four straight days. In tears, the warriors burned their weapons and insignia at the temple of Huitzilopochtli.

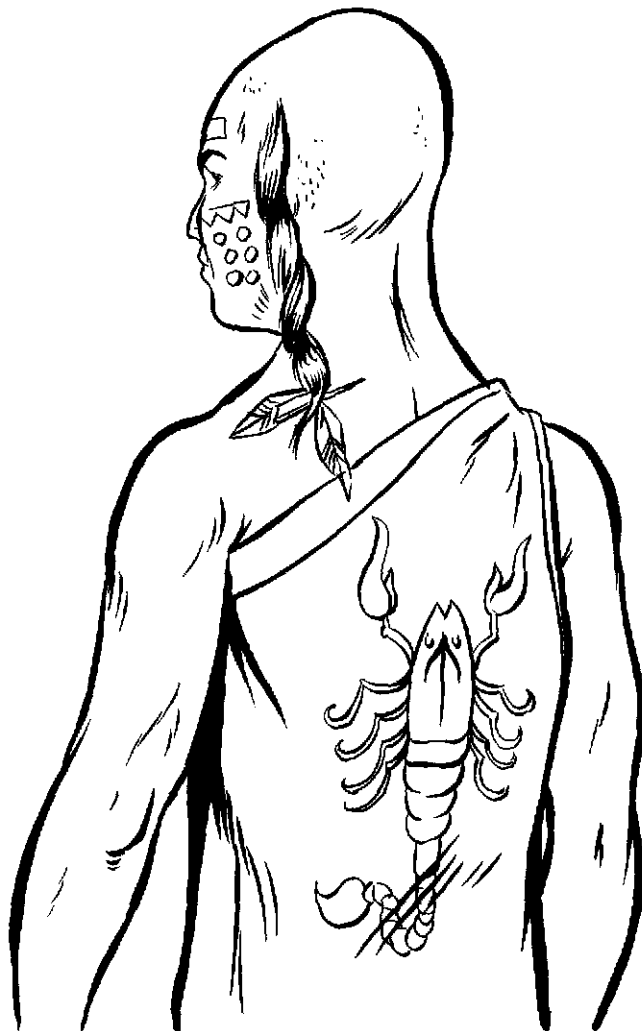
After the war ended, only good relations with the conquered peoples were important to ensure internal peace and consistent tribute. Thus, previously hostile warriors received any insignia or honors that they deserved, and were made to feel part of the Aztec war machine. Many joined later campaigns, especially in areas close to their homelands but far from the capital.

Advancing through the Ranks

The Aztecs did not have a large standing army. The only professional soldiers were the knights, who acted as the officer corps and palace guards. Most Aztec warriors worked at other professions and only brought out their uniforms and weapons during wartime.

The only way to advance as a warrior (and therefore, as a citizen) was by capturing prisoners. Awards and advancements were made during the second month of the year. Varying numbers of captives were needed to reach each rank:

Captor: A youth who captured an enemy with other youths. If he took a captive by himself, he received the title of Leading Youth and was honored before the emperor. He painted his face with red and yellow and received a warrior's mantle, which he could wear in peacetime. Colors and designs differed; some examples placed a scorpion on an orange mantle. Those who had captured two enemies received a mantle with red trim.



Because these youths had proved manly enough to feed the deities, they could indulge in the services of civil courtesans. These government employees accompanied unmarried warriors to social functions, public celebrations and bed.

Youth Leader: After taking three captives, the warrior received a richly worked mantle, a fire-butterfly insignia, and a red and white feather tunic.

Veteran Warrior: Taking four captives brought a share in Imperial revenue and membership in the nobility. Veterans also received an *ocelototec* war garment: a mantle of two stripes of black and orange with a border. They were entitled to wear a veteran's warrior haircut.

Captain: The type of enemy captured became important for this and higher ranks. Warriors from the coastal groups, such as the Huastecs, were not highly regarded. A warrior could capture even ten of them and not receive any recognition. Instead, the fifth captive had to come from Atlixco, Huexotzinco, or Tliluhuitepec. The captor received many gifts from the emperor, such as a headband with eagle feathers and silver flint-knife ornamentation, leather ear plugs, a bright-red cape, a leather cape, and a blue lip plug. If the captive was from Huexotzinco, the captor also received the insignia of a valiant warrior.

General: Another captive had to be taken from Atlixco or Huexotzinco. Among the gifts received were a headband with eagle feathers and gold flint-knife ornamentation; a cape with different designs or a jaguar cape with a red border; a decorated loincloth with long ends; black sandals; and a yellow lip plug. Any general could theoretically advance to the main council. In practice, only the emperor's relatives and high nobles held these offices.

Commanding General: The two highest military positions, the commanding generals, advanced from the pool of generals. They represented the emperor on the battlefield and were answerable only to him.

Eagle Elder: Older warriors who could no longer fight received this honorary title. They were responsible for setting up and maintaining camps and for consoling the families of the dead warriors.

Knights

Though not all knights were professional soldiers, all professionals came from the military orders. Membership into an order depended not only on combat prowess but social status.

Knights could wear military attire and otherwise-forbidden jewelry in public, drink in public, keep concubines, dress in cotton, wear sandals in the palace and dine in the palace. The knights also had rooms in the palace for war councils, presided over by the emperor.

Commoner Orders

The two lowest knightly orders, Eagle and Jaguar, were open to commoners who had captured at least four enemies. The differences between the two are vague and may have had more to do with costumes than rank; they may have been rival groups with equal status. These orders were open to all who showed wartime prowess. Most of the knights were nobles but some had progressed from commoner orders.

Commoner knights wore war suits made of animal skins, and their sons automatically became *pilli* and could attend the *calmecac*.

Noble Orders

Admission to the next higher order, the *otontin*, was open only to nobles who captured five or six warriors. Members were entitled to a net-device staff insignia, a shield with the four nose-moons device, and hair bound in a tassel with a red ribbon.

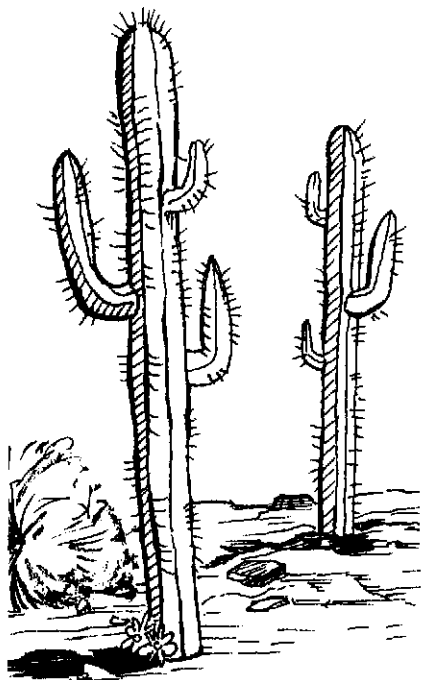
The highest order was that of the *quachic* (Shorn Ones), open only to nobles who took many captives and demonstrated at least 20 brave deeds (GM's decision). Most of the high-ranking military officers belonged to one noble order or the other. These knights had totally shaved heads except for a shock of hair above



A Chalcan Speaks of a Noble Death

"Of course we couldn't just kill him – he was a good fighter and a good general. He showed that well enough in the battle. We wanted him to be commander for the whole Chalcan army. I guess he showed us what it means to be an Aztec. He said he'd accept only if we freed all his men. We couldn't do that, so he says 'I did not come to Chalco to lead, but to fight and die as a man.'

"Because he was Moctezuma's cousin and very brave, we let him choose his sacrifice. He climbed up one of our ceremony poles and did a dance and some prayers at the top platform. Then he jumped and went splat on the ground, just like a bird's egg. I hope I can die as well as that."



An Aztec Noble Discusses Intimidation

"The Tepanecs of Coyoacan had been harassing us for quite some time. But Emperor Itzcoatl did not swallow the bait. Eventually, they gave up and invited us to a rich banquet in their city. The emperor was suspicious but seeing a chance for peace, he sent several of his best men, including his nephew and myself.

"We did not know what to expect. When we reached their palace, we were received graciously and housed in great luxury. They even praised our humble gifts. By dinner, we had all become friends.

"After the banquet, they brought us gifts of what we thought were the traditional flowers. I was shocked to discover that we each received a women's blouse and a skirt. Then they forced us to wear the damned things, saying this was the proper clothing for cowards. What was worse, they sent us home wearing nothing else.

"The emperor was as angry as we were but he wisely plotted a different kind of vengeance. Several of us gathered a pile of food such as red worm cakes, fishes, ducks and frogs, just outside Coyoacan. Then we set fire to these delicacies. A wind blew the smoke and aroma toward the enemy city. You should have seen them: old men losing their bowels, pregnant women miscarrying and children becoming sick for these foods which did not exist in their lands. Many of them died drooling.

"Eventually, the Tepanecs got what they wanted – a battle. We beat them, of course. The Emperor was generous with his emissaries who had been humiliated. Each of us was given one of the Tepanac nobles who made sport of us, as a sacrifice."

the left ear that was braided with a red ribbon. Half the head was painted blue and the other half red or yellow. They wore an open-weave mantle of *metl* fiber and a loincloth.

Noble knights wore war suits made of feathers skillfully formed to resemble animal skins. Aside from being decorative, the feathers deflected missile weapons.

Flower Wars

The ceremonial Flower Wars existed only for gathering captives. Individual combat prowess was more important here than winning, so chivalry and military convention ruled all actions. Only the nobility, using shock weapons, attended. Missile weapons, magic and trickery were prohibited.

A Flower War was fought on sacred ground and initiated with a large pyre of incense and paper. Warriors who died in this war died the best way possible: a "flowery death." Enemies captured here were the most desirable for sacrifice.

Both sides fought with the same number of warriors, with far fewer men than ordinary wars. Fighters purposely avoiding killing and concentrated on capturing. Because the quality of warriors was better than normal wars, fewer prisoners were generally taken.

A Flower War often served political purposes – it was a low-cost demonstration of military might. Sometimes, though, these battles deteriorated into regular wars.



Weapons

Arms were usually not available during peacetime because they were stored in many city armories, the *tlacochcalcos* or Houses of Darts, which usually stood near temples. During specific feast days, crafters made these weapons and deposited them in storage. Only nobles had personal weapons, and these were usually more decorative than functional. They were brought out during rituals and dances but seldom used privately. Blowguns, darts, knives and bows were commonly available, but primarily for hunting and not combat.

During war, commoner militias composed most of the army. They served as archers and slingers. Novice warriors used swords, thrusting spears, and clubs. Noblemen and elite warriors used the same weapons as the novices but added darts and spear throwers. *Macauitls* became the weapon of choice, and their use demanded much training.

Macauitl

The Aztec sword measured three to four inches wide, with one-handed models measuring a yard and two-handed models running five feet or more. Both blade and pommel were made of wood, usually oak. Cutting power came from the obsidian or flint blades that were glued into grooves at each side of the wooden blade. The edges were sharp enough to decapitate a horse in one blow, as the Spaniards learned.

Some varieties provided thongs through which the wielder put his hands. Swordsmen lacked scabbards, so they usually carried their weapons, blade down, in the right hand, with an inward grip.

Because most swords lacked points, using it most efficiently meant slashing downward. Backhand cuts were also possible though not as effective. In this way, Aztec swords were not as efficient as Spanish swords. Rare pointed swords could also impale.

The obsidian blades frequently lost their edge and needed to be repaired. In battle, warriors were frequently relieved so they could rest and obtain weapons with fresher blades.

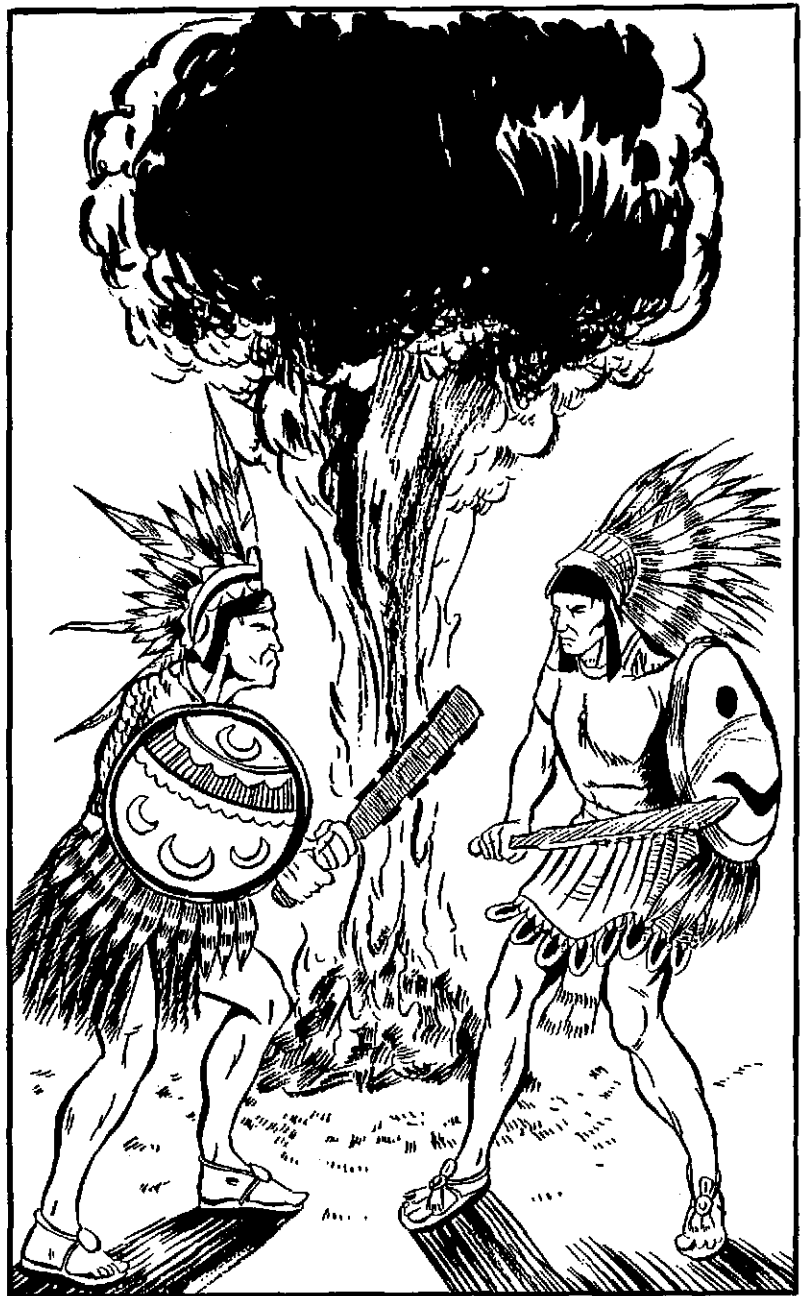
A sword can take 30 points of damage (or 15 per edge for purists) before becoming totally useless. A cheap sword can take 15, a fine one 60, and a very fine one 90. (See p. B74 for how prices and additional damage relate to sword quality.)

One blow through cloth, flesh, or living bone will cause one point of damage to the blade. A blow through wood causes three points; metal does five points. A blow at stone shatters the side that hits (or 50% of the total points of the sword.)

Combatants rarely parried with the sword but when they did, they used the flat surface of the sword. A critical failure on a parry shatters the obsidian blades and destroys the sword as a cutting weapon, though it can still be used as a club.

Atlatl

The two-foot-long spear thrower tapered from a width of one and one-half inches at one end to one inch at the other. A dart or javelin rested in a groove, with the fingers of the throwing hand hooked through loops, pegs, or holes. A few



Honors

The emperor awarded various titles and offices for actions beyond the call of duty. These awards entitled their holders to become part of the war council and to command armies in the field. These titles included Great Lord, Honored Owner of Stone Fields, Lord Priest, Mexica Lord, and Person from Pantlan. All included distinctive insignia.

The GM should feel free to create and award titles as needed. Though most awards usually went to veteran warriors or higher ranks, commoners and non-Aztecs could also receive them.

Captives

The Aztecs sometimes started wars just to win captives for some ceremonial event. For example, rulers usually had to get enough sacrifices for their coronations.

To an Aztec, dying in war was the highest achievement: an instant entry into the Palace of the Sun. Being captured as a sacrifice was just as noteworthy: the victim not only nourished the deity but *became* the deity. However, because of the stress involved, many warriors, especially novices and youths, tried to be killed if the alternative was capture.

The first prisoner captured in a war was sacrificed on the spot by attendant priests. Any other captives were gathered and bound by servants whose special duty that was. They also acted as witnesses, to identify who had captured whom.

Only captives of the losing side remained prisoners. Captives of the winning side returned to their armies. If the battle was a draw, both sides kept their captives. Still, returning alive after being a captive was dishonorable, and many towns executed these unmanly cowards when they arrived home. PCs who are captured and freed may want to find some dangerous, heroic thing to do in hope of regaining honor!

Treatment of Captives

A captive merited honorable treatment. In fact, the first exchange of words usually acknowledged the captor as a respected father and the captive as a beloved son. After reaching the city, captives were distributed among the *calpullis* or housed in the palace.

If they were injured, captives were treated until they were strong enough to be kept in wooden cages. To prevent an easy escape, or even exercises to prepare for escape, the cages were not big enough to stand in.

Captives were given excellent food. This fattening-up enabled more people to partake of their limbs at the cannibal feast following the sacrifice. Fat victims were thus especially desirable.

Tuftheads

Youths who had never captured an enemy were called "Big Tuft of Hair on the Head" for the shock of hair that remained until they succeeded. Such a novice receives a -1 reaction from other Aztecs and becomes more reckless in each battle until he captures an enemy.



propelled two darts at once (give each one a -2 to hit). Some surviving examples are ornately carved from wood and decorated with turquoise and gold.

Darts were made of oak, with wooden, obsidian, copper or bone points and feather butts. Some were barbed and some had two or more prongs. According to Spanish accounts, well-thrown darts could pierce armor and still kill the wearer.

Lance

The lance ranged from six to ten feet long with a pointed blade made of wood. Like the sword, the blade was edged with sharp obsidian. The lance was not only a dangerous thruster but also useful for slashing at long range. They could be thrown if necessary.

Club

The wooden club existed in many varieties. Some ended in stone and some had a wooden ball at one end. Still others had four knobs of wood at one end with a pointed tip.

Bow

The bow was the most common missile and hunting weapon. Bows measured up to five feet, with strings made from deerskin or the sinews of animals. Crafters made arrows from fire-hardened reeds during the feast of

Quecholli. The barbed or blunt points were made of wood, obsidian, flint or fish bone. Each arrow had a tail of feathers. During battle, a quiver held 20 arrows. Mesoamericans sometimes used fire arrows but not poisoned arrows.

The warriors of Cimatlan could reputedly shoot an arrow through two well-made cotton armors. Those from Tehuacan were said to shoot three arrows as skillfully and quickly as most could shoot one.

Sling

Slings were made of *metl*-fiber and were another common low-status weapon. Slingers shaped the rounded bullets by hand from gathered stones and stockpiled them in advance. Bullets were common tribute items.

Tools as Weapons

The resourceful fighter can also use these common tools as weapons:

Blowpipe: The blowpipe was typically used for hunting birds. It was made of a hollow reed, averaging five feet in length. The small pellets were made of clay.

Axe: The axe was used as an execution device or worn on ceremonial occasions to represent justice. It typically had a metal blade with a wooden or metal handle.

Knife: The knife had a flint or obsidian blade, and an elaborate, sculptured handle of varying materials. In war, though knives were sometimes used to kill enemies, they were typically used for sacrificing captives.

Garrote: One method of assassination, especially favored by the ruling classes, was a garrote disguised as a flower garland. As the victim sat at a feast, warriors threw a garland of blooms around his neck and quickly tightened it until he suffocated.

Armor

Commoners did not wear armor and subsequently died in greater numbers in battle. Novice warriors also lacked armor but carried shields. Only nobles protected themselves in body armor, helmets and shields.

Cotton Armor

The *ichcaupilli* protected the torso with a cotton quilt that measured two fingers thick. Many styles of this armor existed: some were tied at the back, some at the front, some worn as a pullover that reached to mid-thigh. Only the strongest dart or spear could penetrate it. Some Spaniards found it more comfortable and more effective than their own metal armor.

War Suits

The *tlauiztli* or war suit covered all limbs as well as the torso and was worn over cotton armor. Commoner knights wore suits made of animal skins, while noble knights donned feather-covered suits decorated to look like animal skins. The slick feathers deflected arrows, spears and glancing blows more effectively than a naked cotton suit; in game terms, it adds passive defense.

Shields, Helmets and Other Armor

The *chimalli* was a circular shield, 20 to 30 inches in diameter, made out of wood and covered with one or two layers of tanned deer hide. Some had a feather fringe that hung down 8 inches, protecting the user's thighs. Dress versions displayed feathers, turquoise, tortoise-shell or metal ornaments in designs that varied according to a person's status and rank.

According to Spanish chroniclers, some shields were so strong that they protected the user from arrows. Crossbow bolts could pierce them, however.

Helmets afforded some protection to the head but were mostly for decoration and identification. They were typically made of wood and could be covered with animal skin, paper and feathers. Some were made out of heads of jaguars, wolves and other animals, with the warrior's head looking from the animal's gaping jaws.

Higher-status warriors also wore armbands, greaves and wristlets made of wood, gold, or bark. These were decorated with leather and feathers. These decorative accessories had little protective value.

Costumes, Uniforms and Insignia

Each chief, leader and *calpulli* raised their own standard, constructed of reeds, feathers, gems, gold and even human skin. The flag rested on top of a tall stick that was strapped so tightly to the back of the bearer that killing him was the only way to take it. It could be seen for many yards and served as a rallying point. Sometimes the standard-bearer was carried on a litter for even greater visibility.

If a strong army or squad lost its insignia, it conceded defeat and routed. Heraldry skill is needed to identify who owns what standard.

Insignia were awarded to brave warriors and war leaders but could not be worn by those entering their first battle. Insignia included clothing, shields, helmets, crests and feather devices. Many insignia were made in Tenochtitlán but some were also captured from enemies and distributed.

These emblems were typically awarded on special days and brought out, along with full dress uniforms, during battles and special occasions. They could also be awarded in the field. Insignia were not hereditary and could be taken away from warriors who did poorly. They were cremated or buried with the warrior. The penalty for using false insignia or colors was death.

Warriors also wore body paint to show combat prowess. A warrior who took a captive, for example, painted his face with red and yellow. Valiant warriors painted their body black and their face with black stripes, sprinkled with iron pyrites. The Shorn Ones painted half their heads blue and the other half red or yellow.

Obtaining Weapons

During war or state-sponsored rituals, citizens and warriors automatically received appropriate arms and armor. Obtaining weapons for other purposes, such as private expeditions or vendettas, can be an adventure in itself.

A rich PC can simply buy a weapon at the marketplace or commission one from a crafter. Marketplace weapons are more decorative than functional and will cost 3d × the regular price. Commissioned weapons will take 3d days to make and cost 2-3 times the regular price. See p. B74 for the relationship between price and quality.

During peacetime, ordinary citizens will have to negotiate for combat weapons at the local armory. (Hunting weapons such as blowpipes and bows are sold at the marketplace.) The GM should create an armory of official and guards, with a status appropriate to the location, and determine the weapons available.

For example, most *calpulli* armories might be staffed by veteran warriors or better and contain mostly militia weapons, such as bows, a few shock weapons and some armor, of low to average quality. Richer *calpullis*, or those inhabited by nobles, would have mostly shock weapons, armor and high-status missile weapons of average quality, and be staffed by nobles or priests.

The best weapons and armor are available at the armories in the Temple District or at the palace. These should be staffed with nobles or priests of status 6+. Weapons here are available only to characters of status 6+ and are very difficult to obtain.

The GM should roleplay the encounter, with supplicants trying their Fast-Talk or Diplomacy skills on supercilious and self-important bureaucrats. Allow bonuses for a request which clearly serves the state, a request at the behest of a noble whose status is higher than the official, or a PC being known to the official, perhaps through guild or *calpulli* membership. Give penalties for supplicants of low status, or for purely personal errands.

Bribery should be used only as a last resort and very discreetly. Officials convicted of bribery were executed.



Fit for a King

Each warrior's clothing and insignia was so distinctive that individuals could easily be recognized and targeted by enemies. In one case, King Nezahualcoyotl of Texcoco exchanged clothes with a noble on the pretext of honoring him. The ruler merely wanted to survive the battle. The noble died, targeted as the king.

A Veteran Teaches Tactics

"No, no, you tufthead! Lead with the left foot and the left arm . . . it's the one with the shield. Now, bring your right foot forward, throw your weight and slash down with your sword. Good. Step back on the right fast or you'll lose your tuft and your head. Again.

"You'll never use a pointed *macauilt* in your life, so don't bother thrusting. Swing it from side to side but only in an emergency. You'll hurt them more with a downward blow.

"Let's try parrying. No, not with the edge! You'll break those obsidian blades before you can use them. Use the edge only when you're cutting flesh. If you're not, parry with the flat of the blade. That's it.

"How's your shouting? Not in my ear, tufthead! Throw in some shrieking and singing. Louder – you're trying to scare them, not put on a show. Now don't freeze up when they do the same to you."

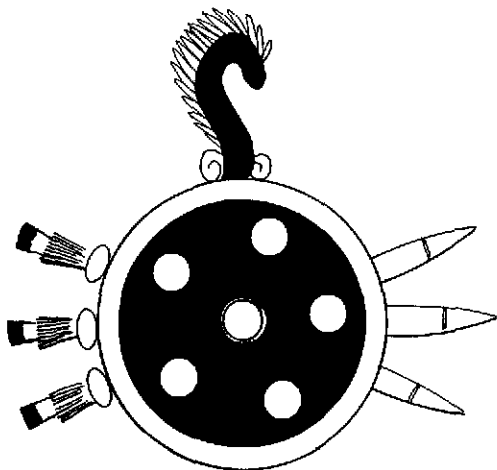
Warriors who encounter the shouting tactic for the first time need to make a Fright Check (p. B93).



Armor Table

War suits, arm coverings and leg coverings can be covered with feathers. This increases PD by 1 and multiplies cost by 10. Only knights and nobles can wear such finery.

Type	PD	DR	Cost	Wt	Notes
<i>Ichcaupilli</i>	1	1	\$100	3 lbs.	Torso only
War suit	1	1	\$200	2 lbs.	The war suit covers the <i>ichcaupilli</i> . In such cases, use the PD of the war suit only, but the DR of the war suit adds to the <i>ichcaupilli</i> .
Arm covering	0	1	\$50	1 lb.	Price for pair.
Leg covering	0	1	\$50	1 lb.	Price for pair.
Armband	1	1	\$30	0	Each. Protects area covered only. Usually, the bicep.
Wristlets	1	1	\$30	0	Per pair. Protects the wrists only.
Shields	2	–	\$50	6 lbs.	Wooden shield.
Feather fringe for shield	1	0	\$100	1 lb.	Protects upper thigh only.



Aztec Hand Weapons

Weapon	Type	Amount	Reach	Cost	Weight	Min ST	Notes
Club	cr	sw+2	1	\$20	2 lbs.	7	Several different types.
Axe	cut	sw+2	1	\$150	2 lbs.	12	Not normally a combat weapon.

BROADSWORD (DX-5)

One-handed macauli	cut	sw+1	1	\$500	3 lbs.	10	Swords had blunt points. 1 turn to ready after each swing.
	imp	thr	1	\$550	3 lbs.	10	Impaling damage available only on swords with points.

KNIFE (DX-5)

Obsidian or flint knife	cut	sw-1	C,1	\$50	1 lb.	—	Not normally a combat weapon. Considered "cheap" for purposes of breaking (pp. 74, 99), but very sharp.
	imp	thr	C			—	

LANCE (DX-5 or Staff-2)

Lance	imp	thr+2	1,2*	\$100	6 lbs.	12	
	cr	sw+2					
	cut	cut+2		\$150			Available only on lances with obsidian blades on both sides of the head.

SPEAR (DX-5 or Staff-2)

Thrusting spear	imp	thr+1	1	\$200	4 lbs.	10	For thrusting only — not thrown.
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TWO-HANDED SWORD (DX-5)

Two-handed macauli	cut	sw+2	1,2	\$650	5 lbs.	12	1 turn to ready after swing.
	imp	thr	1,2	\$700	5 lbs.	12	Impaling damage available only on swords with points.

Aztec Ranged Weapons

Weapons	Type	Amt	SS	Acc	Ranges 1/2D	Max	Cost	Weight	Min ST	Notes
Blowpipe	see B49		10	1	—	ST×4	\$15	—	—	Fires clay pellets.

BOW (DX-6) 2 hands to use. 2 turns to ready.

Quiver							\$10	1/2 lb.		Holds 20 arrows.
Bow	imp	thr+1	13	2	ST×15	ST×20	\$50	2 lbs.	10	Max. damage 1d+4.

SLING (DX-6) 2 hands to load, 1 to fire. 2 turns to ready.

Sling	cr	sw	12	0	ST×6	ST×10	\$10	1/2 lb.	—	Fires round stones.
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SPEAR THROWER (DX-4 or Spear Throwing-4)

Atlatl (spear thrower)	Increases user's effective ST by 5 when throwing a dart or javelin.						\$50	2 lbs.	—	
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SPEAR THROWING (DX-4 or Spear Thrower-4)

Dart, from atlatl	imp	thr-1	9	3	ST×2	ST×3	\$30	1 lb.	7	Not usable as a hand weapon.
Javelin, from atlatl	imp	thr+1	10	3	ST×1.5	ST×2.5	\$100	2 lbs.	7	Not usable as a hand weapon.

Spanish Weapons

Most of the Spanish troops carried rapiers and knives (p. B206). The standard missile weapon was the crossbow (p. B207); some troops carried an arquebus, as described below.

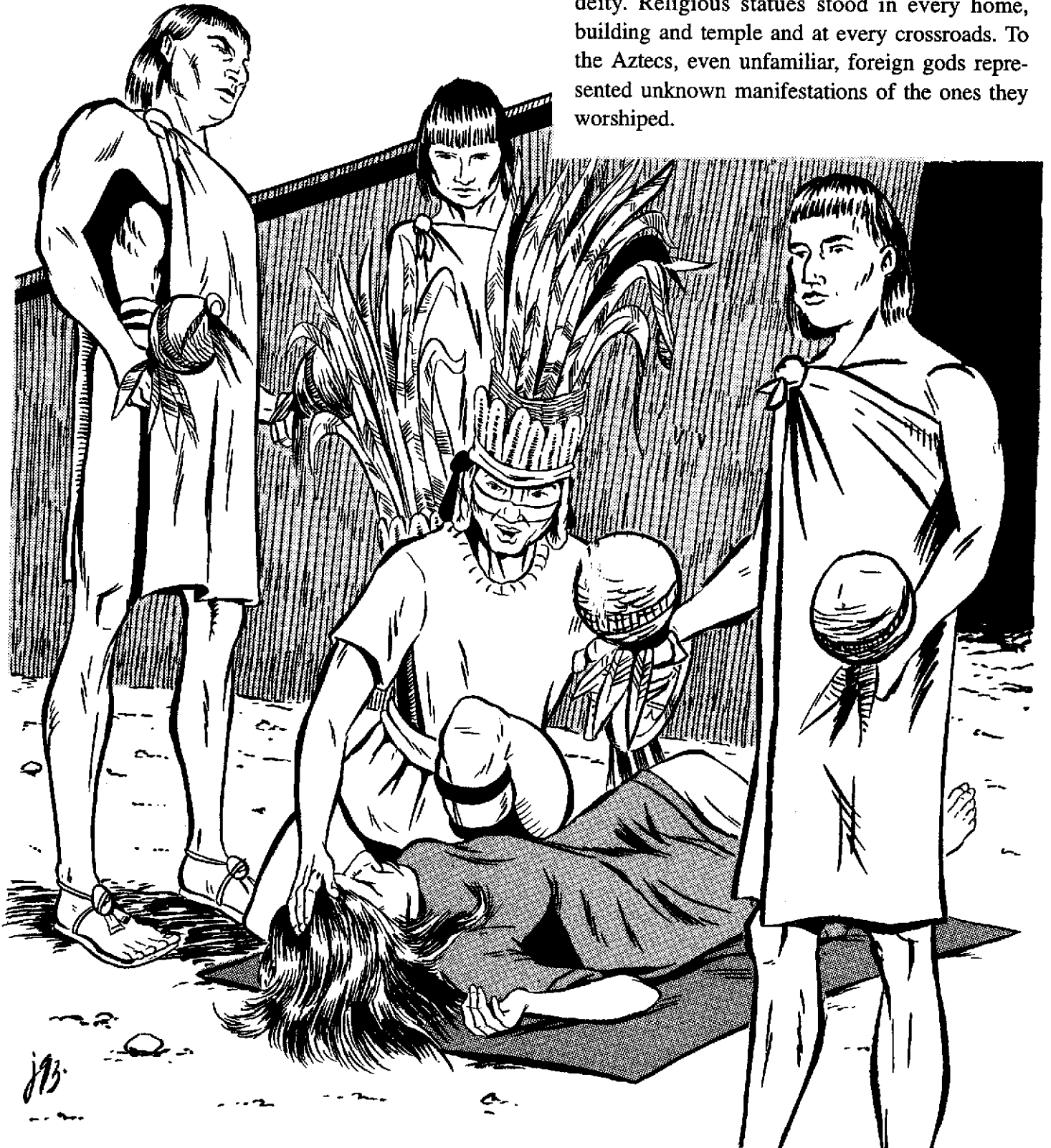
No Spanish weapon would normally be available for purchase during the Conquest. They were issued to the Spanish troops; if captured by Aztecs, they would be priceless.

Weapon	Malf	Dmg	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost	Notes
Arquebus	14	3d+2	16	3	100	700	9 lbs.	1/60	1	10	2	—	.65 caliber

5

RELIGION

Their neighbors complained that the Aztecs worshiped too many gods. Every profession, guild, calpulli, city and province had its own deity. Religious statues stood in every home, building and temple and at every crossroads. To the Aztecs, even unfamiliar, foreign gods represented unknown manifestations of the ones they worshiped.



The fatalistic Aztecs believed that the gods controlled human destiny but were just as dependent on humanity for survival. Thus, man could change destiny through his actions.

The GM should decide how active the gods are and how they affect human affairs.

The *historical* campaign has inactive deities. They do not affect human life, although the religious may believe that they do.

The *fantastic* campaign is the most satisfying and most "realistic" religious plane, at least from an Aztec point of view. Gods exist and affect human life, but only in unobtrusive ways. Most of these effects manifest themselves through priestly spells or omens.

The *mythic* campaign features active gods who walk the earth frequently and meddle in Aztec affairs. Unlike the gods of many European cultures, Aztec deities assumed many aspects, even appearing as other gods. They almost never appeared on earth as themselves, preferring instead an animal or plant disguise, or another manifestation. Players intent on seeing deities in their original form may have to travel to the underworld or heaven.

The Universe

Anahuac, the earth, was a seed floating in a drop of water, held by Ometéotl, parent of all the gods. He represented order, fire, and the color green, and ruled over the center of the earth. From here the four divisions of the earth proceeded to the horizon, each ruled by one of his children:

East: Represented by red, the male and the Reed symbol. Mixcóatl, god of the hunt, ruled this area. From here, the sun rose every day. (The element for this direction is unspecified. Players can assume water.)

West: Represented by white, the female and the House symbol. Quetzalcóatl, god of knowledge, ruled here. This direction's element was air. The sun set here.

South: Represented by blue, life and the Rabbit symbol. Huitzilopochtli, the war god, ruled. The element of the wind was associated with this direction, where the sun rose the highest.

North: Represented by black, death (because the sun never appeared here) and the Flint symbol. This was the domain of Tezcatlipoca, the god of fate. Earth was its element.

Levels of the Other World

The universe comprised 13 heavenly planes and nine lower ones. The upper planes contained the astronomical bodies and the divine beings. The first of the lower planes was Anahuac, our own world. Below Anahuac was the underworld.

The Aztecs observed the sky carefully and named the constellations and the planets. Venus was the most terrifying planet because as a great champion, it always challenged the sun.

The moon palely reflected the sun. It was a basin that emptied and filled with the waters of the sky. Four great trees supported the sky. These trees also acted as an entryway through which the beings of the upper and lower planes entered the earthly plane and affected life.

The Suns and Eons

Because the sun lit the world and controlled the universe, the more powerful gods and each of the elements struggled to become this body. When one of them won, he started a new age. Four Suns or eons had existed before the present one, with each element gaining ascendancy in turn. Each eon ended in a great cataclysm where even time stopped. Except for Xiutecutli, the fire god, all the gods disappeared at the end of each eon, only to exist again at the beginning of the next.

Creation of the Fifth Sun

At the beginning of the Fifth Age, the four gods, each representing a direction

Heavenly Levels

If the players wish to travel to the various planes of the Aztec heaven by magical or religious means, here is what they may find. The 13 planes were benign and delightful places. Precisely which beings lived on which planes is unclear. The GM may want to reassign the suggested locations of various deities to surprise the mortal traveler.

Levels	Description
12 and 13:	Place of Duality, home of Ometéotl, parent of all gods.
11:	Red God, home of Mixcóatl, god of hunting.
10:	Yellow God.
9:	White God, home of Quetzalcóatl, god of knowledge.
8:	Place with Corners of Obsidian Slabs. Level of storms.
7:	Blue-Green Sky, home of Huitzilopochtli, god of war.
6:	Black Sky, home of Tezcatlipoca, chief of the gods.
5:	Gyrating Sky. Level of the Smoking Sun (comets).
4:	Skyplace of Salt. Home of Huixtociuatl, goddess of salt water. Level of Venus.
3:	Level of the Sun.
2:	Level of the Stars.
1:	Tlalocan, home of Tlaloc, god of rain. Level of the Moon and the Clouds.

Lower Levels

Most Aztecs journeyed to the underworld after death. Each plane of this after-life contained terrible dangers that could destroy the soul forever before it reached its resting place on the final plane.

- 1: Earth. Anahuac.
- 2: Passageway for Water. Origin of waters. Guarded by dangerous deities of springs and woods.
- 3: Place Where the Hills Collide.
- 4: Obsidian Hill. The soul balanced on a narrow ridge to cross a bottomless ravine.
- 5: Place of the Obsidian Wind. Razor sharp winds cut the flesh from the traveler's bones, turning him into a skeleton.
- 6: Place Where the Banners Wave.
- 7: Place Where People are Pierced with Arrows.
- 8: Place where People's Hearts Are Devoured. A jaguar devoured the heart of the traveler unless he offered a piece of jade in its place. (The jade rested in the mouth of the deceased during the funeral.)
- 9: Mictlan, home of Mictlantéotl, ruler of the dead.



Sun Sayings

The sun was the most important heavenly body and inspired many sayings. These come from the *Florentine Codex*:

Where the sun comes, the warmth then comes. Things start slowly and then increase. For example, one who starts a job slowly eventually accumulates possessions.

Now the sun shines; it is light. Something new has happened, such as a new ruler being installed.

The sun has set. It has darkened. A person has grown very old and useless.

The god is eaten. There is an earthquake. The god represents the sun. Something terrible has happened, such as a war.

Now the sun is overturned. Something good has ended, such as a city being destroyed or a wise man dying.

Perhaps the sun will not emerge. This bit of sarcasm describes something that will never happen.

Truly, you have attained the sun. A person has acquired something valuable and precious

The Four Suns

Sun of the Jaguar: Began in 955 B.C. Tezcatlipoca was the sun and the age lasted 676 (13×52) years. It ended on the day 4 Jaguar when jaguars devoured all the people of the earth.

Sun of the Wind: Began in 279 B.C. and also lasted 676 years. It was ruled by Quetzalcóatl and ended on 4 Wind, when a great wind blew everything away and turned men into monkeys.

Sun of the Rain: Began in 397 A.D., and lasted 6×52 or 312 years. It was ruled by Tlaloc and ended on 4 Rain, when a fire destroyed everything and turned people into turkeys.

Sun of the Water: Began in 709 A.D., and lasted only 52 years before being destroyed on 4 Water. Chalchiuhtlicue, goddess of ground waters, was the sun. On the day of destruction, the water in the sky fell, drowning everything and turning men into fish.

Thus, the current Sun, the Sun of Motion, began in 761 A.D., and at the time of Moctezuma II has already lasted longer than any previous Sun. Clearly, the Aztecs have been faithful and taken good care of the gods!

and an element, decided to create the world. They gathered at the dark and desolate Teotihuacán with other deities. On top of the Pyramid of the Sun, they set up a huge bonfire and discussed who would jump into the flame to create the sun. None of the four volunteered, so they accepted the offers of two lesser gods, Nanauatl (Ulcerated One) and Teucciztecatl (Lord of the Snails).

The handsome and richly dressed Teucciztecatl rushed toward the fire and then backed off. He repeated this four times but could not sacrifice himself. Suddenly, Nanauatl, poor, deformed and covered with sores, threw himself on the pyre. He turned into Tonatiuh, the sun. Embarrassed by this show of courage, Teucciztecatl also jumped into the flame to become the moon, a pale reflection of the sun.

Tonatiuh was angry that none of the others were brave enough to enter the fire. He remained at the horizon, turning the sky red with his fury, demanding that the other gods sacrifice themselves. The Morning Star, the best divine warrior, came out to confront the Sun. They battled long and furiously until finally Tonatiuh struck down his opponent, who fell into the underworld.

The gods now realized who was sovereign among them. All 1,600 of them were sacrificed by an executioner, who himself jumped into the bonfire at the end. Strengthened by this food of hearts and blood, Tonatiuh rose into the sky and began the first day.

Tonatiuh, a transformation of Ometéotl, thus keeps the Fifth Sun intact by balancing the needs of his children and the elements. The current age is the Age of Earthquakes because earthquakes will destroy the world on the date 4 Motion. Then the *tzitzimime*, demons of twilight, will swarm out and devour the survivors.



Life

The Aztecs knew that the gods existed everywhere: in the elements such as the clouds and wind, in plants and animals, in activities such as hunting and fishing, in food, and even in evil spirits. Everything had material, spiritual, spatial and temporal aspects. For example, maize was not only the material *centli* but also its day sign of 7 Snake and the god Centeotl.

Baptism

The midwife who delivered a child immediately washed it, praying to the goddess of water. The parents immediately consulted a soothsayer to determine whether the child was born under a good daysign. Being born under a bad sign could be countered by naming the child under a good day.

The word for daysign was *tonalli*. This was also the word for fate and destiny, because a child's daysign determined his future.

During the naming ceremony, the midwife presented the child to the sun and the sky. To dedicate a boy to war, she tied his umbilical cord around a small shield and four arrows (for the four directions) and presented the package to a warrior for burial at a battlefield. She also buried an additional package of miniature craft tools in the courtyard to represent his noncombat profession. A girl's cord was tied around little spindles, a shuttle and a box, and also buried.

The parents then announced the name of the child and held a banquet.

Confessions

A person near death called on a priest to confess his sins. This ritual was presided over by Tezcatlipoca, the chief of gods, who saw everything, and Tlazoltéotl/Tlaelquani, Eater of Filth, because she inspired sins and forgave them.

A cleric went to the penitent's house if he were important. Otherwise, the penitent went to the temple. To begin the ritual, the priest threw incense into the flames. As smoke filled the room, he called on the naked sinner to bare all his faults. Because this ceremony could only be done once per life, the penitent revealed everything. He was not only absolved of all sin but he could not be punished for any crime he confessed to.

The priest then prescribed a penance that could involve fasting, scarring of the body, or sacrifices to the gods. The priest could never reveal the content of the confession; it was a sealed account between god and man.

Death and Dying

The way in which a person died, and not the way he lived, determined his funeral and destination after death.

Funerals

Most of those who died were cremated. Relatives dressed the body in fine clothes and fastened it in a squatting position, with knees drawn up to the chin. They wrapped the corpse in several layers of cloth. Finally, they decorated it with feather and paper ornaments and a mask of carved stone or mosaic.

After chanting and ceremonies, the corpse was burned on a pyre. Most people's ashes were stored in a jar with a piece of jade and buried in their homes. The emperor's remains were buried in the temple of Huitzilopochtli. Those who died by lightning, drowning, or gout were regarded as taken by Tlaloc and treated with reverence. Only priests could touch a drowned man, for example. They reverently carried the corpse on a litter to be buried rather than burned.

A woman who died giving birth was buried in the court of the Cuateteo. She was so honored because she had died carrying and giving birth to a warrior. During the funeral procession, attendants, midwives and old women with swords and shields carefully guarded the body. Young warriors tried to take the left forearm or forefinger from the corpse to use as a talisman.

Afterlives

There were several possible afterlives, on different heavenly and lower planes.

The Palace of the Sun was the destination of those who had died in combat or as sacrificial captives. This region had many delights: flowers, birds and fruits. Merchants who had also sacrificed slaves went here; so did women who died in childbirth. The inhabitants greeted the sun with war whoops and weapons as it ascended from the underworld and accompanied it across the horizon. After four



Omens

Omens were one way the gods sent messages. Thus, most Aztecs learned to interpret them in general terms. For more specific interpretations, they consulted soothsayers or sorcerers.

Anything unusual became an omen. A bear, wolf or especially a jaguar foretold doom. If any of these animals entered a house, its owner wondered who sent it and what it wanted. A particularly bad omen was a snake, especially if it crossed the road in front of someone. It was then said that the snake cut the thread of a person's life.

Other bad omens included a mysterious fire or eclipse of the sun or the moon. Such omens stemmed from divine anger and demanded an immediate sacrifice to one or more gods.

If an Aztec was quarreling or angry with someone, any omens were blamed on an enemy. Many long-lasting feuds began with such accusations.

Astronomers

The gods manifested themselves through the sky and its objects. Thus, astronomer priests were very important in interpreting divine will. Their main instrument was simple: a wooden cross, balanced on a sighting block held at arm's length. They recorded the location of the stars, computed the paths of the planets and named the constellations. Most did not use their observations to predict the future. Instead, diviner priests interpreted the data.

The most important astronomer was the emperor, who observed the sky every day and night to get a general sense of the fate of his empire. From his observations of the strange phenomena before the Conquest (see p. 114), Moctezuma II knew that something was amiss with the empire. However, he had to consult specialists to determine precisely what was wrong.

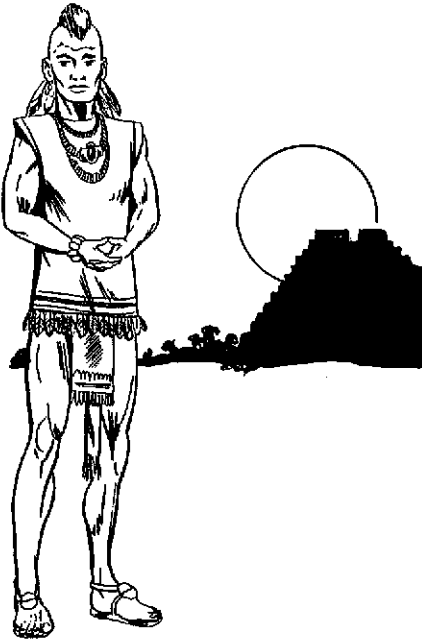
Good and Evil

Many religions require people to do good to reach eternal paradise after death. Otherwise, they suffer eternal torment for evil deeds. The Aztec afterlife did not depend on the quality of one's life, but on the way one died. Even then, in most cases, the afterlife was only transitory.

Thus, the Aztecs were really not interested in the rewards of an afterlife. They were more concerned with increasing the quality of their current life. This required protection of the universal order and service to the gods. Only if the deities remained content and nourished could they sustain the earth. On a more practical plane, increasing the quality of life meant avoiding the misfortunes that could damage it.

Good acts were those that enriched life and were appropriate to a situation. If a deed helped someone to develop his personality, respect others and increase self-control, then it was good.

Evil acts impoverished life and were self-indulgent and devious. Evil acts degraded others and increased disorder in the universe and in society.



Teopatlí

The black "priest's paint" is an enchanted ointment that enables priests to worship for hours without tiring. It can only be used by a cleric of the deity to whom the paint was consecrated. Each batch has a specific name used to turn on its power. A fresh coat of this paint increases a user's HT by 50% (rounded up) for 12 hours. After that time, the user immediately takes fatigue losses equal to the amount gained. Any losses beyond the user's fatigue are taken from HT. Normal recovery rules apply as described on p. B128.

years of happiness, these denizens turned into beautiful hummingbirds and birds to live forever among the flowers of the earth.

Those who died of drowning visited Tlaloc, the rain god, in his abode of Tlalocan. It lay hidden by rain clouds on the top of a mountain full of flowers and water. They lived here in eternal joy, as companions to the god.

Children and those who could not think went to the Heaven of the Nursing Tree. Here they suckled on a milk tree, so called because it constantly dripped nourishment for its inhabitants.

Everyone else went to Mictlan or the underworld. The departed had to pass a series of tests. Sometimes a dog accompanied the funeral pyre to aid the deceased across the land of the dead. After four years of trials and hardship, the soul finally disappeared into eternal nothingness.

Temples

The temple or *teocalli* was usually a flat-topped pyramid, with steps down one face. It typically fronted a large, open space used for religious celebrations. At the top of the pyramid stood a one-roomed sanctuary, with a large entrance and a roof of either thatch or stone. The image of the god rested within on a platform.

Temples were so important that nearly every settlement, crossroads and mountain had one. Larger settlements, such as Tenochtitlán, had several, with a dominant one rising above all the rest. The burning of a temple by an enemy signified conquest and immediate surrender usually followed.

Subordinate buildings such as armories, herbal gardens and clerics' homes usually surrounded the temple.

The Clergy

Members of the clergy acted as messengers between the people and the deities and were as numerous as those they worshiped. The Great Temple alone had over 5,000 priests dedicated to its service.

Priests had to lead a moral life; chastity was one of the requirements. They worshiped their god through religious rituals, feasts and sacrifice of objects, animals and humans. They practiced rituals both day and night. Every day they had to sacrifice some of their own blood to prove their devotion.

Most clerics came from the nobility, though parents of a lower-status child could dedicate their child to the profession by applying to the *calmecac*. Priests had to embody the qualities of their god. The priesthood was one of the few professions open to women.

The highest priest was the emperor. He led many ceremonies and even human sacrifices. Below him, the religious hierarchy reflected Aztec social structure; see *Religious Rank*, p. 35.

High Clerics

The top religious post belonged equally to the high priest of Huitzilopochtli, the war god, and the high priest of Tlaloc, the rain god. Because the deities demanded almost round-the-clock attention, these positions were more ceremonial than administrative.

Below them, the vicar general held the real administrative power. He was in charge of all the ceremonies and education in the empire and appointed all the priests below him.

Calmecac Priests

Helping the vicar general in his educational responsibilities was the Keeper of the *Calmecacs*. He administered all the *calmecac* chiefs. The chief of the Great Temple *calmecac* had more status than any other. The *calmecac* chief led the Masters of Youths, the priests who taught individual subjects.

Administrative Priests

Assisting the vicar general in all other duties was the assistant vicar. With

other officials, he supervised the Keeper of Performances, who dealt with celebrations and temples, and the Major Clerk, steward for the thousands of vestments, idols and religious instruments needed in the city.

Beneath the Keeper of Performances was the Caretaker of Songs, who ensured the quality of all religious compositions. New songs or poems that praised the gods needed to pass inspection by his office before a public premiere. His office also supervised the chorale masters, who taught all new songs.

Also beneath the Keeper of Performances were the high priests of the individual temples and deities. Each high priest took charge of priests and deacons who specialized in various temple arts. Some were scribes and painters, others were diviners and healers; others maintained the temples or led individual feasts.

The lowest rung of the priestly hierarchy was occupied by the novitiates. They did most of the temple "grunt work," such as sweeping and sorting of tribute.

The Soul

A person's soul had three components.

The *tonalli* was a part of the soul that in gaming terms corresponds directly to a player's magical energy. It was a solar force that gave a person valor, vigor and warmth. It could be lost because of divine wrath or could leave the body involuntarily – due to disease, for example. Many cures involved searching for and returning a person's lost soul. (For more information, see the *Remove Soul* spell, p. 75, and the *Recover Soul* spell, p. 73.)

The *tonalli* was principally located in the head. Some warriors or wizards took a victim's head or hair, to overcome his *tonalli*. Losses to this part of the soul are applied evenly to ST and HT.

The *teyolia* contained personality and knowledge. It was the part that entered the afterlife and was located in the heart. *Teyolia* losses are applied to IQ.

The *ihilia* was the evil or animal part contained in the liver. It was the seat of passion, desire, feelings, anger, jealousy, hate and strength. *Ihilia* losses are applied to DX.



Fright Checks and the Tonalli

The Aztecs believed that fright caused loss of *tonalli*. (Losses to other parts of the soul can only occur through magical means.) To play this, use the die roll made for the Fright Check Table (see p. B93-B94) to determine the amount of *tonalli* lost. Results less than or equal to the character's *tonalli* (HT and ST combined) are temporary losses divided as evenly as possible between HT and ST. Lost points are regained using normal recovery rules. However, if the lost amount is greater than total HT and ST, the difference becomes a *permanent* loss, regainable only through the *Recover Soul* spell.

For example, Quimichetl encounters a specter in the forest. He makes a Fright Check roll of 16, an automatic failure. He now rolls an 11 (9 on the dice + 2 for the amount by which he missed the check) on the Fright Check table. Besides applying the results of the table, he loses 11 points of *tonalli*. Because 11 is less than his combined HT and ST of 18, they are temporary losses that heal normally. Quimichetl applies 5 points to his HT and 6 points to his ST.

On another occasion, Quimichetl misses his Fright Check by 6. He rolls 23 (17 on the dice + 6). Because the result is 5 greater than his combined HT and ST of 18, he loses five points *permanently* from his *tonalli*. The loss can only be recovered through spells.

Cannibalism

Although no archaeological evidence exists for cannibalism among the Aztecs, the literature mentions it profusely. While this may be a case of bad press instigated by the Spaniards, it seems likely that ritual cannibalism was an important part of human sacrifice.

After a victim's heartless corpse reached the ground, the captor took it home for a feast. Cooks dismembered the body to prepare only the limbs for consumption. The more important parts went to the dignitaries at the banquet. For example, the palm went to the highest dignitary. The head went to the skull rack while the rest of the body served as animal fodder.

The captor did not eat his victim's flesh because it would be like eating his own flesh. Instead, he collected the blood in a green bowl with a rim of feathers. He brought this special bowl before all the idols in all the shrines and used a hollow cane to place drops of blood on the lips of the deity. This ritual symbolized the actual feeding of the gods.

The victim's hair (as the repository of his *tonalli*) and clothing were kept in a special box as a commemoration. When the sacrificer died, this box was burned at his funeral.

Feasts and Festivals

Aztec festivals served two important purposes. They allowed ordinary citizens to publicly worship and nourish the deities. Only through great quantities of food and blood could the gods continue to exist.

More importantly, they impressed and intimidated subject and hostile nations, whose citizens were often invited to the celebrations. An empire that was powerful enough to lavish clothing, gifts, food, weapons, flowers and jewelry on hundreds of performers and visitors could easily muster the resources for conquest. Thus suitably and pleasantly terrorized, visiting enemies and tributaries returned home with little desire to oppose the mighty Aztecs.

Not a day passed in the capital without several rituals. A feast could involve an individual sacrifice or hundreds of performers and thousands of onlookers. On some feast days the nobles, artisans or merchants gave gifts to the emperor, not out of obligation but out of respect and good will. The emperor, in turn, redistributed many of these gifts to deserving citizens as rewards for good service.

All PCs need to attend any religious ceremonies or festivals involving their deities or profession. Otherwise, unless they are publicly known to be seriously ill or away, they suffer -5 reaction from everyone until they next attend an appropriate feast. This removes all penalties.

Important feast days are described on p. 80. An example of such a feast is the Feast of Tezcatlipoca.

Feast of Tezcatlipoca

Chief of all the gods, Tezcatlipoca afflicted the land with drought and famine. His feast was celebrated in the Aztec month of Toxcatl, roughly our May, when lack of rain plagued central México.

During this month, a man was chosen to impersonate the god for the coming year. He was a perfect physical specimen, graceful and intelligent, selected from the slave classes or from war captives. Disguised as the god, he received many privileges and obligations.

For an entire year, he studied such divine behavior as playing the flute and dancing. A troop of bodyguards not only protected him from harm but ensured he did not escape. By day, he lived in his temple. At night, he blew his flute to announce his presence and walked down the pyramid accompanied by his guards.

As he wandered the city playing his flute and jangling the rattles on his limbs, the people approached. The sick came to be cured and others came to be blessed with wealth, fame and health.

Toward the end of his year as a god, the impersonator wore the full god-disguise or *ixiptla*, and was dressed by the emperor himself. He also wed four goddesses, in the form of beautiful women, who served his every whim.

On the last day, the impersonator slowly ascended the steps of the pyramid,

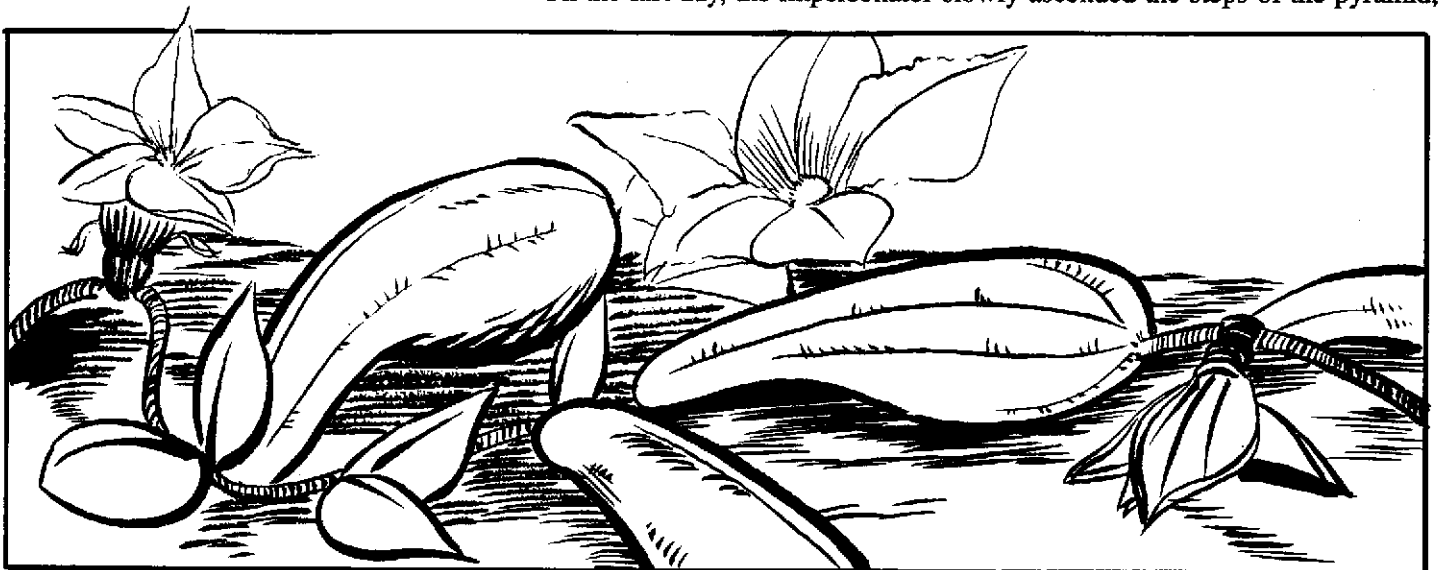
Tezcatlipoca Ixiptla

The Tezcatlipoca *ixiptla* is covered in the priest's black paint. He wears gold ear plugs, a crystal lip plug with a green feather and a golden pectoral. He also wears a golden headband carved with an ear, representing his ability to hear confessions. On his feet are richly worked sandals and a deer hoof, to represent agility. Around his ankles he has golden foot rattles, and on his shoulders is a beautiful net mantle. Note that he does not wear all these items all the time.

This *ixiptla* frequently carries flowers in one hand and a clay flute in the other. Playing this flute brings all criminals and sinners to tears for their misdeeds and fills warriors with bravery. Occasionally, he will carry a feather fan supporting a dark scrying mirror.

Enchanted *ixiptla* items will affect any wearer. Those which cast spells will affect any target except for priests of Tezcatlipoca. Anyone can wear them, but each item has a name to turn it on and a password to turn it off. Additionally, a single name will turn on all the items and a single password will turn them all off. The GM should feel free to add or subtract magic spells to ensure the balance of the game. Note that because the god disguise's primary function was to serve its worshipers, spells that serve the common good rather than the individual must be given first consideration.

Item	Spell
Black paint	Vigor
Headband	Compel Truth
Golden pectoral	Bravery
Fan with mirror	Divination
Clay flute	Bless, Curse
Deer hoof	Dexterity



breaking his instruments at every step. When he reached the top, priests sacrificed him immediately. His body was then carried down the temple steps to be fed to the emperor, dignitaries and the impersonator for the coming year. No further human sacrifices were allowed on that day.

God Disguise

The god disguise or *ixiptla* enabled its wearer to assume the person of a deity. Because the disguise granted the god's powers and obligations, its wearer was revered as the deity. A small town might have only one such disguise, while the capital had many versions of many divinities.

This disguise also provides a convenient way for the GM to grant magical items to the players. A god disguise included several items enchanted by priests to duplicate a god's powers. The quality of each disguise varied from place to place. For example, a disguise from a small settlement might have one or two minor spells, while that of the same god from a major urban temple might have many important powers. A typical disguise is described in the sidebar on p. 64.

To avoid abuse by the wearer, each item or the entire disguise might have a name and password – probably a brief prayer to the god – to turn its powers off and on. In addition, anyone using the disguise for a long time or an important act *becomes* the god, and must usually be sacrificed.

Because the god disguises were closely guarded by priests and warriors, they are very difficult to obtain. Stealing one risked the wrath of a deity and the enmity of an entire city. A player may more plausibly chance upon these magical items in an abandoned temple. The challenge then becomes how to activate and use these found objects. The name and password would usually *not* be written on the item, but memorized by its creator.

Religious Sacrifice

In the beginning, the gods sacrificed themselves to create the sun and to keep it moving. Man's prime duty was to continue this tradition and to supply blood and hearts to nourish the sun. Thus, religious devotion and not cruelty inspired the Aztec rituals of human sacrifice.

The Divine Mission

As the chosen people of the Fifth Age, the Aztecs could have accepted their fate and waited for the end of the world. But believing that as individuals they could change this fate, they decided to prevent or at least postpone the fifth cataclysm. If they could nourish the sun and support it against evil, the world would survive. The sun needed blood for nourishment and the Aztecs would provide that blood through human sacrifice.

Auto-Sacrifice

The lowest form of sacrifice, which everyone did periodically, was auto-sacrifice: piercing a body part, such as an ear, to draw blood. This blood was sometimes dripped on paper or put in fire as an offering.

Other forms of self-mutilation were practiced. For example, lords and ladies sometimes ran cords of *metl* thorns through a hole in their tongues as a sign of devotion.

Object Sacrifice

A higher plane of sacrifice involved small objects such as rubber or food. Many guilds would not allow members to sacrifice such things until they had reached a certain status, as these sacrifices were considered important to the deities. Again, the object was burned at a hearth, allowing the flames to carry the object to the divine abodes. Higher planes of sacrifice involved animals or valuable objects such as gems or paper.



Other Deities

Chalchiuhtlicue: She Who Has a Skirt of Gems was the female counterpart of Tlaloc and was the goddess of ground waters such as lakes and springs.

Chantico: Goddess of domestic fire. Patroness of Xochimilco and of lapidaries.

Chicomécatl: Seven Snake was the goddess of agricultural products. As her son, Centeotl, (s)he was the god of maize. As her daughter, Xilonen, she was a virginal maiden, the fresh young maize.

Cóatlícue: She of the Snake Skirt. Mother Goddess of florists and of the earth. Celebrated her birthday, One Rabbit, by sending famines.

Coyotlínauatl: God of featherworkers.

Huixtociuatl: Goddess of salt.

Itzpapalotl: Obsidian Knife Butterfly was the goddess of war and of unpredictable fate, whose *naualli* was the deer. The female counterpart of Mixcóatl, she was associated with the hunt. She was a fleshless face with claws for hands and feet.

Mictlantéotl: God of death, darkness and the underworld. He possessed both male and female aspects.

Mixcóatl: Cloud Snake, god of the hunt, of stars and numbers. Primary god of the Chichimecs or barbarians.

Tlaelcuani: Eater of Filth. Filth means sin, in this case. Goddess of confessions.

Tlazotéotl: Goddess of love and sex.

Tonatiuh: He Who Goes Forth Shining. The sun, whose *naualli* was an eagle, strengthened warriors by his heat and light. In the day, warriors and the women who had died in childbirth accompanied him across the sky. In the evening, he descended into the underworld alone to become Yaomicqui, one who died at the hands of the enemy. At dawn, he was reborn.

Xipe Totec: Our Lord, The Flayed One, god of goldsmiths, suffering, spring and renewals. Sacrifices to him were skinned after being shot with arrows. Priests wore the flayed skin to symbolize the earth putting on a new skin at the beginning of the rainy season.

Xochipilli: Flower Prince, god of youth, flowers, plants and song.

Yacatecuilli: Lord of the Nose, god of merchants.

The Victim's Reaction

Not all victims approached their sacrificial end with grace and dignity. Many warriors tried to escape during the ceremonies. Others fainted just as they reached the top of the pyramid. Many victims, especially women, may have remained unaware of their impending sacrifice, especially if they were beheaded in one surprising move.

PCs who are lucky enough to reach the sacrificial altar need to make a Will roll three times: during the ceremonies preceding sacrifice, halfway up the temple steps and near the sacrificial block. Social Status of 4+ adds 1; the higher a person was on the social ladder, the more he was trained to see this as an honor. Warriors and priests also receive a +1 because they believe that this is a good way to die. Slaves get -1.

If this Will roll is failed, roll against HT. A failure means the victim faints and will be unconscious when sacrificed. Success means he tries to escape. For an Aztec, this is the ultimate shame, though prisoners from other cultures might feel differently!

Clerical Investment Costs

Clerical Investment costs 5 points in a historical Aztec background. There are added costs to be a priest in a historical/fantastic campaign, where magic works! Note that some of the spells listed here are found in *GURPS Magic* rather than the *Basic Set*.

By paying the base 5 points for Clerical Investment, *plus* the appropriate cost for the deity as listed in the sidebars on the following pages, a priest becomes able to learn and use that deity's spells (plus Recover Strength) as though he were a mage. The priest does not automatically get spells – he must study and pay character points for each one he wants to learn – but his temple provides training. A few deities provide extra benefits, which *are* automatic.

Transformations: Multiple Deities

Most Aztec priests or priestesses serve only one god. But there is an important exception. If a deity can change into another, a priest may invest in both the original deity and the transformation and receive powers from both gods. The devotee must meet the prerequisites of *both* deities.

For example, a priest wishes to serve both Tezcatlipoca and Mixcóatl, one of Tezcatlipoca's transformations. To meet the prerequisites for Tezcatlipoca, he must have any weapon skill at 15+, Shield at 15+, and Disguise at 15+. To meet the prerequisites for Mixcóatl, he must also have Animal Handling at 15+ and any one of these skills at 15+: Traps, Tracking, Bow, Blowpipe, Spear Thrower.

Continued on next page . . .

Human Sacrifice

Only male priests with many years of service sacrificed humans. They had to do it with no feeling, but with speed, skill and precision. Because the emperor was the highest priest in the land, he could also sacrifice people, but he did so only with important captives.

A small town might sacrifice 30 people in a year, while a provincial capital might offer 400. Sometimes thousands were sacrificed. During the dedication of the Great Temple in Tenochtitlán, nearly 20,000 victims nourished the gods.

Divine credit for the sacrifice went to the person offering the victim and never to the priest performing it, unless the priest also captured the victim. There were many methods of human sacrifice.

Drowning

Drowning was most often used on children as an offering to Tlaloc, the rain god. The victim was first beaten until it cried. This induced tears in the watchers; tears equated to the life-giving rain. With great ceremony, the child was then thrown into a body of water, where it drowned.

Beheading

Women who impersonated the female deities were usually beheaded. The victim was usually mildly drunk as she danced up the temple steps, accompanied by priests. When she reached the top, priests grabbed her and lopped off her head. Her blood, spurting in many directions, brought fertility to the crops. Her heart was also taken, sometimes before the beheading, but usually after.

Burning

Other victims were roasted alive in a fire as an offering to the fire god, Xiutecutli. They were given a drug called *yiautli* to anesthetize them. Then their limbs were bound and they were thrown into the flames. After a few minutes, the still-living victims were pulled out and their hearts taken.



Skinning

As an offering to Xipe Totec, god of suffering, a victim was tied to a frame and shot with arrows until he died. Then a priest flayed his skin and wore it. Occasionally, victims were skinned after other types of sacrifice, or while they were still alive and suitably anesthetized.

The priest wore the skin for a few days, until it dried and fell to pieces. (The odor of the rotting skin gives a -3 reaction to the priest.) This represented renewal, or the green shoots of maize bursting from a dead seed. The cleric carefully gathered the broken skin and bundled it underneath the temple of Xipe Totec.

Heart Sacrifice

The best-known sacrifice was the taking of the heart. Four priests held the victim's limbs, stretching him face-up over a sacrificial stone. A fifth priest ripped open his chest with an obsidian knife, tearing out the still-beating heart. The heart was immediately placed in the basin of a Chac Mool, a stone messenger who delivered it to the gods, or in a large stone container for later disposal.

If the sacrifice was held at the top of the pyramid, the victim's body was kicked down the steps to the ground. There, the captor collected it for burning or distribution at a later feast.

Gladiatorial Sacrifice

Captives renowned for their bravery had the option of dying in combat. Near the Temple of the Sun, a rope fastened the captive to a platform, while still allowing full movement. He was given bladeless wooden weapons (crushing damage only) and a ceremonial costume with no defensive value. He had to fight four normally-equipped warriors, one at a time. If he still won, he faced a left-handed warrior, who tried to disable the victim's weapon arm. When the captive was incapacitated, priests took his living heart.

The few who survived this trial were offered freedom. Many considered this a disgrace and demanded more opponents, so they could die fighting and nourish the gods.

Gods and Goddesses

The deities controlled both good and evil in Aztec life. Yet, all divine art emphasized the frightening and disgusting, with body parts, bones, blood and dirt as major parts of godly regalia. The deities were also usually depicted in battle dress, which emphasized their warlike nature. The deities were never part of any divine army but often fought each other.

Transformations

An unusual aspect of Aztec deities was their ability to assume each other's personas, thus transforming their powers and obligations. A single deity might have dual male and female personas, each worshiped as separate divinities. For example, Ometéotl, the creator, was also Ometecutli, the male creator, and Omecihuatl, the female creator. And gods might share their domains – Quetzalcóatl and Tlaloc were both responsible for water.

In a sense, a god could become another divinity by wearing that deity's *ixiptla*, just as worshipers on earth could do so. Perhaps the deities should be considered as essences rather than individuals, who do not assume aspects of individual gods until they select that god's disguise. Some essences could wear many disguises, while some were restricted to just a few.

It was this transformational aspect that made the Aztec religion a receptive one. No foreign god or religious practice seemed too strange or sacrilegious. Unknown gods were merely new aspects of the familiar deities; foreign idols were welcomed into a special temple in the Temple District.

Following are described just a few of the 1,600 Aztec deities.

Clerical Investment Costs (Continued)

The point cost is 5 points for Clerical Investment, plus the listed cost for the original god, plus half the listed cost for the transformation. Fractions are rounded up. In this case, the total cost is 30 points: 5, plus 20 for Tezcatlipoca, plus 5 for Mixcóatl (whose usual Clerical Investment cost is 10 points.)

The cleric can learn the spells of the transformation normally, but can use them (and any other powers of the transformation) only on that deity's feast days. The original god's powers can be used only after the feast day is over. (See *Feast Days* on p. 84.) In this example, the priest can use Mixcóatl's powers only on Mixcóatl's feast days of 14/1 to 14/5. He may use the powers of Tezcatlipoca only on other days.

General Prerequisites: Besides the listed prerequisites, all priests must have the Literacy advantage and Theology at 14+.

Ce Acatl (5 points)

Prerequisites: Sword and Shield at 16+.
Benefits: One Animal spell and one of these spells: Armor, Bravery, Dexterity, Might, Recover Strength, Resist Pain, Sense Foes, Shield, Vigor.

Centeotl

See Chicomecóatl.

Chalchiuhtlicue (10 points)

Prerequisites: Agronomy at 15+. **Benefits:** Either all the Water spells or all the Plant spells.

Chantico (10 points)

Prerequisite: None. **Benefits:** Either all the Plant spells or all the Fire spells.

Chicomecóatl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Agronomy at 14+. **Benefits:** Either all the Plant spells or all the Food spells. **Note:** The prerequisites and costs are the same for Xilonen and Centeotl. Any of these corn deities can transform into any of the others.

Ciuacóatl (17 points)

Prerequisite: Religious Rank 3+ and Huitzilopochtli as a secondary deity. **Benefits:** All the Necromantic spells and all these spells: Clumsiness, Daze, Fear, Foolishness, Great Haste, Haste, Hinder, Itch, Pain, Panic, Quick March, Resist Pain, Sense Foes, Stun, Terror. The cleric also receives adds 1 to his Sacrifice skill or increases it to 17, whichever is higher.

Continued on next page . . .

Clerical Investment Costs (Continued)

Transformation: Huitzilopochtli. Though Cuacóatl could not transform into Huitzilopochtli, the priests of Cuacóatl were also priests of Huitzilopochtli. Thus, priests can be invested in both deities using transformation costs.

Cuateteo (10 points)

Prerequisites: Cleric must be female.
Benefits: All the Body Control spells.

Coatlícue (10 points)

Prerequisites: Agronomy at 14+ or Flower Arranging at 14+. **Benefits:** Either all the Earth spells or all the Plant spells.

Coyotlinalau (10 points)

Prerequisites: Featherworking and Heraldry at 15+. **Benefits:** All the Making and Breaking spells.

Ehécatl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Same as Quetzalcóatl.
Benefits: All the Air spells.

Huitzilopochtli (15 points)

Prerequisites: Must be Aztec. Sword and Shield at 18+. **Benefits:** Sword and Shield +2. All these spells: Alertness, Armor, Bravery, Dexterity, Flaming Weapon, Great Haste, Haste, Hinder, Lightning, Might, Pain, Quick March, Rear Vision, Recover Strength, Repair Arrow, Resist Pain, Sense Foes, Sharpen, Shield, Stun, Vigor. One spell from either Weapon or Armor enchantments.

Transformation: Cuacóatl. Though Huitzilopochtli could not transform into Cuacóatl, the priests of Huitzilopochtli were also priests of Cuacóatl. Thus, priests can be invested in both deities using transformation costs.

Huixtociuatl (10 points)

Prerequisites: None. **Benefits:** All the Earth spells.

Itzpapalotl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Animal Handling at 15+. Any weapon or Shield skill at 15+. **Benefits:** Choice of all Animal spells, all Knowledge spells, or all these combat spells: Armor, Fatigue, Fear, Hinder, Pain, Panic, Repair Arrow, Sense Foe, Sharpen, Shield, Stun, Terror.

Mayauel (10 points)

Prerequisites: Carousing at 15+, Beverage-Making at 14+. **Benefits:** Choice of all the Plant spells or all the Food spells. Ferment spell.

Continued on next page . . .

Tezcatlipoca

Considered the chief of all gods by the Náhuatl-speaking groups, Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror) was dark, evil and unknowable. He generally used a shield, *atlatl* and darts, and wore the double heron feathers of the Aztec warrior in his hair. His body was painted black; his face was gold, with three vertical black stripes. His emblem was a special kind of turkey with a blue wattle.

His distinguishing feature was the mirror he wore in his hair. Through it, he saw all things and all times, and thus was also the god of fate and confessions. He could show anyone in this mirror as dark and misshapen, thus frightening them.

He existed as four colors: his major color was black. In red, he was Xipe Totec, god of spring and renewals. In white, he was Quetzalcóatl, god of learning, and in blue, he was Huitzilopochtli, Aztec patron god.

He was the god of night and tricks, and an evil sorcerer. He could shapeshift into any animal, though his favorite was the jaguar, an evil omen. He could also transform into over 14 deities, the most of any Aztec god.

Tezcatlipoca's Transformations

One of the god's transformations was as Yaotl, the enemy. He constantly stirred up war for war's sake and not to take any side. He was the god of arsenals and was also Quetzalcóatl's sworn enemy.

Another important manifestation was Telpochtli, the Youth. As such, he was the patron of the *telpochcalli*. Another was as *Moquequelo*, or Mocker. He delighted in tricking men and did so in his appearance as a slave. On his feast day, lords and merchants changed places with their slaves to serve them, in order not to incur the wrath of this god.

Though Tezcatlipoca sent famine and disease as an evil god, in his transformation as Omecatli (Two Reed), he was a god of plenty and the patron of invitation to feasts. As this deity, he brought music, dance and song from the Palace of the Sun to men.

Quetzalcóatl

One of the most important gods, Quetzalcóatl (Plumed Snake) was the god of knowledge. A creation myth tells how he stole some bones and brought them to the surface to create the first people. His *naualli* is the quetzal bird. As a celestial dragon, he controlled the waters of the sky, and children were often sacrificed to him by drowning – though he decried human sacrifice and was only rarely offered a captive. As the god of learning, he was patron of the *calmecac*.

He was a bearded man in black, wearing a red mask with a beak. He often carried a scepter studded with star-like jewels to symbolize his connection with the sky. His most sacred city was Cholula.

Quetzalcóatl, the Hero

Quetzalcóatl was also Tolpitzin, a great Toltec priest in the ancient city of Tula. Among his radical ideas was his insistence on the sacrifice of flowers and small animals only. He wanted to end the practice of human sacrifice.

His followers and ideas clashed with the conventions established by other priests, especially those of Tezcatlipoca, who was a powerful sorcerer at the time. This struggle forced a civil war, in which the followers of Tezcatlipoca won.

In the mythic version of this tale, Tezcatlipoca, disguised as a merchant, showed Quetzalcóatl a mirror. The priest was shocked to discover sores on his face and quickly accepted a drink that was supposed to cure him.

The beverage was *octli*, which made him drunk. In that state, he invited a priestess to his chambers and broke his vow of celibacy. Thus dishonored, he ordered his palace burned and all his treasure hidden in the surrounding mountains and caves. He then left Tula with some followers in 987 A.D., and fled toward the east.

He reached the coast in the year Ce Acatl (One Reed) where two things might have happened. In one version, he threw himself onto a pyre and changed into the

Morning Star. In another version, he bid his followers farewell and stepped onto a raft of snakes to float east, never to be heard from again.

Quetzalcóatl's Transformations

This god had two important transformations. As Ehécatl, he was the god of wind and patron of thieves and sorcerers. The conch shell he wore around his neck symbolized the swirling winds. As Ce Acatl (One Reed), he was the Morning Star, a famous hunter and warrior, and second only to the sun, against whom he had dueled and lost. Thus, Ce Acatl represented the captured and sacrificed warrior. His day was unlucky and anyone born on it could become a sorcerer or thief.

Huitzilopochtli

The most important god in Tenochtitlán, its patron, was Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird on the Left). He was the god of war of this city (as Tezcatlipoca was the god of war for all Náhuatl groups). He was also associated with the sun. His main weapon was the turquoise fire snake, which was not only a magic staff, but often came alive as his *naualli*. He wore yellow feathers in his headdress.

When the original wandering Aztecs reached Coatepec (Snake Hill), Huitzilopochtli was reborn. His mother Coatlicue was sweeping when a ball of feathers descended from the sky. She kept this ball in her bosom and from it conceived a child. Her 400 children, led by a daughter, Coyolxauqui, thought this dishonorable and plotted to kill their mother. Coatlicue became frightened but the child within her told her not to be afraid.

As Coyolxauqui advanced to kill her mother, Huitzilopochtli sprang out from Coatlicue's womb, fully dressed in war regalia. He cut Coyolxauqui to pieces, which went rolling down Coatepec. He also overpowered all his siblings, taking their insignia and weapons.

To commemorate this event, the Aztecs placed a circular stone disc, carved with pieces of Coyolxauqui, at the bottom of the Great Temple, which represented Coatepec.

The Turquoise Fire Snake

After the battle, Huitzilopochtli bequeathed his magical staff to the Aztecs, who treated it as a sacred relic. They enshrined this fearsome weapon in his temple, bringing it out only when needed by their god. The relic was so dangerous that it was used only once. When the conquistadors attacked Tenochtitlán, a lone warrior faced the advancing armies armed only with the Fire Snake. He invoked its awesome powers against the advancing army. And absolutely nothing happened.

The Aztecs concluded that even their gods had abandoned them in the face of a superior foe.

Tlaloc

Tlaloc was the god of rain and agriculture. He shared the highest honors among the Aztecs with Huitzilopochtli. He wore goggles, a twisted nose, fangs and a paper fan on his back to denote fertility. In one hand he carried an ear of corn, and in the other a rattle that attracted rain. His clothing featured black rubber to attract black rain clouds. He lived in Tlalocan, a place of rain clouds above a tall mountain. Each of his assistants, the Tlaloque, controlled a different type of rain: terrible northern thunderstorms, gentle eastern rains, life-giving southern rains of summer and the fertile western rains of fall.

Ometéotl

Ometéotl was the original god. He existed in dual roles, as Ometecutli and Omecihuatl, the Lord and Lady of Duality. He lived in the 13th heaven and was the father of all deities. As Tonatiuh, the sun, he established the harmony of the Fifth Age. He fixed the birthdate of all living things and their fate. He is the father

Clerical Investment Costs (Continued)

Mictlantéotl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Theology at 18+ and Sacrifice at 15+. *Benefits:* All the Necromantic spells.

Mixcóatl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Animal Handling at 15+. Any of these skills at 15+: Blowpipe, Bow, Spear Thrower, Tracking, Traps. *Benefits:* All the Animal spells.

Octli God (10 points)

Prerequisites: None. *Benefits:* The cleric adds 2 to his Beverage-Making and Carousing skills, or raises each of them to 15, whichever is greater. Ferment spell.

Omecatl (10 points)

Prerequisite: Entertainment skill at 15+. *Benefits:* Add 2 to all these skills or raise them to 15, whichever is greater: Carousing, Dance, one Musical Instrument, Singing.

Ometéotl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Divination (Daybook Reading) spell at 15+. *Benefits:* Choice of one of these groups: all the Fire spells, all the Knowledge spells or all the Healing spells.

Transformations: Camactli, Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcóatl, Tezcatlipoca, Xiutecutli.

Quetzalcóatl (12 points)

Prerequisites: Social Status of 4+, IQ at 15+, Writing at 18+, one Knowledge skill at 18+. *Benefits:* Knowledge spells. Either all the Plant spells or all the Water spells.

Transformations: Ehécatl and Ce Acatl.

Tezcatlipoca (15 points)

Prerequisites: Any weapon skill at 15+, Shield at 15+, Disguise at 15+. *Benefits:* All these spells: Alertness, Clumsiness, Compel Truth, Daze, Dispel Illusion, Divination (Mirror Scrying), False Memory, Fatigue, Fear, Foolishness, Hide, Independence, Itch, Know Illusion, Pain, Panic, Rear Vision, Roundabout, Sense Foes, Shapeshifting (one animal), Simple Illusion, Stun, Tanglefoot, Terror, Truthsayer.

Transformations: Huitzilopochtli, Mixcóatl, Quetzalcóatl.

Tlaloc (10 points)

Prerequisite: Agronomy at 16+. *Benefits:* Clouds and Rain spells. Either all the Water spells or all the Plant spells.

Tlaelcuani (10 points)

Prerequisites: Empathy. *Benefits:* All the Communications and Empathy spells (except for Very Hard spells).

Transformation: Tlazoltéotl.

Continued on next page . . .

Clerical Investment Costs **(Continued)**

Tlaloque (5 points)

Prerequisite: Meteorology 14+. *Benefits:* Clouds, Rain, and Fog spells.

Tlazoltéotl (10 points)

Prerequisite: Attractive or better. *Benefits:* All the Mind Control spells.

Transformation: Tlaelcuani.

Toci (12 points)

Prerequisites: Medical skill at 15+. *Benefits:* All the Healing spells. Choice of one of these groups: all the Earth spells, all the Plant spells or all the Water spells.

Transformations: Any goddess.

Tonatiuh (10 points)

Prerequisites: Sword or Spear Thrower skill at 15+. Shield skill at 15+. *Benefits:* All these spells: Armor, Continual Light, Dexterity, Flash, Great Haste, Haste, Light, Light Jet, Might, Quick March, Recover Strength, Repair Arrow, Resist Pain, Sense Foes, Sharpen, Shield, Vigor.

Xilonen

See Chicomecóatl.

Xipe Totec (10 points)

Prerequisites: Sacrifice at 20+. *Benefits:* Either all the Plant spells or all the Water spells. Sacrifice skill +1.

Xiutecutli (10 points)

Prerequisites: None. *Benefits:* All the Fire spells.

Xochipilli (10 points)

Prerequisites: One of these skills at 15+: Agronomy (flower specialty), Musical Instrument, Singing. *Benefits:* Prerequisite skill +2. All the Plant spells.

Xochiquetzal (12 points)

Prerequisites: Appropriate social skill at 15+. Appropriate craft skill at 15+. Appearance of Attractive or better. *Benefits:* All these groups: Communication spells, Empathy spells, and Making and Breaking spells.

Transformations: Tlazoltéotl, Tlaelcuani.

Yacatecutli (10 points)

Prerequisites: Merchant at 14+. *Benefits:* Choice of one of these groups: all the Movement spells (without the Very Hard spells), all the Communication spells, or all the Empathy spells.

Yaotl (10 points)

Prerequisites: Any weapon skill at 14+. Armoury at 14+. *Benefits:* All these spells: Berserker, Pain, Rejoin, Repair, Repair Arrow, Sense Foes, Sharpen, Stun.

of Camactli, Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcóatl and Huitzilopochtli. He can transform into them, but his most common transformation is as Xiutecutli, the god of fire.

Ometéotl had no temple, but was at the center of every household, in the hearth. As the center of all things, he gave life to children by fertilizing the womb.

Xiutecutli

The god of fire was the oldest of the gods, never having been destroyed even during the transition from one age to the other. He was ancient and wrinkled, with a wise beard. He supposedly lived in the center of the earth, in a castle surrounded by deep waters. He was the center of all things, even as the hearth was the center of the home. He was possibly the only god without a terrifying representation. Everyone loved this god of renewals.

Toci, the Grandmother

All the goddesses were transformations of one female deity, Toci (the Grandmother). She was known by many names, such as Tonantzin, the Earth Mother, and could transform into all the other female goddesses. She represented the earth as a nourisher and as a destroyer. In the latter role, she controlled earthquakes and other earthly upheavals. She was the patron of healers, weavers and spinners.

Ciuacóatl

Snake Woman was also a mother goddess, related to war, sacrifice and rulers. She brought nothing but war and death, and her skeletal lower jaw was always open to devour victims. She always carried the knife of sacrifice. She received more sacrificial victims than any other goddess. Every eight days, her priests visited the palace to complain that the goddess was hungry. The emperor placated them by releasing one or more captives for sacrifice.

If she appeared before men, she wore white, with long, stringy hair, and screamed crazily. But she also turned into a snake or a beautiful woman who seduced men only to kill them.

The statue of Ciuacóatl was so holy that its priests neither touched it nor brought it out. Her priests were the highest of all, being also the priests of Huitzilopochtli. The term Ciuacóatl, Snake Woman, also referred to her (male) high priest, who was the highest cleric in the city and also the vice-emperor and supreme judge. See p. 21.

The Ciuateteo

These Little Princesses (see p. 104) were divine versions of women who had died in childbirth. They appeared singly, as the Five or as a swarm. They were equal to male warriors because they died while carrying a warrior.

There were shrines to them at all the crossroads, and they were honored by many feasts in Tenochtitlán. They brought many diseases, such as palsy, spasms and strokes, and particularly hated children.

Xochiquetzal

Precious Flower was the goddess of love and flowers. She protected courtesans, weavers, embroiderers and painters. Supremely beautiful, she lived in Tamoanchan as both mother and virgin, surrounded by entertainers and nymphs. Her gift to mankind was flowers. As Tlazoltéotl, she was the goddess of sex and of the moon, who stirred up sexual desires. As Tlaelcuani, Eater of Filth (Sin), she forgave them. Her priests, therefore, were in charge of confessions.

Mayauel

As the goddess of pulque, Mayauel personified the *metl* plant. She was attended by a group of *ocli* gods known as the Four Hundred Rabbits, who encouraged revelry.

6 MAGIC

The Aztec deities communicated to their worshipers through dreams and omens. Priests and good sorcerers interpreted the gods' will, and used magic to help their people in other ways. Aztecs at all levels used "household" magic. They consulted soothsayers for advice, expected their doctors to diagnose and cure through spells, feared evil sorcerers who paralyzed their victims, and worshiped impersonators who assumed divine powers through god disguises.



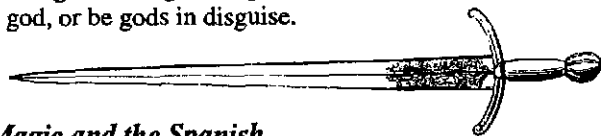
Magic in the Campaign

A *GURPS Aztecs* campaign can use magic in three ways. In a historical campaign there is no magic. However, the PCs will still believe that it exists, and the GM should still fill the background with sorcerers and soothsayers.

A pure fantasy campaign uses all forms of magic with a Mesoamerican flavor. The world of the Aztecs should be considered one of normal mana in most places, high or very high mana in a few sacred spots. Only mages can learn spells, but mages are common. And priests are also given spells by their gods. See *Clerical Investment*, sidebars, pp. 66-70.

The historical/fantasy campaign uses magic as a traditional Aztec saw it. Low-level spells, of little gaming value, are possessed by minor wizards everywhere. These include magic to make plants grow better, to give a good night's sleep and to lighten heavy loads. Healing and divinatory spells exist, but are used only by physicians and soothsayers. Powerful spells such as shapeshifting, enchantments and combat spells are used only by

the mightiest mages and priests, who may be working directly for a god, or be gods in disguise.



Magic and the Spanish

When the Spanish came, the Aztecs believed that their gods had abandoned them. Perhaps they did. In game terms, whatever the level of magic in the campaign, it should become unreliable as soon as the Spanish land, and fail completely within only a few years. Perhaps some of the hidden very-high-mana areas might retain a trace of power . . . no more.

Of course, the GM could play out an alternate history in which the Aztecs' magic did not fail them. Maybe the Spanish had mages of their own, or maybe they learned Aztec sorcery. Or perhaps they rejected magic as heathen evil, and the invasion became a battle of gunpowder against wizardry!

Learning Spells

The aspiring wizard can learn useful spells from many sources: private sorcerers, physicians, diviners, the *calmecac*, or the temple priests.

Though there are many private sorcerers in the bustling cities, finding one might require a roll on Streetwise skill, as they are considered evil . . . though good ones did exist. Such a teacher will demand high payment in the form of physical wealth or aid in some evil deed.

Most physicians will know diagnostic and healing spells and might be willing to teach a student for free, if he shows promise and if it is for the common good. A diviner might also be willing to teach. Most will also require payment in goods and services.

Teachers at the *calmecac* and temples will teach spells to aspiring priests. Those who require spells for other than state or theological reasons will need considerable diplomacy and money to persuade these teachers. They may need to prove their devotion to the god at whose behest the spells are granted. They may have to undergo a quest, or sacrifice goods, animals, or humans.

Spellcasters

Many types of spellcasters of varying quality exist in the city. Though many are experts, others are charlatans, using a few parlor tricks to convince the gullible. Most are competent enough to use their skills to earn a living.

Official spellcasters serve not only their god but also the good of the state and the people. They include priests and soothsayers. Freelancers include sorcerers, diviners, physicians and thieves who practice magic for the common welfare and for selfish gain.

Soothsayers

Soothsayers are common and respected, and are consulted before every kind of event. They will have Divination spells related to their specialty. For example, a daybook reader will have the Daybook Reading spell.

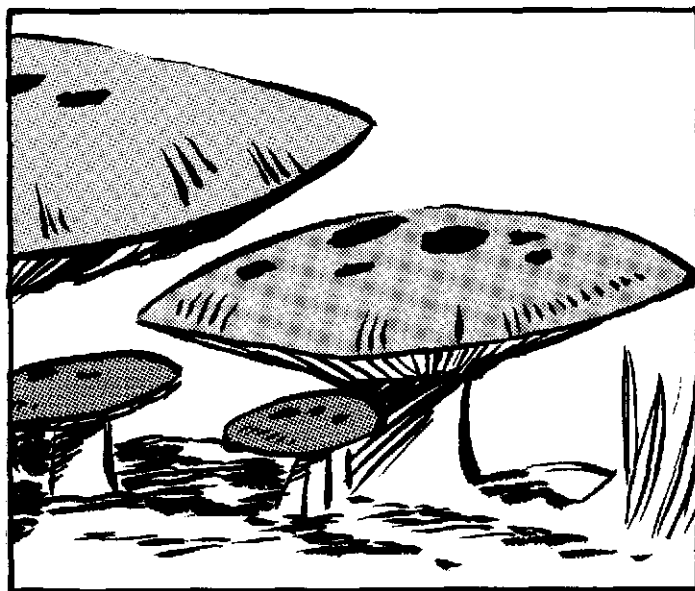
Priests

Priests may have a wide variety of spells, depending on the gods they serve. See *Clerical Investment Costs* (pp. 66-70). Note that a priest who is also a mage may have spells other than those normally granted by his god!

Healers

Healers need two types of spells: those to divine the nature of the patient's problem and those to heal. Some healers only diagnose problems, while others only cure them using one or two methods. More competent healers do both and know many spells. Most common are Knowledge and Healing Spells.

The healer initially guesses the cause of a disease by studying the illness visually. Identification of divine diseases requires only simple fortune-telling. Identification of sorcery and its caster requires use of a hallucinogenic and the appropriate Knowledge spell.



Sorcerers

Most sorcerers or *nauallis* are considered evil, using magic only to rob people or to act as hired assassins. Their most common spells are Shapeshifting, Paralyze Limb and Sleep spells.

Sorcerers and thieves must be judicious in their use of spells. Any competent healer can easily determine the person who cast an evil spell. In fact, many illnesses are ascribed exclusively to evil sorcery. Feuds frequently arise because of such accusations.

Spells

Unless another herb is mentioned, every spell needs a pinch of tobacco to work if the caster uses a gesture. The tobacco is normally crushed between the fingers or on the object on which the spell is cast.

All spells from the *Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic* are available unless otherwise mentioned. Missile spells are not available, unless otherwise specified, such as in the clerical spells for the order of Huitzilopochtli.

Animal Spells

Spells to control animals are common. The ruler of Cuernavaca protected his daughter from suitors by calling on an army of bats, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, and beasts to guard the walls of his palace.

Body Control Spells

All are known, and useful in combat!

Elemental Spells

While most Elemental spells are allowed, Elemental Spirit spells (Summon Elemental, Control Elemental, Create Elemental) are inappropriate. Elementals are seen as messengers or spirits from the god. Thus, those wishing to summon a spirit with some elemental powers need to use a Summon Spirit spell and to specify the deity from which the spirit is sent.

Enchantment Spells

Except for Leave Curse, enchantments may only be cast by priests when creating a god disguise (p. 65). Normal enchantment rules apply. The Golem spell is not appropriate.

Leave Curse

This spell lets the caster take an Itch, Spasm, Pain, Clumsiness, Curse, Strike Blind/Deaf/Dumb, or Pestilence spell and cast it on any object or area, such as a roadside. The first eligible person to touch the object or pass through the area receives the spell or disease. A more powerful version of the spell will produce an item or area that affects any eligible person, over and over.

The type of person affected and the duration can be limited through other enchantments (p. B152). Two rolls are needed: one to determine the success of the casting, and another on the underlying spell, to determine if the target resists the spell. Spells may not be "stacked."

Cost: 3, plus the total cost of the underlying spell (Pain, etc.) whether it succeeds or not. Multiply cost by 10 for an item that works over and over.

Time to cast: 10 seconds, plus time for underlying spell.

Prerequisites: Magery 2 and the spell being left.

Food Spells

Food spells are popular and commonly used.

Healing Spells

Resurrection is not appropriate. In the Aztec world, death was permanent. For many, such as warriors, death led to a more glorious world from which they would not want to return.

Diagnose Loss of Soul

Information

Determines if an affliction is caused by the loss of one of the three parts of the soul. A successful roll will diagnose the missing soul part, if any.

Cost: 2.

Prerequisites: Detect Magic, Minor Healing.

Item: Hallucinogenic.

Recover Soul (VH)

Regular

This restores lost soul parts (see p. 63) – *tonalli*, *teyolia*, or *ihilia*. Only one of these soul parts can be recovered per casting. This spell must be used to recover the entire lost amount. Partial recoveries do not work.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: Half the total amount lost by subject.

Time to cast: 1 hour.

Prerequisite: Major Healing.

Illusion and Creation Spells

These are popular with entertainers and some evil sorcerers.

Knowledge Spells

All these spells are available to the Aztecs. Successful casting of a Knowledge spell requires a hallucinogenic herb, most commonly *ololiuqui*, and sometimes *peyote*. When taken in water, these herbs enable the caster to obtain knowledge through a hallucination. Without the spell, though, the herbs will produce only wild dreams, unless a god *chooses* to send a message.

Divination

Information

Gives the caster a vision relevant to his question, or the answer to one yes-no question. The Aztecs had many sorts of divination; each is a separate spell and requires the appropriate materials. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Skill modifiers: Standard long-distance modifiers. If repeated questions are asked on the same subject within a day, the "vibes" are muddled; -4 skill for the second question, -8 for the third, and so on. Questions about past or future are also harder; use the standard long-distance modifiers again, substituting "days" for "miles."

Cost: 10.

Time to cast: 1 hour unless specified otherwise.

Prerequisites: Depends on type of divination. See below.

Arm Measuring is divination by measuring an individual's arm with the caster's hand and fingers. Tobacco is required and *ololiuqui* adds +1 to success. **Prerequisites:** 10 Body Control spells.

Daybook Reading determines if a day is lucky or unlucky for a specific event. A daybook is required (cost \$2,000; weight 50 lbs.) and so is the Literacy advantage. (Other components, such as tobacco, are not required.) If divination involves an individual, his daysign must be known. For more information on daybooks, see *Sacred Calendar* (p. 80). **Prerequisites:** 10 Knowledge spells.

Maize Kernel Reading was the second most important kind of divination. The caster selects 19-25 kernels from an ear of corn (cost of an ear, \$1) and throws them. He makes the divination according to how they fall. Kernels can also be thrown in a bowl of water and judged according to how they sink and float. **Prerequisite:** 10 Earth spells.

Mirror Scrying uses the Smoking Mirror, which was the name

of the all-knowing god, Tezcatlipoca, and also of the black obsidian mirrors used by seers. After staring into the mirror for a suitable time, the seer would see clouds of smoke part to reveal a picture of the future. The GM must only describe the vision. It is the seer's job to interpret it. *Prerequisites:* 5 Earth and 5 Water spells.

Vision Interpretation tries to explain the dreams and visions of the caster or of others. Special foods consumed after banquets sometimes induced the mental images (see p. 76). If successful, the caster can ask a number of yes/no questions about the vision equal to (spell level/2) rounded down. *Prerequisites:* 5 Earth and 5 Water spells.

Identify Spellcaster

Information

Cast on an object or place that is (or was) affected by a particular spell, Identify Spellcaster will indicate who cast that spell. If that is someone not personally known to the caster, only a picture of the "target" will be revealed. The greater the success, the more information is revealed, but always in the form of a vision.

There is a -1 penalty if the subject spell has already expired.

There is a further penalty if it has been a long time since it expired; the weaker the original spell, the quicker its traces expire. For a spell that cost 1 point to cast, it is -1 for every day since it expired. For a spell that cost 2 points to cast, it is -1 for every full two days, and so on.

Cost: 2.

Prerequisite: Identify Spell.

Meta-Spells

These are popular with all priests and sorcerers.

Bless

Regular

A general spell of aid and protection. Must be cast on another; you cannot bless yourself.

The effect of the blessing is as follows: All the subject's die rolls are modified favorably by one point (or more, for a more powerful blessing). The modifications will *not* affect critical suc-

cesses and failures. This lasts indefinitely . . . until the subject fails some die roll (or a foe *makes* a good die roll) and the subject is in some serious danger. The blessing miraculously averts or reduces the danger – and ends. The GM decides when the blessing has its final effect, and what form the protection takes. If an arrow is aimed at your heart, a 1-point blessing might move it to your arm, while a 2-point one would send it through your hat, and a 3-point blessing would let it slay a foe behind you.

Duration: As above.

Cost: 10 for a 1-point blessing, 50 for a 2-point blessing, 500 for a 3-point blessing. Blessings may not be "stacked" – a stronger blessing dispels a weaker one.

Time to cast: 1 minute for every point of energy in the spell.

Prerequisites: Magery 2 and at least 2 spells from each of 10 different colleges. Magery 3 is required to cast a 3-point blessing.

Curse

Regular

Exactly the opposite of Bless. All the subject's die rolls are modified unfavorably, lasting until he scores some notable success despite the bad rolls – GM's decision as to exactly what this is. Then the success turns somehow to ashes and the curse is ended.

Cost: 3 for a 1-point curse, 10 for a 2-point curse, 20 for a 3-point curse. Like blessings, curses cannot be "stacked."

Time to cast: 2 seconds for a 1-point curse, 4 for a 2-point curse, 6 for a 3-point curse.

Prerequisites: As for Bless.

Movement Spells

Poltergeist, Air-Golem and Teleportation spells are not appropriate. Others may be used.

Open Planar Gate (VH)

Regular

The Aztecs believed that caves, special trees and underwater formations were gates to the heavenly or underworld levels. This spell opens such a portal. (Deities who require the services of mortals will usually open the gateway without mortal intervention.) Physically deformed sorcerers, such as hunchbacks or dwarves, receive a +1 chance of success for this spell.

Duration and Cost: The gateway will remain open for 5 minutes for every 5 points spent.

Prerequisites: Magery, one spell from each of the 10 Colleges.

Planar Travel (VH)

Regular

According to many codices, powerful sorcerers often traveled to the other levels of heaven and the underworld to search for spells or to speak with the gods. The caster's *teyolia* made the trip, with the body remaining behind.

One cup full of *ololiuqui* is required for the trip. Because the body remains unconscious during the trip, it must be protected. If the body dies, the soul remains trapped in the other world forever. Death of the soul means death of the body.

The level that can be reached to depends on skill and cost.

Skill	Levels Away	Cost
14	1	5
15	2	10
16	3	15

And so on.

Prerequisites: Magery 2, one spell from each of the 10 colleges and IQ 15+.

Time to Cast: 5 minutes.



Necromantic Spells

Only these spells are allowed: Death Vision (with a good dose of *ololiuqui*), Summon Spirit (the spirit will usually appear as a small insect or flower), Steal Strength, Steal Health, Age, Steal Youth, Pestilence.

Remove Soul (VH) *Regular; Resisted by Attribute*

Lets the caster remove part of the subject's soul (see p. 63). Only one part can be affected per casting. The caster must specify which of the three parts of the soul is removed. *Tonalli* losses apply equally to a subject's ST or HT. *Teyolia* losses apply to IQ. *Ihilia* losses apply to DX. These losses are permanent and can only be cured with the Recover Soul spell.

This spell is resisted by the appropriate attribute. *Tonalli* removal is resisted by the higher of ST and DX.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 5 points for every point removed from the subject.

Prerequisites: Magery; 5 Necromantic spells including Steal Strength and Steal Health.

Plant Spells

Low-level spells are common among farmers.

Protection and Warning Spells

These spells are commonly cast on the *petlatls* of travelers.

Sound Spells

All sound spells are appropriate.

Ceremonial Magic

To cast ceremonial magic, magicians and priests can easily take advantage of the crowds and performers that gather during the many Aztec celebrations.

Use p. B151 with these modifications. Physical joining is not necessary if all casters are within the same sacred space. A sacred

space is an area regularly used to perform rituals and ceremonies. Typical spaces include the interior of a temple or the steps of a pyramid, a palace courtyard, a stage or platform built for the ceremony, or any space within the Temple District.

Nauallism

Nauallism was a confusing subject, even for the Aztecs. In general, it dealt with an individual's association with animals. This association manifested itself in three ways. The first involved a sorcerer's ability to shapeshift into one or more animal forms. The second referred to his ability to occupy the body of an animal.

The third was a belief that everyone had a special link to an individual animal. This animal generally had the physical defects of the person. Killing or harming it would do the same to the individual and vice versa. Most people did not know where their linked animal was, but a sorcerer might know, and use his animal for magic. The rules for *familiars* (*GURPS Magic*, p. 105) can be used for this type of nauallism.

Naualli referred to the sorcerer (considered evil, though some good ones existed), the animal he became, and the animal to which an individual was linked.

Shapeshifting (VH) *Special*

Shapeshifting is the ability to change into one or more animal forms. Unlike other cultures where the animal form has special powers, the Aztec shapeshifter simply became an ordinary animal that can be captured or killed in ordinary ways. The form must be familiar to the caster. Known forms include jaguars, dogs, birds

(such as owls or eagles) and snakes. Each form must be learned as a separate spell.

The caster becomes a large member of the species. Any physical defects of the caster will appear on the animal. For example, a shapeshifter who is blind in the right eye will become an animal that is also blind in the right eye. Clothing, jewelry and armor disappear when the beast form is taken and reappear when the human form is resumed (magical jewelry cannot be detected while "vanished."). Backpacks and other carried items simply fall to the ground.

This ability may be gained through spells or as an advantage (see p. 34). Aztec shapeshifters lose no IQ, no matter how long they keep the animal form – but again, Aztec shapeshifters gain no special powers in animal form.

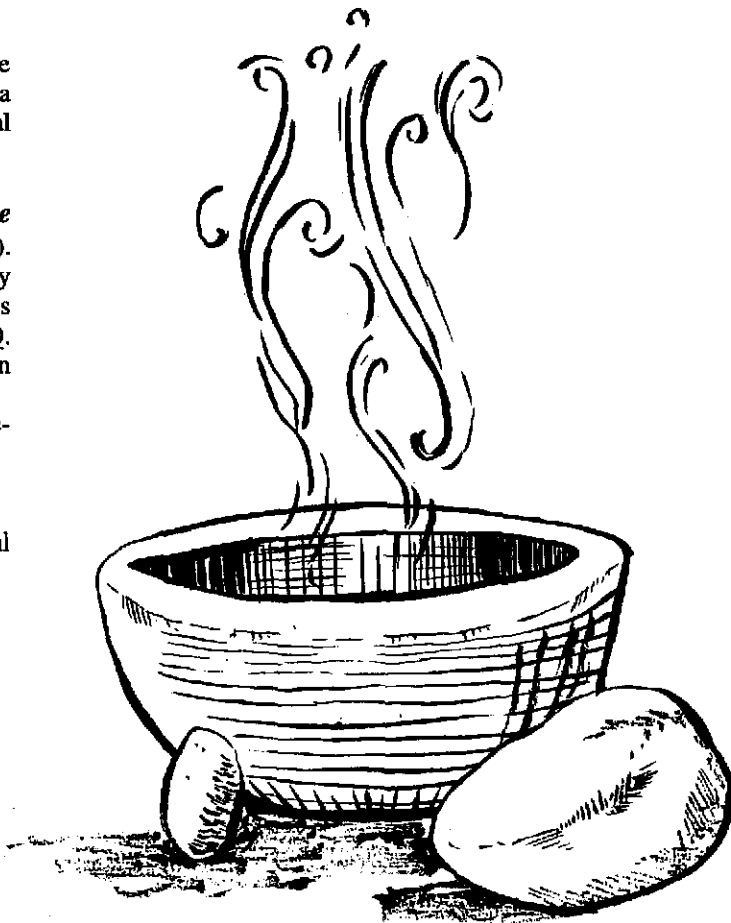
The shapechanger retains his own intelligence but gains all the physical attributes of the new form. This means that no spells may be cast unless the wearer knows them so well that they can be done without gestures. Note that Fatigue is *not* increased for spellcasting purposes.

Duration: 1 hour.

Cost: 6 to cast, 2 to maintain.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery and at least 6 other spells of any type.



Rider Within

Regular

This works on any type of animal, but not intelligent beings (those with IQ8+). The caster becomes able to see through subject's eyes, hear through its ears, etc., as long as he concentrates. (He also remains aware of his own body and may act normally.) The caster exerts no control whatsoever over the subject, and the subject is unaware that the caster is "watching."

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 4 to cast, 1 to maintain

Time to Cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: At least two different Animal Control spells. The caster must also know the Animal Control spell for the type of animal being "ridden" before he can use this spell on that type of animal.

Beast Possession

Regular; Resisted by IQ

This spell is like Rider Within – except that the caster is in full control of the subject, "from the inside," and has full access to the beast's memories and abilities. While in the subject's body, the caster may use all its skills and abilities as though they were his own. He may use his own mental abilities, but not his physical ones (so spells cannot be cast unless they are so well-known that they require no speech or gesture). The caster's own body lies unconscious during the spell and must be safeguarded.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 6 to cast, 2 to maintain.

Time to Cast: 5 seconds.

Prerequisite: Rider Within.



Visions

Inducing hallucinogenic visions was a popular banquet pastime for those who could afford the expensive herbs. The GM may find these visions a convenient way of dropping hints to players needing guidance.

Note that these visions are not magical spells. There are no rolls for casting. To have these visions, a person needs to drink three cups of *octli*, smoke one reed of tobacco and eat doses of *ololiuqui* equal to half his HT, rounded down. A few seconds after consuming the herb, he will begin to see visions.

Typical visions include those of the future and those of a viewer's death. Travel to other planes is also common. In all cases, the visions are highly unreliable and do not truly predict events, unless the GM so desires.

After the visions, the user falls into a deep sleep. Upon awakening, he will customarily discuss his visions with other partygoers. Those who are skilled in Vision Interpretation (p. 74) can try to interpret these dreams.

Specialists

Many types of spellcasters practiced in Aztec society. Small villages might have one or two of these magic users, while Tenochtitlán would have many of each kind.

Matlapouhqui: One who diagnoses illness by measuring the patient's forearm.

Naualli: Sorcerer, usually evil, who changes into an animal.

Pahini: One who drinks a hallucinogenic drug to diagnose a patient's problem.

Quatlatoque: Rulers of wood who invoke Quetzalcóatl whenever wood is cut from a forest. Common in many villages.

Tecihpehiqueh: One Who Turns Away Hail. Controls weather. Common in many villages.

Temixihuitiani: Midwife.

Tempacpalitoti: Dancer with a dead woman's forearm who robs people after putting them to sleep.

Tetonalti: One who cures by finding and retrieving the patient's lost soul.

Ticitl: Physician or good sorcerer who heals.

Tlacateculutl: Evil possessed one who shapeshifts and spreads sickness.

Tlachixqui: Seer.

Tlaolxiniani: Diviner who sees the future or diagnoses illness by reading maize kernels tossed into water.

Magic Amulets

A common magic amulet is the left forefinger from a dead woman. The part must be obtained within four days of death, while the soul is still around the body. When attached to a shield or weapon, the amulet makes the warrior brave (effects of the Bravery spell, p. B164) for the duration of one battle only.

The left forearm from a dead woman, with finger attached, makes the warrior brave and gives him a 1-point Blessing spell (p. 74), for the duration of one battle only. A warrior may only have one of these amulets at a time. Note that no consecration or magical procedure is necessary to make these amulets work!

TIME

The Aztec Calendar

Like many Mesoamerican cultures, the Aztecs inherited their sophisticated time measurements from the Maya. Some days were lucky, others unlucky. Each person's birthday, profession and chosen god also affected his day-to-day fortunes.

The rules in this section will encourage the characters to consult a soothsayer or render a sacrifice before any important event, just as the Aztecs used to do. The GM can decide whether to add some, all, or none of the effects, preferably in this order of importance: secular calendar, sacred calendar and daily time.

Daily Time

Each day had 22 hours: thirteen for the day and nine for the night. Each hour was ruled by a different god. Some brought good luck, some brought bad. The blare of conch trumpets, sounded by priests from the tops of temples, announced the time.

At the GM's option, all activities occurring during each hour receive its specified modifier, which is added to that day's sacred calendar modifier (described on pp. 81-84). When time becomes important to an adventure, the players may tell the GM "We will start this work at the sixth hour." Or the GM may tell them at an appropriate time, "You hear the sound of the trumpet; it is now the hour of Tlaloc!"

The tables below give a starting time for each Aztec hour, making each one a modern hour long except for two of the night-time hours. These are *entirely arbitrary*, invented for game use, since the details of the Aztec hours have been lost.

The 13 Lords of the Day

The Aztecs favored the day for most of their activities because the life-giving sun shone. It provided strength to the warriors and energy for children. An Aztec working day began at sunrise and ended at sunset.

These gods ruled the hours of the day:

1. Xiutecutli, +1	6 A.M.
2. Tlatecutli, 0	7 A.M.
3. Chalchiuhtlicue, 0	8 A.M.
4. Tonatiuh, +1	9 A.M.
5. Tlazolteotl, -1	10 A.M.
6. Mictlantecutli, -1	11 A.M.
7. Centeotl, 0	12 noon
8. Tlaloc, 0	1 P.M.
9. Quetzalcoatl, +1	2 P.M.
10. Tezcatlipoca, -1	3 P.M.
11. Chalmecatecutli, 0	4 P.M.
12. Tlauizcalpantecutli	
(Great Star), +1	5 P.M.
13. Citlalicue, 0	6 P.M.

The Nine Lords of the Night

Night was a fearful time and most people went to bed early to avoid the ghosts that lurked in the darkness. A few brave souls ventured out, however. Refuse collectors gathered the pots of human excrement and urine from each home using a boat. They distributed the excrement to farmers for fertilizing the soil and the

"Calendar Stone"

This famous sculpture was not a calendar at all, but a platform for human sacrifice, 12 feet across, carved during the reign of Axayacatl in 1479 (the Aztec year 13 Reed). It was discovered in 1790 in the remains of the Temple District. The glyphs carved onto this 24-ton basalt platform represented the history of the Aztecs rather than a keeping of any calendar.

Tonatiuh, the sun god, is at the center of the stone. His tongue is a sacrificial knife and flanking his head are two claws holding human hearts. Around him, four panels represent the previous four eons: proceeding clockwise from the upper left, they are rain, jaguars, water and fire. The fifth eon, movement, is represented by the triangular cap over Tonatiuh.

The first ring of figures around the center represents the sacred calendar, beginning with 1 Crocodile and continuing counterclockwise. Two snakes form the outermost ring with their heads meeting at the bottom and their tails ending at the stone's creation date.



A Priest Remembers the New Fire Ceremony

"Sí, padre, I remember the last New Fire ceremony, our most important ritual. We did it at the end of every calendar round, once every 52 years. I was then just a deacon for the god Xiutecutli . . . No, no, padre, I do not believe in the old fire god any more. We are all Christians now, no? But this was 30 years ago, in 1502.

"When the sun set on that last day, we were all afraid. Even the gods didn't know if the sun would rise again. Maybe the world would finally end that day. Only the ceremony could tell us and help avoid it.

"The city was dark and quiet. All the fires were put out and everyone was watching us, the priests. Most of us dressed as one or the other of the gods, as we slowly marched out the southern causeway. I was only dressed as a priest – but I carried the fire tools. That was a big honor for a mere deacon.

"I remember the setting sun alone lighting the entire valley as we marched to the Hill of the Star; that's the dead volcano just outside the valley. We walked to the temple near the top. Some of us watched the stars – the constellation Pleiades. We were all afraid that the *tzitzime* would swarm out and devour the world.

"The head priests took our captive. He was a brave and noble lord. I forget his name but I remember that he followed the ritual with much dignity. He knew how important his role was. The priests stretched him out over the sacrificial stone. Then they quickly cut his chest with the obsidian – I'm sorry, padre, I will omit the details. They offered his heart to Xiutecutli.

"I solemnly gave my fire tools to the head priest. He put the fire board in the lord's chest hole and whirled the fire stick on it. We all held our breath – the whole valley held its breath. Maybe there would be no fire. Maybe the universe would die that day.

"But the tools flashed light and I breathed again. The priest blew and fanned the sparks into a fire. He quickly put the fire onto a pile of wood on the temple terrace. It was already very dark then and the new fire could be seen everywhere. I could only hear the cheers from the people by the hill but I knew every person in every city of the valley was shouting thanks at the gods.

"Runners ran torches and braziers from the temple fire to the temple of Huitzilopochtli in the capital. From there, more runners brought the flame to other temples in other cities and to other buildings and homes. I watched spots of light dot the valley again, little by little, as all the empire celebrated the return of time.

"Heathen, padre? Maybe. But I think all our gods are the same. We will see what happens in 1554 when there is no New Fire ceremony."

urine to tanners for curing hides. Returning merchants always entered the city at nights, to avoid revealing their booty to prying eyes. Priests and schoolboys practiced required rituals near midnight. Canoers poled perishable goods into and out of the city. Finally, thieves and evil sorcerers also went about at night perpetrating their evil deeds.

These gods ruled the hours of the night:

1. Xiutecutli, +1	7 P.M.
2. Iztli or Tecpatl, -1	8 P.M.
3. Piltzintecutli (Child Lord), +1	9 P.M.
4. Centeotl, 0	10 P.M.
5. Mictlantecutli, -1	12 midnight
6. Chalchiuhtlicue, 0	1 A.M.
7. Tlazolteotl, -1	3 A.M.
8. Tepeyollotli (Mountain Heart), +1	4 A.M.
9. Tlaloc, 0	5 A.M.



Calendar Concepts

The Aztecs used two calendars: the secular calendar of 365 days, for regular timekeeping, and the sacred calendar of 260 days, for divining and fortunetelling. Each day would have both a secular designation (such as Stopping of Water 1, the first day of the Aztec year, which is our February 2) and a sacred designation (such as 5 Jaguar).

The two calendars interacted to provide a grouping of 13 365-day years, known as a *sheaf*. Four such sheaves (or 52 years) produced the Calendar Round of 73 sacred years. If Stopping of Water 1 came on 8 Flint in 1500, it would not be on 8 Flint again until 1552. After such a period, the Aztecs believed that time ran out. If time were not replaced, the demons of the night would descend and devour all humanity. The New Fire ceremony, held every 52 years, prevented this disaster. Few Aztecs would live to see this ceremony more than once!

Secular Calendar

The secular calendar used 18 months of 20 days each and began at February 2 of our year. An extra day may have been added to the end of every fourth year to account for the leap years.

The secular months, and their festivals, are described below. Because participation in festivals was required, the GM can use these celebrations to stall or delay PCs. The feasts can also serve as springboards to further adventures – for instance, when warriors must collect enough captives for a sacrifice.

1. *Atcaualco* (Stopping of Water). Planting season began. Children were sacrificed on mountain tops, to honor the gods of water, so that they might give rain. Captives were slain at Yopico.

2. *Tlacaxipehualiztli* (Flaying of Men). Xipe Totec was honored by flaying captives. Warriors were given awards and rank advancements.

3. *Tozoztontli* (Small Vigil). Buds of the flowers that bloomed earliest that year were sacrificed on Yopico. Florists were sacrificed to their patroness, Coatlicue.

4. *Huey Tozoztli* (Great Vigil). Fasting was required for four days before the feast of Cinteotl, which fell on the first of the month. Maize stalks were sacrificed to deities such as Chicomecoatl.

5. *Toxcatl* (Dryness). Feast of Tezcatlipoca, with the sacrifice of the god's impersonator. See *Feast of Tezcatlipoca*, p. 64, for more details.

6. *Etzalcualiztli* (Eating of Bean Porridge). Beginning of the rainy season and the bearing of fruit. Feast of the rain gods, with captives sacrificed to the Tlaloque.

7. *Tecuilhuitontli* (Lesser Feast of the Lords). Feast of Huixtociuatl, goddess of salt. Dancing by the women and girls, including the goddess impersonator who died on the pyramid of Tlaloc.

8. *Huey Tecuilhuil* (Great Feast of the Lords). Feast of Xilonen, goddess of tender maize. Food was given to all the poor people in honor of the goddess for eight days before the feast. On the tenth day of the month, the goddess impersonator climbed the pyramid and was beheaded.

9. *Miccailhuitontli* (Little Feast of the Dead). Dead children were remembered. Merchants honored Yacatecutli. Feast of Huitzilopochtli. Flowers decorated this god and many others, and all the houses.

10. *Huey Miccailhuil* (Great Feast of the Dead). The dead were honored with many sacrifices. The merchants sacrificed a Yacatecutli impersonator. Also during this month was the Feast of Xiutecutli, where captives were sacrificed by fire. It featured the Pole Ceremony, where a tree 25 fathoms high was brought into the courtyard. Crafters pruned it smooth and stood it into the courtyard where it was decorated with paper. The top of the pole had a dough statue of the god, which young men competed to get after the fire sacrifice.

11. *Ochpaniztli* (Sweeping of the Roads). The feast of Toci was celebrated on the first day of this month. The first eight days of the month featured continuous dancing to the beating of the two-toned drum, without singing. The goddess impersonator was sacrificed. The emperor watched a parade of warriors and young men who had never gone to war. He gave arms and insignia to the valorous.

12. *Teotelco* (Arrival of the Gods). Young men and boys strewed boughs on all the altars and shrines of the gods, those in houses and on the crossroads. They received maize for this service. On the 20th day, the priests made a small cake of cornmeal, which they watched all night. Finally, a foot imprint signaled that the gods had come. Priests sounded horns and trumpets, crying "Our lord has come." This declaration occasioned much feasting and merrymaking.

13. *Tepelhuil* (Feast of the Hills). A feast to honor the high mountains. Serpents were made of wood in memory of those who had drowned in the water and were buried. These were placed on altars to much singing and drinking of wine.

14. *Quecholli* (Roseate Spoonbill, a bird). For five days, Mixcoatl was honored by the making of arrows and darts. Each maker then anointed his creations with his blood. The populace then set out for the country to hunt animals. During this month of penances, sex and drinking were prohibited.

15. *Panquetzaliztli* (Raising of the Flags). Feast of Huitzilopochtli with many sacrifices, especially of merchant slaves, dancing and feasting. A runner carried a dough idol of the god to Huitzilopochtli and back, running continuously for two hours. Whoever snatched this idol received the fortune of the deity who permitted the encounter. Paper flags decorated all the trees.

16. *Atemoztli* (Falling Water). The feast of the rain gods, because thunder began this month. Copal and food were sacrificed to Tlaloc.

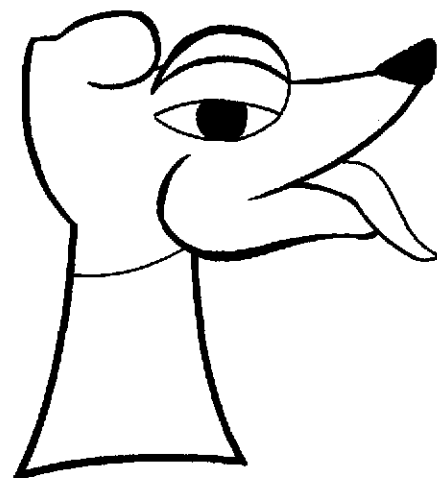
17. *Tititl* (Stretching). The feast of Tonantzin, with the sacrifice of an impersonator. Common folk made sacks filled with soft things, which they hid under their capes. Women encountered on the street were hit with these weapons.

18. *Izcalli* (Growth). The feast of Xiutecutli. An image created in his honor appeared to throw off flames of its own accord. Every fourth year there were sacrifices: captives, slaves and a god impersonator. The Dance of the Lords was performed after the sacrifice. Children born on these years had their ears pierced.

Nemontemi (Useless days). These five days at the end of the year were extremely unlucky. Children born on these days would live a life of misery. Everyone tried to do nothing on these evil days. To simulate these unlucky days, all activities during *nemontemi* receive a -5 modifier. On these days only, modifiers from the sacred calendar and from sacrifices do not apply.

Sacred Calendar

The sacred calendar was illustrated in the Book of Days, the single most important work of Aztec literature. Through it, priests and diviners predicted the fortune of individuals, events and empires. Everyone consulted this book during the birth of their children, before traveling, and for any other reason in which luck or misfortune played a part.



Náhuatl Daysigns

For those interested in using the Náhuatl versions of the daysigns, here are the Náhuatl names for both the numbers and the signs. To name a daysign in Náhuatl, use the number first and then the sign. For example, 2 House becomes *Ome Calli* in Náhuatl.

English	Náhuatl
1	<i>Ce</i>
2	<i>Ome</i>
3	<i>Ye</i>
4	<i>Nau</i>
5	<i>Macuilli</i>
6	<i>Chicace</i>
7	<i>Chicome</i>
8	<i>Chicuei</i>
9	<i>Chiconau</i>
10	<i>Matlactli</i>
11	<i>Matlactli Oce</i>
12	<i>Matlactli Omome</i>
13	<i>Matlactli Omei</i>
Reed	<i>Acatl</i>
Jaguar	<i>Ocelotl</i>
Eagle	<i>Cuauhtli</i>
Vulture	<i>Cozcacuhtli</i>
Motion	<i>Ollin</i>
Flint	<i>Tecpatl</i>
Rain	<i>Quiahuitl</i>
Flower	<i>Xochitl</i>
Crocodile	<i>Cipactli</i>
Wind	<i>Ehécatl</i>
House	<i>Calli</i>
Lizard	<i>Cuetzpallin</i>
Snake	<i>Cóatl</i>
Death	<i>Miquiztli</i>
Deer	<i>Mazatl</i>
Rabbit	<i>Tochtli</i>
Water	<i>Atl</i>
Dog	<i>Itzcuintli</i>
Monkey	<i>Ozomatli</i>
Grass	<i>Malinalli</i>

Sample Combined Calendar

The sample entries (see *Creating a Combined Calendar*, p. 84) assume an adventuring group of four: a scribe, a warrior, a priest of Ehécatl and a fisherman.

February 2, 1519

Aztec Date: Atcualco (Stopping of Water) 1

Daysign: 1 Reed

Planting season begins today. Sacrifices of children to the water gods and captives at Yopico. Owners of captives dance.

+1 for sacrifices to Tlazoltéotl, Chalchiuhtlicue, Ehécatl *because this is their feast day.*

Scribe, Warrior: -1 *because the day is unlucky.*

Priest: +1 *because this is the feast day of Ehécatl.*

Fisherman: +1 *because this is a lucky day for fishermen.*

February 3, 1519

Aztec Date: Atcualco (Stopping of Water) 2

Daysign: 2 Jaguar

-1 for everyone *because this is an unlucky day.*

* * *

February 10, 1519

Aztec Date: Atcualco (Stopping of Water) 9

Daysign: 9 Crocodile

-1 for everyone *because this is an unlucky day.*

A further -1 for Gambling and Diplomacy skills.

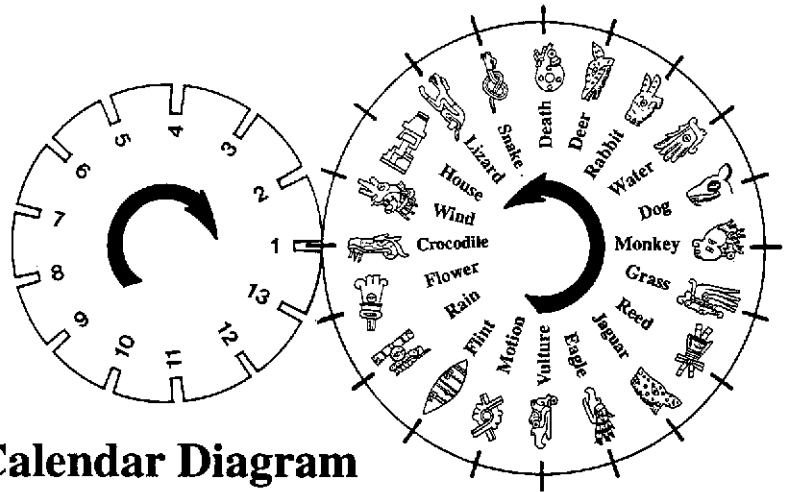
+1 for any evil sorcerers encountered *because this is a lucky day for evil.*

Quicker Figuring of Lucky and Unlucky Days

GMs who find the daysign calculation tedious can use the following technique for simulating lucky and unlucky days.

For each day, roll once on the same attribute for each player. Roll on ST one day, DX the next, IQ the next and HT the next; then go back to ST. An exact hit means an ordinary day. Rolling under the attribute means a lucky day for the player and a +1 bonus. Rolling over the attribute represents an unlucky day and a -1 penalty. Critical successes and failures double the modifier.

The GM does not tell the players whether their day is good or bad, unless a Daybook Reader or other sorcerer can check the omens for them!



Aztec Calendar Diagram

The sacred calendar consisted of 13 numbers that interacted with 20 day signs. As shown by the illustration, each number interacted with each day sign like the gears of a clock. Thus, each combination of number and sign appeared only once per sequence of 260 days.

Although each number/daysign combination appeared 1.5 times a year, each combination appeared on the same secular day only once every 52 years. Thus, the daysign was an easy way of marking a year. The daysign that appeared on the first day named the entire year and was the year-bearer. Thus, a year might be called One Reed. Sadly, historians cannot know the “sheaf” in which a particular One Reed fell, so a historical record for that year could apply to 1415, 1467, or 1519.

The daysign under which a person was born determined his course of life. Those born on the day 2 Rabbit would be drunkards, while those born on 4 Dog would receive much wealth easily. Individual days brought fortune or misfortune. For example, the numbers 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 were favorable. The number 9 was unfavorable. The Crocodile sign was good, Wind was neutral and Deer was bad.

The Christian and Aztec Years

The following table shows how the Christian year corresponds to the native calendars. The daynames within the shaded box, under the Feb. 2 column, are the year-bearers – the Aztec year began on our Feb. 2.

The numbers under each box represent the month number and the day of the corresponding *secular* Aztec month. For example, April 2 has the designation 3-20, which represents the third month, *Tozoztontli* (Small Vigil), and its 20th day. To find the secular equivalent for a specific Christian date, count forward or back from the second day of the month. The secular days are always the same.

To find the sacred day, cross-reference the nearest month (at the top of the table) with the desired year (in the left column). This gives the daysign for that day in that year. Then count forward or backwards by the appropriate number of days to get the dayname for the desired date. The order of the sacred days is given on the *Sacred Days* table (p. 81-84).

For example, to find the Aztec date for September 14, 1517, first locate 1517 and September 2 on the *Year Correspondence Table* (p. 81). They intersect at 3 Eagle. September 14 is 12 days from that date. Using the *Sacred Days* table on p. 81, find 3 Eagle (yes, it will take some looking) and count 12 days down to arrive at the correct sacred dayname of 2 Deer. Now look at the *Aztec Secular Date* row below Sept. 2. It says that Sept. 2 was equivalent to 11-13 – that is, the 13th day of the 11th secular month. Adding 12 days to this gives the 5th day of the 12th month. So September 14, 1517 was Raising of the Flags 15 (a day of ceremony) and 2 Deer (a day of ill fortune).

Note: Because we do not know exactly how the Aztecs counted a leap year, all years are assumed to have 365 days. To account for the leap year, purists can move February 29 to after January 31st, near the end of the Aztec year. A sixth day is thus added to the five useless days of the *secular* calendar. A neutral, unnamed day is added to that *sacred* calendar year to keep it in balance.

Year Correspondence Table

Christian Date

Jan. 2	Feb. 2	Mar. 2	Apr. 2	May 2	Jun. 2	Jul. 2	Aug. 2	Sept. 2	Oct. 2	Nov. 2	Dec. 2
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Aztec Secular Date

17-15	1-1	2-9	3-20	5-10	7-1	8-11	10-2	11-13	13-3	14-14	16-4
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Year

1500	3 Deer	8 Flint	10 Death	2 Motion	6 Deer	11 Flint	2 Rabbit	7 Rain	12 Dog	3 Flower	8 Monkey	12 Crocodile
1501	4 Grass	9 House	11 Monkey	3 Wind	7 Grass	12 House	3 Reed	8 Lizard	13 Eagle	4 Snake	9 Vulture	13 Death
1502	5 Motion	10 Rabbit	12 Vulture	4 Deer	8 Motion	13 Rabbit	4 Flint	9 Water	1 Flower	5 Dog	10 Crocodile	1 Monkey
1503	6 Wind	11 Reed	13 Crocodile	5 Grass	9 Wind	1 Reed	5 House	10 Jaguar	2 Snake	6 Eagle	11 Death	2 Vulture
1504	7 Deer	12 Flint	1 Death	6 Motion	10 Deer	2 Flint	6 Rabbit	11 Rain	3 Dog	7 Flower	12 Monkey	3 Crocodile
1505	8 Grass	13 House	2 Monkey	7 Wind	11 Grass	3 House	7 Reed	12 Lizard	4 Eagle	8 Snake	13 Vulture	4 Death
1506	9 Motion	1 Rabbit	3 Vulture	8 Deer	12 Motion	4 Rabbit	8 Flint	13 Water	5 Flower	9 Dog	1 Crocodile	5 Monkey
1507	10 Wind	2 Reed	4 Crocodile	9 Grass	13 Wind	5 Reed	9 House	1 Jaguar	6 Snake	10 Eagle	2 Death	6 Vulture
1508	11 Deer	3 Flint	5 Death	10 Motion	1 Deer	6 Flint	10 Rabbit	2 Rain	7 Dog	11 Flower	3 Monkey	7 Crocodile
1509	12 Grass	4 House	6 Monkey	11 Wind	2 Grass	7 House	11 Reed	3 Lizard	8 Eagle	12 Snake	4 Vulture	8 Death
1510	13 Motion	5 Rabbit	7 Vulture	12 Deer	3 Motion	8 Rabbit	12 Flint	4 Water	9 Flower	13 Dog	5 Crocodile	9 Monkey
1511	1 Wind	6 Reed	8 Crocodile	13 Grass	4 Wind	9 Reed	13 House	5 Jaguar	10 Snake	1 Eagle	6 Death	10 Vulture
1512	2 Deer	7 Flint	9 Death	1 Motion	5 Deer	10 Flint	1 Rabbit	6 Rain	11 Dog	2 Flower	7 Monkey	11 Crocodile
1513	3 Grass	8 House	10 Monkey	2 Wind	6 Grass	11 House	2 Reed	7 Lizard	12 Eagle	3 Snake	8 Vulture	12 Death
1514	4 Motion	9 Rabbit	11 Vulture	3 Deer	7 Motion	12 Rabbit	3 Flint	8 Water	13 Flower	4 Dog	9 Crocodile	13 Monkey
1515	5 Wind	10 Reed	12 Crocodile	4 Grass	8 Wind	13 Reed	4 House	9 Jaguar	1 Snake	5 Eagle	10 Death	1 Vulture
1516	6 Deer	11 Flint	13 Death	5 Motion	9 Deer	1 Flint	5 Rabbit	10 Rain	2 Dog	6 Flower	11 Monkey	2 Crocodile
1517	7 Grass	12 House	1 Monkey	6 Wind	10 Grass	2 House	6 Reed	11 Lizard	3 Eagle	7 Snake	12 Vulture	3 Death
1518	8 Motion	13 Rabbit	2 Vulture	7 Deer	11 Motion	3 Rabbit	7 Flint	12 Water	4 Flower	8 Dog	13 Crocodile	4 Monkey
1519	9 Wind	1 Reed	3 Crocodile	8 Grass	12 Wind	4 Reed	8 House	13 Jaguar	5 Snake	9 Eagle	1 Death	5 Vulture
1520	10 Deer	2 Flint	4 Death	9 Motion	13 Deer	5 Flint	9 Rabbit	1 Rain	6 Dog	10 Flower	2 Monkey	6 Crocodile
1521	11 Grass	3 House	5 Monkey	10 Wind	1 Grass	6 House	10 Reed	2 Lizard	7 Eagle	11 Snake	3 Vulture	7 Death
1522	12 Motion	4 Rabbit	6 Vulture	11 Deer	2 Motion	7 Rabbit	11 Flint	3 Water	8 Flower	12 Dog	4 Crocodile	8 Monkey
1523	13 Wind	5 Reed	7 Crocodile	12 Grass	3 Wind	8 Reed	12 House	4 Jaguar	9 Snake	13 Eagle	5 Death	9 Vulture
1524	1 Deer	6 Flint	8 Death	13 Motion	4 Deer	9 Flint	13 Rabbit	5 Rain	10 Dog	1 Flower	6 Monkey	10 Crocodile
1525	2 Grass	7 House	9 Monkey	1 Wind	5 Grass	10 House	1 Reed	6 Lizard	11 Eagle	2 Snake	7 Vulture	11 Death

Sacred Days – Good and Bad Fortune

The following table represents an Aztec daybook and can be used to add to the luck or misfortune of a player during the game. Only the GM, or a PC with both a daybook and the requisite Daybook Reading spell, can read this table.

Each day can add or subtract a modifier from all that player's rolls for that day, thus simulating the fortunes or misfortunes of the day. Note that these modifiers are cumulative and apply only to rolls used in game play. The modifiers do not affect rolls used to determine skill increases, for example.

The first number after the daysign is the general modifier.

Day	Modifiers
1 Reed	-1. Ce Acatl, Chalchiuhtlicue, Ehécatl, Tlaelcuani, Tlazoltéotl. Fishermen +1, Florists +1, Watersellers +1.
2 Jaguar	-1.
3 Eagle	-1.
4 Vulture	-1.
5 Motion	-1.
6 Flint	-1.
7 Rain	+1.
8 Flower	+1.
9 Crocodile	-1. Diplomacy -1. Gambling -1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Wind	+1.
11 House	+1.
12 Lizard	+1.
13 Snake	+1.

There are also special modifiers (usually bonuses) for particular days. When the name of a god is listed, priests of that deity and sacrifices to that deity are at +1. When a profession is listed, members of that profession get a +1 bonus to all rolls, and anyone attempting that profession's tasks also gets a +1.

If a day has a *general* penalty, but some people or efforts get a *special* bonus, anyone eligible for the special bonus simply *ignores* the general penalty. The -1 does not cancel out their bonus . . . it is entirely ignored, leaving them with the benefit of their special bonus.

Day	Modifiers:
1 Death	+1. Tezcatlipoca, Tonatiuh. Administrators +1, Slaves +1.
2 Deer	-1. Will rolls +1.
3 Rabbit	+1.
4 Water	-1.
5 Dog	-1. Mictlantéotl.
6 Monkey	-1.
7 Grass	+1.
8 Reed	-1.
9 Jaguar	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Eagle	+1. Combat/weapon skills +1, Strength +1.
11 Vulture	+1.
12 Motion	+1.
13 Flint	+1.

Day	Modifiers
1 Rain	+1.
2 Flower	+1.
3 Crocodile	-1. Gambling -1, Diplomacy -1, Fast-Talk +1
4 Wind	+1.
5 House	+1.
6 Lizard	-1.
7 Snake	+1. <i>Pochtecas</i> leaving on caravans, +1.
8 Death	-1.
9 Deer	-1. Social skills -1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Rabbit	+1.
11 Water	+1.
12 Dog	+1.
13 Monkey	+1.

1 Grass	-1. <i>Mayauel</i> , <i>Octli</i> gods, <i>Ometéotl</i> . Midwives +1, <i>Octli</i> makers and sellers +1.
2 Reed	+1. <i>Omecatli</i> .
3 Jaguar	+1.
4 Eagle	-1.
5 Vulture	-1.
6 Motion	-1.
7 Flint	+1.
8 Rain	-1. Thief skills +1.
9 Flower	-1. Thief skills +1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Crocodile	+1.
11 Wind	+1.
12 House	+1.
13 Lizard	+1.

1 Snake	+1. <i>Quetzalcóatl</i> , <i>Xiutecutli</i> . Artisans +1, Philosophers +1, <i>Pochtecas</i> +1, Warriors +1.
2 Death	-1.
3 Deer	+1.
4 Rabbit	-1.
5 Water	-1.
6 Dog	-1. Social skills -1.
7 Monkey	+1. Social skills +1. Song Feast +1.
8 Grass	+1.
9 Reed	-1. <i>Tlaelcuani</i> , <i>Tlazoltéotl</i> . Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Jaguar	+1. <i>Tezcatlipoca</i> .
11 Eagle	0.
12 Vulture	0.
13 Motion	+1.

1 Flint	+1. <i>Huitzilopochtli</i> , <i>Mictlantéotl</i> , <i>Tonatiuh</i> . Innkeepers +1, <i>Metl</i> farmers and sellers +1, Warriors +1.
2 Rain	+1.
3 Flower	+1.
4 Crocodile	+1.
5 Wind	+1.
6 House	+1.
7 Lizard	+1.
8 Snake	+1.
9 Death	+1. Evil sorcerers +1, Water sellers +1.
10 Deer	+1.
11 Rabbit	+1.
12 Water	+1.
13 Dog	+1.

Day	Modifiers
1 Monkey	+1. <i>Tonatiuh</i> . Artistic performances +1, Social skills +1, Pharmacists +1, <i>Pochtecas</i> leaving on caravans +1, <i>Octli</i> makers and sellers +1. Children -5 (!!) because the malevolent <i>Chuateteo</i> descend today.
2 Grass	-1.
3 Reed	+1.
4 Jaguar	-1.
5 Eagle	-1.
6 Vulture	-1.
7 Motion	-1.
8 Flint	-1.
9 Rain	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Flower	-1.
11 Crocodile	-1.
12 Wind	-1.
13 House	-1.

1 Lizard	+1. <i>Tlaelcuani</i> , <i>Tlazoltéotl</i> . Physical skills +1. Astronomers +1.
2 Snake	+1.
3 Death	+1.
4 Deer	+1.
5 Rabbit	+1.
6 Water	+1.
7 Dog	+1.
8 Monkey	+1.
9 Grass	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Reed	+1.
11 Jaguar	+1.
12 Eagle	+1.
13 Vulture	+1.

1 Motion	0. <i>Tezcatlipoca</i> . Medicine traders +1, Pharmacists +1.
2 Flint	0.
3 Rain	0.
4 Flower	0.
5 Crocodile	0.
6 Wind	0.
7 House	0. <i>Pochteca</i> caravans returning to the city +1.
8 Lizard	0.
9 Snake	0. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Death	0.
11 Deer	0.
12 Rabbit	0.
13 Water	0.

1 Dog	+1. <i>Chantico</i> , <i>Coatlícue</i> , <i>Quetzalcóatl</i> , <i>Tonatiuh</i> , <i>Xipe Totec</i> , <i>Xiutecutli</i> . Goldsmiths +1, Lapidaries +1, Silversmiths +1.
2 Monkey	+1.
3 Grass	+1.
4 Reed	+1. <i>Pochtecas</i> +1, Slaves +1.
5 Jaguar	+1.
6 Eagle	+1.
7 Vulture	+1.
8 Motion	+1.
9 Flint	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Rain	+1.
11 Flower	+1.
12 Crocodile	+1.
13 Wind	+1.

Day	Modifiers
1 House	-1. Chantico, Ciuacóatl, Huitzilopochtli, Itzpapalotl. Lapidaries +1, Philosophers +1, Thieves +1. Ball Game -1, Gambling -1, Patolli -1; <i>Pochteca</i> caravans arriving in city +1.
2 Lizard	-1.
3 Snake	+1.
4 Death	-1.
5 Deer	-1. Daybook readers +1.
6 Rabbit	-1.
7 Water	-1.
8 Dog	-1.
9 Monkey	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Grass	-1.
11 Reed	-1.
12 Jaguar	-1.
13 Eagle	-1.

1 Vulture	+1. Tlaloc. Administrators +1, Elderly (50+ years of age) +1.
2 Motion	+1.
3 Flint	+1.
4 Rain	+1.
5 Flower	+1.
6 Crocodile	+1.
7 Wind	+1.
8 House	+1.
9 Lizard	+1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Snake	+1.
11 Death	+1.
12 Deer	+1.
13 Rabbit	+1.

1 Water	-1. Chalchiuhtlicue, Ehécatl, Tezcatlipoca, Tlaelcuani. Knights of any order +1.
2 Dog	-1.
3 Monkey	-1.
4 Grass	-1.
5 Reed	-1.
6 Jaguar	-1.
7 Eagle	-1.
8 Vulture	-1.
9 Motion	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Flint	-1.
11 Rain	-1.
12 Flower	-1.
13 Crocodile	-1.

1 Wind	-1. Ehécatl, Tlaelcuani, Tlaloc, Tlazoltéotl, Xochiquetzal. Palm Readers +1, Surgeons +1.
2 House	-1.
3 Lizard	-1.
4 Snake	-1.
5 Death	-1.
6 Deer	-1.
7 Rabbit	-1.
8 Water	-1.
9 Dog	-1. Chantico, Evil sorcerers +1, Lapidaries +1, Physicians +1.
10 Monkey	-1.
11 Grass	-1.
12 Reed	-1.
13 Jaguar	-1.

Day	Modifiers:
1 Eagle	-1. Ciuateteo, Tezcatlipoca, Xochiquetzal. Painters +1, Silversmiths +1, Sorcerers +1.
2 Vulture	-1.
3 Motion	+1.
4 Flint	-1.
5 Rain	-1.
6 Flower	-1.
7 Crocodile	-1.
8 Wind	-1.
9 House	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Lizard	-1.
11 Snake	-1.
12 Death	-1.
13 Deer	-1.

1 Rabbit	+1. Huitzilopochtli, Xiutecutli. Daybook readers +1, Farmers +1, Warriors +1.
2 Water	+1.
3 Dog	+1.
4 Monkey	+1.
5 Grass	+1.
6 Reed	+1.
7 Jaguar	+1.
8 Eagle	+1.
9 Vulture	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Motion	+1.
11 Flint	+1.
12 Rain	+1.
13 Flower	+1.

1 Crocodile	+1. Quetzalcóatl. <i>Pochtecas</i> leaving on caravan +1, Daybook readers +1, Farmers +1, Sorcerers +1, Weavers +1, Song Feast +1.
2 Wind	+1.
3 House	+1.
4 Lizard	+1.
5 Snake	+1.
6 Death	+1.
7 Deer	+1.
8 Rabbit	+1.
9 Water	+1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Dog	+1.
11 Monkey	+1.
12 Grass	+1.
13 Reed	+1.

1 Jaguar	-1. Chicomecóatl, Quetzalcóatl, Tonatiuh. Fishermen +1, Water hunters +1.
2 Eagle	-1.
3 Vulture	-1.
4 Motion	-1. Nobles (status 4+) +1, Lapidaries +1.
5 Flint	-1.
6 Rain	-1.
7 Flower	-1. Chicomecóatl, Xochiquetzal. Embroiderers +1, Painters +1, Scribes +1.
8 Crocodile	-1.
9 Wind	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 House	-1.
11 Lizard	-1.
12 Snake	-1.
13 Death	-1.

Day	Modifiers
1 Deer	+1. Cuateteo, Tezcatlipoca. Innkeepers +1, <i>Octli</i> makers and sellers +1.
2 Rabbit	+1. Innkeepers +1, <i>Octli</i> makers and sellers +1.
3 Water	0.
4 Dog	+1. Dog breeders and traders +1.
5 Monkey	+1. Entertainers +1. Bard +1, Diplomacy +1.
6 Grass	-1.
7 Reed	+1.
8 Jaguar	-1.
9 Eagle	-1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Vulture	-1.
11 Motion	-1.
12 Flint	-1.
13 Rain	+1.

Day	Modifiers:
1 Flower	+1. Chantico. Administrators +1, Dancers +1, Embroiderers +1, Goldworkers +1, Lapidaries +1, Musicians +1, Singers +1, Warriors +1.
2 Crocodile	+1.
3 Wind	+1.
4 House	+1.
5 Lizard	+1.
6 Snake	+1.
7 Death	+1.
8 Deer	+1.
9 Rabbit	+1. Evil sorcerers +1.
10 Water	+1.
11 Dog	+1.
12 Monkey	+1.
13 Grass	+1.

Feast Days

Each of the gods had his own special day for celebration and worship. Feast days on the secular calendar (p. 78) are shown with the number of the month and the day, separated by a slash

(e.g., 14/1 indicates the first day of the 14th month, *Quecholli*.) Feast days on the sacred calendar (p. 80) are shown by the daysign (e.g., 4 Reed).

Deity	Feast Day
Ce Acatl	1 Reed
Centeotl	4/1
Chalchiuhtlicue	1 Reed, 1 Water
Chantico	1 Dog, 1 House, 9 Dog, 1 Flower
Chicomecóatl	4/1, 1 Jaguar, 7 Flower
Ciuacóatl	1 House
Cuateteo	1 Monkey, 1 Eagle, 1 Deer
Coatlícue	3/1, 1 Dog
Coyotlinaual	15/1
Ehécatl	1 Reed, 1 Wind, 1 Water
Huitzilopochtli	9/1, 15/1, 1 Flint, 1 House, 1 Rabbit
Huixtociuatl	7/1
Itzpapalotl	1 House
Mayauel	1 Grass
Mictlantéotl	5 Dog, 1 Flint
Mixcóatl	14/1 to 14/5
Octli Gods	1 Grass
Omecatl	2 Reed
Ometéotl	1 Grass
Quetzalcóatl	1 Snake, 1 Dog, 1 Crocodile, 1 Jaguar

Deity	Feast Day
Tezcatlipoca	5/1, 1 Death, 10 Jaguar, 1 Motion, 1 Water, 1 Eagle, 1 Deer
Tlaloc	16/1, 1 Vulture, 1 Wind
Tlaloque	1/1, 6/1
Tlaelcuani	1 Reed, 9 Reed, 1 Lizard, 1 Wind
Tlazoltéotl	1 Reed, 9 Reed, 1 Lizard, 1 Wind
Toci	11/1, 11/8, 17/1
Tonatiuh	1 Death, 1 Flint, 1 Monkey, 1 Dog, 1 Jaguar
Xilonen	8/10
Xipe Totec	2/1, 1 Dog
Xiutecutli	10/1, 18/1, 1 Snake, 1 Dog, 1 Rabbit
Xochipilli	7/1
Xochiquetzal	1 Wind, 1 Eagle, 7 Flower
Yacatecutli	9/1
Yaotl	12/20

Creating a Combined Calendar

The GM can combine all these tables into a single calendar for his PCs and important NPCs as shown in the *Sample Combined Calendar* (sidebar, p. 80).

Use one 3"x5" card per day. First, find the day of the year in which the game starts by using the *Year Correspondence Table*. For example, if the game begins on February 2, 1519, the correct daysign is 1 Reed. Enter the Christian date, the secular date and the daysign at the top of the card.

Next, check the modifiers for that day and for succeeding days and see how the modifiers affect different players. Write down each day and each player's name underneath it. Total up all the positive modifiers and penalties to produce a final modifier. Include bonuses from sacrifices. For example, a player may have the modifiers +1, -1, +3 for one day. This adds up to +2 for the day.



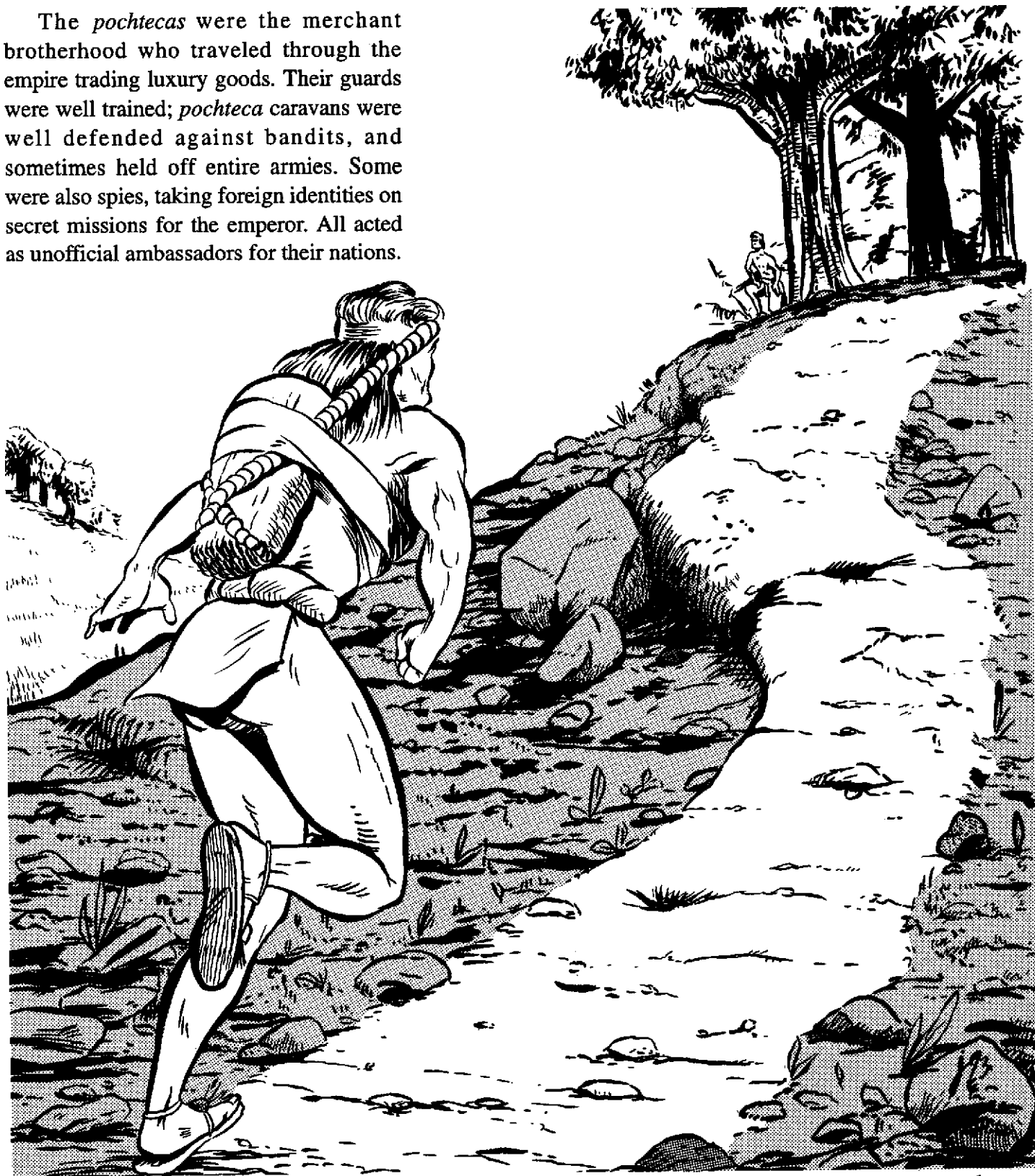
Each daily card should also show feast days (see above) and planned events in the game world. The day's adventures can be recorded on the card, creating a history of the campaign.

As the adventure enters each new day, consult the appropriate calendar card. Apply the total modifiers to each character for all his rolls for that day. Do not tell the player his modifier unless he consults a soothsayer or does a reading on himself through his own divining spell.

A successful Daybook Reading roll will give the general gist of the day – fortunate, neutral, or unfortunate. Only a critical success can reveal the exact modifier. An unsuccessful roll reveals nothing, while a critical failure confuses the seer with an incorrect answer.

POCHTECAS 7

The *pochtecas* were the merchant brotherhood who traveled through the empire trading luxury goods. Their guards were well trained; *pochteca* caravans were well defended against bandits, and sometimes held off entire armies. Some were also spies, taking foreign identities on secret missions for the emperor. All acted as unofficial ambassadors for their nations.



The First Pochtecas

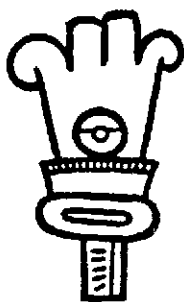
Though merchants followed the original wandering tribes, they did not reach their high status until the reign of Auitzotl. Then warriors from eight tribes surrounded a column of Aztec traders in a far town. The defenders held out for four years until then-General Moctezuma II led an army to rescue them. To his surprise, he met the *pochtecas* on the road. Their hair grew beyond the hems of their smelly capes, but they paraded the captured standards, weapons and warriors of their enemies.

Emperor Auitzotl was so impressed by this victory that he adopted the merchants as his "beloved uncles." He rewarded them with their booty, with decorated capes and with jewelry. At the welcoming feast, he sat them among the flustered nobles, who until then had been the only class allowed to wear jewelry. After that, *pochtecas* could wear the clothing of nobility on special occasions.

The 12 Merchant Towns

Though traders lived in every part of Anahuac, the 12 towns of the Valley formed the most important corporation. These towns provided at least one merchant hostel, a storehouse, a temple and a warm welcome to all *pochtecas*. Only the first five listed had trading rights to the tropical lowlands. The first two controlled almost all trade in tropical goods.

1. Tenochtitlán
2. Tlatelolco
3. Huitzilopochco
4. Cuautitlán
5. Azcapotzalco
6. Mixcoac
7. Texcoco
8. Huexotla
9. Cōatlīchan
10. Otompan
11. Xochimilco
12. Chalco



Tochtepec

Though not one of the 12 merchant towns, Tochtepec grew rich from storehouses and inns that catered primarily to the *pochtecas*. All the merchant associations maintained guild halls there where traders could throw banquets, and spies could change into and out of their disguises. Supplies and long-distance porters were readily available.

The merchants imported raw materials such as feathers, animals, animal skins, seashells, turquoise, jade, amber, obsidian, gold and foodstuffs. Artisans turned these into luxury exports that included decorated capes, blankets, embroidered clothing, pottery, precious-stone lip plugs, obsidian knives and jewelry of gold, silver, amber and crystal. These in turn were carried to wealthy customers throughout the empire in *pochteca* caravans.

Merchants in Society

The *pochtecas* formed a large corporation with branches and warehouses in 12 cities. The supreme chief and the merchant general sat as co-leaders of the merchant council. Its members included the chiefs of the other corporate towns and older traders of high rank. The council judged other merchants, kept order in the marketplace through the market judges and passed spy information to the authorities. When needed, council members also served as scouts during war or diplomats during peace.

Pochtecas paid taxes in the form of trade goods but did not provide civil labor. They lived in their own *calpullis*, married among themselves, worshiped their god Yacatecutli and passed their trade on from father to son.

Because merchants bought their way up the social ladder, they existed uneasily with nobles whose high social status came from birth and reputation. To avoid hostility, the *pochtecas* publicly humbled themselves. They wore poor-quality capes and deferred to those of higher status. Only within the safety of their homes and among themselves did they live in luxury. Those traders who disturbed the social order could face trial and execution.

Pochteca Characters

Because experienced *pochtecas* prefer to keep to themselves, everyone in an established corporate playing group should be merchants. The only outsiders to accompany caravans were professional porters and the occasional priest. However, beginning merchants may need to recruit non-merchant players, as described in the sidebar on p. 87.

All *pochtecas* have Merchant and Leadership skill, and some level of Sword and Shield. Gesture, some languages and some Area Knowledge are also helpful. Finally, a trader needs the Carousing skill and the Merchant Banquets specialty of Savoir-Faire (p. 37) to throw the kind of feasts that will raise his social standing.

Additional skills depend on the type of *pochteca* chosen:

An ordinary *pochteca* graduates from the *calmecac* with such noble skills as Administration, Diplomacy, Literacy, Savoir-Faire and Theology. Merchant specialties in luxury items such as jade, feathers and capes are also recommended.

A merchant guard or *oztomeca* is highly skilled in many weapons and Brawling. He can continue his career as a warrior, or become a disguised merchant or *naualoztomeca*. The latter job requires high Area Knowledge, Disguise and Language skills to pass as a native of a foreign country. Acting and Streetwise are also helpful.

Common disadvantages for all *pochtecas* include Greed, Intolerance, Jealousy and Miserliness. Those burdened by Cowardice will find the career of a disguised merchant one that hides this failing well.

Rising Through The Ranks

To move up the levels of *pochteca* society, the merchant had to practice rituals and meet trading goals. At higher levels, a trader could organize caravans, trade in expensive goods such as slaves, sit on the corporate council and receive gifts from lower-status members seeking advancement.

To rise socially, the *pochteca* threw lavish banquets. The key to a successful feast was generosity. The more food, chocolate, tobacco and gifts the host gave to

guests, the more esteemed he was. Spending, not saving, impressed the merchant's friends.

Though nobles publicly scorned *pochteca* banquets, invitations to these festivities were highly regarded. They enabled outsiders to glimpse the rich and exotic foreign goods that lay within the humble and unassuming walls of a merchant house. More importantly, the banquets were a chance to stray from the normal boundaries of Aztec protocol into the sophisticated customs brought back by these worldly travelers. Foreign-bought slaves frequently entertained at these events, performing charming dances from other lands that were pruriently inappropriate in polite Aztec society.

The Lower Ranks

The lowest level belonged to the merchant youth who attended school and could only sacrifice his blood. He could interrupt his education temporarily to join a caravan. Older merchants then guided him as an apprentice, allowing him to sacrifice birds, rubber balls, paper and flowers.

After he graduated, attended a few expeditions and married, the apprentice could become an independent merchant by organizing the Washing of the Feet ceremony. This feast celebrated the return of a caravan with invitations to everyone from the district, and those of slave-sacrificer rank (see below) from all over the city. The youth could sharpen his banquet-planning skills by spending company funds rather than his own. Other apprentices who were not ready to act as organizers also helped.

The Caravan Leader

An independent merchant traded by himself or joined expeditions, either as a trader or a merchant guard. After many profitable expeditions, the *pochteca* could rise to caravan leader by throwing a Song Feast. The best days for this were 7 Monkey or 1 Crocodile.

This costly affair lasted three days and was attended by the merchant chiefs, older traders, high army officers, nobles and many relatives. Among other gifts, the host gave flowers to army officers and sacrificed tobacco and flowers at six city temples. Seven musicians provided dance music and song.

Guests ate special mushrooms with honey to see visions, which they discussed freely. Some guests dreamed of death by wild animals while others foresaw an old age ripe with wealth and children.

The main feast ended at noon of the second day. On the third day, he threw a small dinner party for relatives and friends only.

The older merchants then returned to judge the entire banquet based on the amount of food and gifts remaining. If no food or gifts remained, this indicated that the gods had already bestowed all their favors on the host. He would neither rise socially nor prosper and would never organize other feasts. On the other hand, if many leftovers remained, the gods still had many favors left to give and the *pochteca* advanced to caravan leader.

Slave Sacrificers

After many years of profitable caravans, the merchant could become a slave sacrificer or *tealtianime* through the expensive slave-bathing ritual. He bought from one to four slaves, evenly divided between male and female. Because these slaves were clean and attractive and could sing and dance well, they cost at least \$4,000 each. The GM may define Appearance, Singing and Dancing skills for each slave and adjust the price as needed. For male slaves, the GM also rolls for general fighting skill. The *pochteca* kept the slaves in a wooden cage guarded by a male helper.

Starting on Raising of the Flags 15, the *pochteca* gave 800-1,200 decorated capes and 400 decorated loincloths to high army officers and civil officials. He also gave expensive clothing to the merchant chiefs, to *tealtianimes* of the 12 cities and their spouses, to all disguised merchants and to the slave dealers.

An Adventuring Opportunity

First-time caravan leaders, expeditions into risky areas, or trade runs during the high season may find it difficult to find financing and guild labor. Most of the investments naturally went to traders with established reputations on proven profitable routes. Guild porters always demanded payment up front for long-distance journeys. Thus, a beginning caravan leader, with neither adequate funds nor reputation, would recruit expedition members from the local marketplace.

Bored young men looking for adventure excitedly signed up for a chance to travel to unknown corners of the world. In exchange for their acting as porters and guards, they received a small share of the expedition profits. This is one way of creating a mixed adventuring party that includes a merchant.

A Novice Swears The Oath

"Yes, Revered Father, I promise to humble myself, to walk quietly, sadly within the city; to wear only miserable *meil* capes and to avoid notoriety, honor, praise and fame. I will maintain, follow and live by these rules of the *pochteca*:

"To be loyal to all merchants and their associations;

"To respect all the peoples of Anahuac;

"To respect marriage and hold fast against adultery;

"To guide and control the merchant youths and apprentices;

"To be modest, plain, humble, controlled and deny my jealousy of others;

"To deny myself excess and to persevere;

"To be generous with all my material goods and to be charitable to the poor;

"To be fair in business and to charge reasonable prices;

"To gain wealth from honest work and not from gambling and cheating;

"I swear, pledge, affirm this oath, this vow, this contract on our respected god Yacatecutli, our lord and patron."

- Paraphrased from the *Florentine Codex*

Reactions to Merchants

Because of his poor dress and humble behavior, strangers never saw a *pochteca* as having wealth or high status. No matter who he is, a merchant is always seen as Status 0 by people who do not know him. Merchants on a journey carried the fan and staff that characterized all travelers.

Nobles who recognize a trader as such will disdain him with a -1 reaction.

Women Merchants

As a *pochteca*, women rose equally with men. By performing the correct rituals, women could reach all non-military merchant levels except the highest. Though women could not travel on expeditions (a restriction the GM may choose to ignore), they could invest freely in all trading ventures. Apparently, women *pochtecas* up to the level of slave dealer were common in Aztec society.

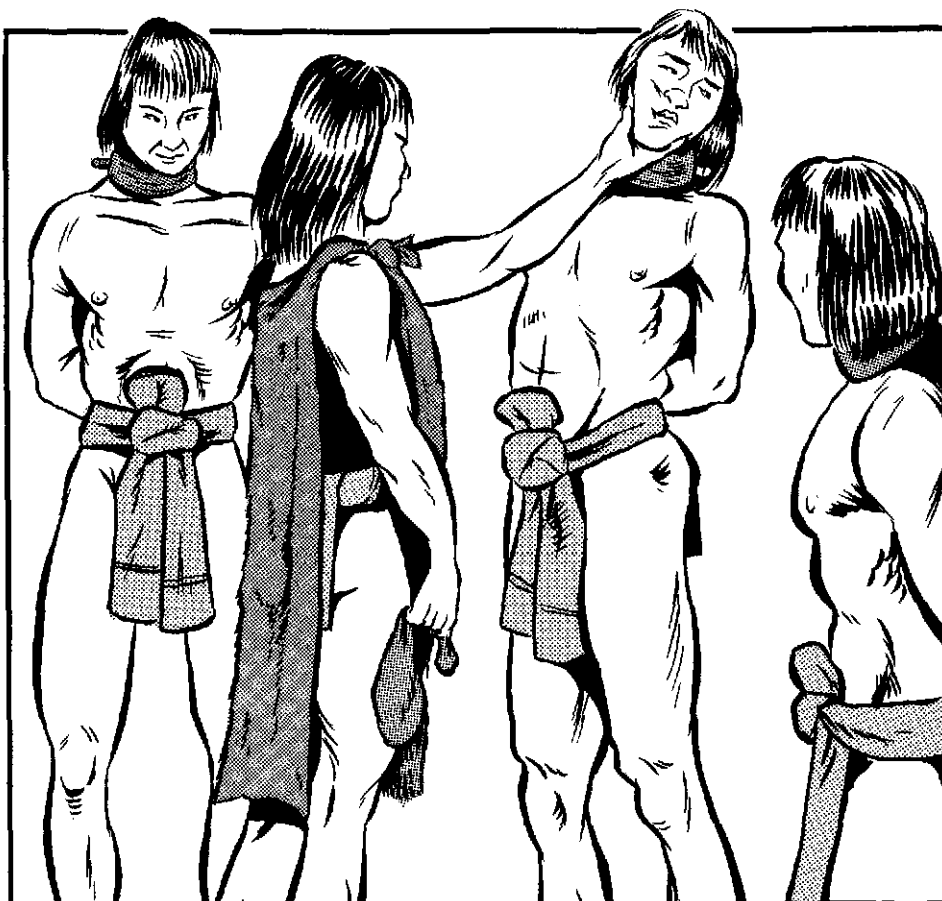
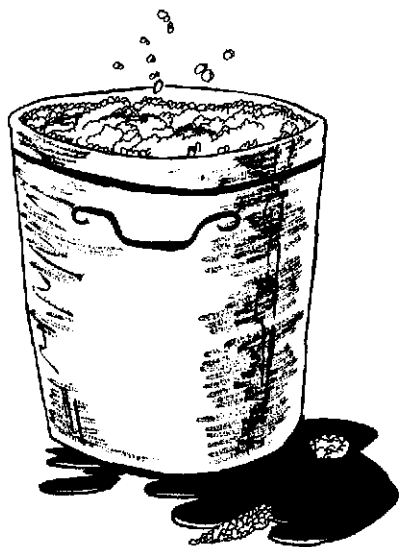
Power Banqueting

Merchant banquets generally follow the rules of banqueting described in *Feasts* (see sidebar, p. 10), but with some exceptions. Before the start of the feast, the visiting *pochtecas* must criticize the food and gifts of the host. Charges of theft and poor quality are appropriate. The host must endure these insults before displaying his generosity.

Only during these affairs can a merchant parade in high-status sandals, fine clothing and jewelry. He must still defer to any attending nobles. The well-dressed *pochteca* struts among guests with tobacco tube in one hand and a cup of chocolate in the other.

Advice, warnings and general speech-making add much to any feast, especially if offered by elders to youths. This excerpt from the *Florentine Codex* is typical:

"Here you are. Take heed. Shall you therefore perhaps be presumptuous, proud, ignominious? Shall you rather deliver yourself to comforts? Quickly take up, without fail, the staff and the carrying frame. And if there is yet some reward and merit for us, you shall return here; we will see you; we shall behold your presence. Continue to travel. Do not stumble against the sticks, into the grass. Go carefully. Take heed, O my beloved son!"



After a sacrifice of paper for each slave at the Yacatecutli temple in Tochtepec, the merchant threw four banquets in Tenochtitlán:

Announcement Feast (*Teyolmelaua*). Only three chiefs of his association attended this small get-together. Here, the *pochteca* announced his slave sacrifice and received advice and warnings.

Display Feast (*Tlaixnextia*). He displayed his slaves in their finest clothing and made them sing and dance for many guests. Though a poor performance reflected badly on the trader, a superb one was worse: nobles would force the merchant to sell them the slaves. With no slaves left to sacrifice, the *pochteca* stopped his ritual and had to wait until next year to repeat it. This was one way that nobles prevented a too-ambitious merchant from rising too quickly.

Bathing Feast (*Tetualtia*). Slave bathers, who were hired women, ritually prepared the slaves by bathing and dressing them in such rich clothing as earplugs, nose plugs, feather capes and feather headdresses. The slave bathers received gifts of rich clothing and feather ornaments.

Sacrificial Feast (*Tlamictia*). The male slaves were given shields and swords to fight sacrificial war captives at Coatlán before an audience. An army officer who wished to interfere with the *pochteca*'s career could enter the fight. If he helped a captive defeat a slave, the officer could hold that slave for ransom – and if the *pochteca* could not afford the ransom, the officer could sacrifice the slave to advance his own career. Officers and captives who lost their fights were sacrificed by the victorious slave. Although the slave still died, he could now enter the warrior's heaven, having dedicated his captive to the gods.

The Sacrificial Feast was part of the feast of Huitzilopochtli (see *Religion*, p. 69). This god's impersonator eventually approached the combatants and stopped the fighting. He then led a procession of slaves and their owners to the temple of Huitzilopochtli in the Temple District.

All Tenochtitlán, including the emperor, watched the proceedings. Up the steps to the top of the pyramid marched each slave, the owning merchant and his wife or relative, and the slave bather and her companion. There, a priest ripped out the slave's heart to the sound of a shell trumpet and kicked the body down the

steps of the pyramid. The newly promoted slave sacrificer then came down and brought the corpse home. He cooked the body in little pieces and served it with salt and cooked maize to all his neighbors.

The Cost of a Banquet

The costs apply to *pochtecas*. At the GM's discretion, these rules can apply to skill rolls for other types of characters as well.

To decide success at a feast, roll against a *pochteca's* Merchant Banquets specialty. A normal failure represents a mistake, like temporarily running out of chocolate. The merchant suffers a -1 reaction with all banquet guests until he throws a successful feast. A critical failure represents a disaster, like dropping a pot of chocolate on a noble's head. The *pochteca* suffers a permanent -1 reaction in dealings with guests and, if the party is required for social climbing, can never rise in rank. A critical success awards a +1 reaction with banquet guests until the next party.

The Guest List

To determine how many guests to invite to a celebration, use (3d + reputation) × the following modifiers. Wealth is that of the individual throwing the banquet.

PC's Wealth	Modifier
Struggling	1
Average	2
Comfortable	5
Wealthy	10
Very Wealthy	20
Filthy Rich	50



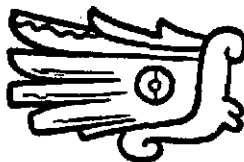
For these banquets only, use the number or die roll shown to find the number of attendees, without regard to the host's wealth:

Banquet	Guests
Washing of the Feet	Use wealth modifier of caravan leader
Third Day of Song Feast	3d
Announcement Feast	3
Display, Bathing and Sacrificial Feasts	3d × 50

Food and Gift Modifiers

The costs are typical for an all-day banquet. The costs may be halved by the GM for shorter affairs.

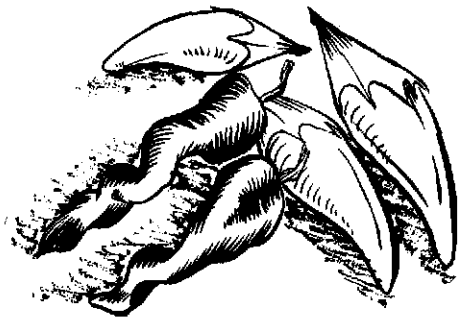
Amount Spent	Modifier
Under \$5 per person on food	-2
\$20 or more per person on food	+1
Under \$50 in gifts per person	-1
Under \$40	-2
Under \$30	-3
Under \$20	-4
Under \$10	-5
No gifts for guests	-5
\$100 or more in gifts per person:	+1



The GM may also want to consider modifiers for the dignitaries attending. For example, the emperor could be worth a +2.

Song Feast Modifiers

During the Song Feast, first roll for the success of the feast, adding all applicable modifiers including the following:



Porters

Because Anahuac lacked beasts of burdens, most cargo was hauled by male *tlamemes* or porters. They carried goods on their back in *peilacallis*, cane containers strapped to the forehead with rope. Hides covered most cargos for protection against the elements. Porters also transported the wealthy on their back or in a litter.

Portering is an easy job to get into, provided the applicant has a strong back. For a membership fee of \$10, and 10% of portage fees, one can apply at the nearest carriers' guild, located in every town in the empire. Although work is usually plentiful, hereditary *tlamemes* are the first to get jobs.

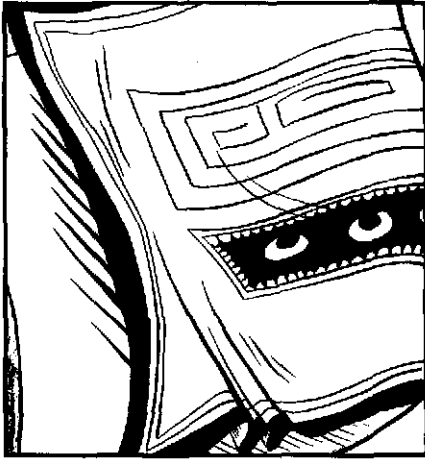
There are two kinds of porters:

Local porters are hired for the day for travel in the empire. They go only as far as the next town. Local porters cost \$12 a day plus meals, have strength 10, and will carry medium encumbrance (54 lbs.).

Long-distance porters are hired over several days for travel to far provinces or through hostile areas outside the empire. They cost \$18 a day plus meals, have an average strength of 11, but will carry only light encumbrance (40-44 lbs.).

Long-distance porters must be returned to a town with a porter guild or their town of origin, and must be paid, in advance, for every day until their return. Thus, traders must predict the largest loads for their entire trip and hire enough *tlamemes* to carry that load. This may mean that porters carry less than full loads at the start of the trip. By universal agreement, long-distance *tlamemes* are generally immune from danger if their caravans are attacked and employers killed.

Either type of porter needs a 10-minute rest break every hour. Long-distance porters also require a half-hour break every day. In good terrain, the average porter can travel 2.5 miles per hour or 13-18 miles per day.



Canoes

Canoes were the only other cargo carriers available to the Aztecs. Hewn from single trees, these dugouts had square bows and a shallow draft. Canoeists either rowed or poled them between Tenochtitlán and lake-shore cities. The smallest boats carried only two men or a few hundred pounds of goods; the largest could carry 60 passengers or nearly 4 tons of cargo. A single man could handle up to a 45-foot canoe, which could carry a ton of maize.

Because canoes traveled two miles per hour, at most – more slowly than a walking person – they rarely transported people. (Canoes moved their fastest with the currents toward Tenochtitlán.) They were more often used for food because one man could propel the cheap and bulky cargo more cheaply than several porters could.

Perishable goods were usually transported at night to preserve them. Thus, the lakes around Tenochtitlán were usually crowded 24 hours a day. The canals inside Tenochtitlán allowed house-to-house delivery.

Canoe traffic was least active in the late winter and spring dry periods, when the shrinking lakes could be cut off from each other. In the summer, canoe traffic could be hampered by lake weeds that quadrupled normal travel times.

Canoeists typically charge \$5 per load of 50 lbs. or \$15 per person per one-way trip. The canoeists belonged to a highly specialized guild. Certain guild members only launched boats. Others only loaded and unloaded cargo. Still others only managed the size of the cargo.

Canoes were sometimes used in combat, such as during the defense of Tenochtitlán against the Spaniards. In such cases, the number of warriors carried ranged from 1 to 12, with an average of 6. For combat purposes, use 1-2 for Movement and -1 for Maneuverability for canoes.

Action	Modifier
Feast held on 7 Monkey or 1 Crocodile	+1
Critical failure of musicians	-1
Critical success of musicians	+1

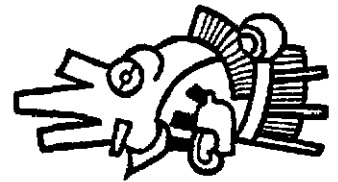
Then, to determine the judgement of the older merchants, roll on the Merchant Banquets specialty again, using only the food and gift modifiers. Success means that many leftovers exist and the merchant can rise in rank. A failure means no leftovers; the *pochteca* will never rise in rank and can never organize another feast. He suffers a permanent -3 reaction in the trading community.

Slave-Bathing Modifiers

Use the appearance of the least attractive slave as a modifier for all rolls. Every level above average is a bonus, while every level under average is a penalty. For example, if all the slaves appear handsome, use +2.

Roll for success four times: once each for the Announcement, Display, Bathing and Sacrificial feasts. Modifiers apply only to the feast in which they appear. These modifiers apply to the gifts for the first banquet only and replace the usual food and gift modifiers.

Cost of Gifts	Modifier
Under \$10,000	-4
\$10,001 – \$20,000	-3
\$20,001 – \$30,000	-2
\$30,001 – \$40,000	-1
\$40,001 – \$50,000	0
\$50,001 – \$60,000	+1
Over \$60,000	+2



For the Display Feast only, roll also against the lowest Dancing and Singing skill of the slave group. A critical failure is a terrible display and means a permanent -1 reaction from all guests and a -2 on the Display Feast roll for success. A normal failure means a -1 to the roll. A critical success means a +1 reaction from all guests until the next feast and a +1 to the Display Feast success roll. The slave performance is so good that the nobles will demand to buy the slaves. The GM should determine the wealth of the bidding noble. The merchant may set any price for his slaves that is not beyond the means of the bidding noble.

Banquet Example

Axolohua (Salamander) has a Merchant Banquets skill of 15 and decides to throw the four feasts of the slave-bathing ritual. He is Very Wealthy.

For the occasion, he has bought two male and two female slaves, all of whom have a handsome appearance, giving him +2. The least skilled of these slaves has a Singing skill of 15 and a Dancing skill of 14. The slaves cost a total of \$16,000.

For the Announcement Feast, he invites three dignitaries. He automatically gets +2 for the handsome appearance of his slaves. Because he has previously distributed \$60,000 worth of gifts to the city's top officials, he adds +2, bringing total modifiers to +4. For success, Axolohua needs a 19 (skill of 15 + 4) or less. (But remember that a roll of 17 or 18 is always a failure.) He rolls a 15 to impress the dignitaries by the quality of this feast.

For the Display Feast, he rolls 11 on three dice to invite 550 (11×50) guests. Axolohua can afford only \$10 per person (\$5,500 total) for food (no modifier) and only \$10 per person (\$11,000 total) on gifts (-5). The slaves now sing and dance. The least skilled one sings beautifully (regular success: no modifier) and dances magnificently (critical success: +1 toward success of this feast, and +1 reaction from all guests until the next feast). Axolohua needs a 13 (15 + 2 - 5 + 1) or less. He rolls 12, barely making this a successful feast.

Unfortunately, the excellent rendition prompts a noble to bid for the most skilled of the women slaves. The nobleman is not particularly rich, so Axolohua offers the slave for \$4,000, his break-even point. The merchant receives +1 for his

Merchant skill and +1 for the slave's performance. He rolls a 9 + 2, making 11, a neutral reaction. The nobleman accepts the offer and leads the slave away. Though Axolohua is out one slave, he still has enough to continue the ritual.

For the Bathing Feast, Axolohua rolls 10 on three dice to invite 500 (11x50) guests. Axolohua can afford \$10 per person (\$5,000 total) for food (no modifier) and \$30 per person (\$15,000) on gifts (-3). Axolohua makes the exact roll of 14 (15 + 2 - 3), making this success a close one.

For the final Sacrificial Feast, Axolohua rolls 8 on three dice to invite only 400 (8x50) guests. Axolohua receives no modifier for food, because he spends \$10 per person (\$4,000 total). Not wanting to risk failure at this point, Axolohua spends \$50 per person (\$20,000) in gifts (no modifier). He needs a 17 (15 + 2) and rolls a 12. His final feast is a great success.

Barring any unforeseen interference by nobles, Axolohua will advance in rank upon the sacrifice of his slaves.

The Higher Ranks

The slave sacrificer was now a respected member of the merchant community. He could become an elder, consulted for his wisdom by up-and-coming youngsters. Or he could rise further to become a slave dealer. This *tecouanime* was the richest of merchants, often raiding non-Aztec tribes or kidnapping children. The slave dealer could advance to market judge, chief merchant, or eventually to *pochtecatlailotlac*, the supreme chief of all the merchants.

A merchant guard could rise to the equal of the slave sacrificer's rank without going through the expensive slave-bathing ritual. By capturing four enemies, he rose to *teyahualonime*, a surrounder of the enemy. Or by traveling once to a foreign land, he became a *naualoztomeca*, a disguised merchant. From these positions, the guard could aspire to become the *acxotecatl*, merchant general, the highest-ranking of the merchant guards and co-leader of the merchant council.

Those in the higher ranks received many gifts and invitations from merchants wanting career advancement. They were also often consulted by the Great Council, or even became part of it. They had many audiences with the emperor.

Caravans

An experienced caravan leader headed the typical expedition with support from independent merchants and apprentices. Porters carried goods on their backs. Investment capital came from older merchants, female *pochtecas*, and even the emperor. For example, on one expedition alone, Emperor Auitzotl invested 1,600 large capes and rich clothing. Caravans ranged from three-person groups to an army of dozens, on day trips to the next town or month-long travels to hostile lands.

The Journey

The caravan leader consulted with the local soothsayer to decide the best days for departure. 1 Crocodile, 1 Monkey and 7 Snake were always good, but other days might be equally propitious for a given trip. For instance, 1 Motion would be a good day for medicine traders, while 1 Flower (good for goldworkers and lapidaries) would probably benefit a caravan trading in jewelry.

On the night before leaving, expedition members cut their hair and bathed. They would not wash their heads nor wash or cut their hair until they returned.

At midnight, the merchants sacrificed quails, their own blood and paper onto their home hearths. Papers that only sputtered (a failure on the Sacrifice roll) predicted a bad journey. Papers that burned quickly (success on the Sacrifice roll) with much smoke portended a profitable journey.

A feast before dawn celebrated the departure. Novice or poor merchants invited only a few merchants of their district. Richer merchants invited the merchant chiefs, the disguised merchants, the slave sacrificers and slave dealers. Amid farewell speeches and warnings, the guests wished the expedition members good luck.

Adventure Ideas

Party Spoilers

It is rumored that a group of uninvited nobles are planning to disrupt a Song Feast tomorrow. They are enemies of the PC throwing the feast. The adventurers can choose to deal with the problem when it arises during the banquet. After all, it is only a rumor. But a serious disruption could prevent the PC's rise in rank.

The merchants can also choose to confront the nobles today and persuade them not to interfere. Unfortunately, if the rumor is false, the accusation could prove to be a serious embarrassment to all concerned.

A final alternative is to threaten the use of force. Not only is this a serious breach of etiquette, but the nobles may respond in kind.

Bandit Bait

Two caravans have disappeared on a newly profitable trading route far from Aztec territory. Even the porters, usually immune from violence, have not returned. The adventurers must discover the cause of the disappearance by leading a small caravan stocked with worthless goods. Will they discover bandits financed by a foreign capital, a conspiracy by the porters, or an unknown terror?

A Feather In His Cape

While leading a merchant caravan, the PCs discover a primitive town whose main export is an iridescent feather, unavailable elsewhere. They trade them to other towns in this backwoods area in exchange for food and other necessities. The party trades for a quantity of these feathers and take them back to Tenochtitlán.

The feathers cause a sensation among the nobility and are quickly sold for a handsome profit, even after the emperor takes nearly half to incorporate into his new cape. The emperor charges the merchants with convincing the town to join the empire. Their only required tribute item will be the feathers. The *pochtecas* will be richly rewarded for their efforts.

A little judicious spying will uncover a few things about the town that make this diplomatic mission complicated. If the town pays all its bird feathers as tribute, it will lose its only source of income and be reduced to poverty. The town is composed of survivors of an Aztec attack that occurred many years ago. Though its inhabitants will grudgingly trade with the *pochtecas*, they would all rather die than submit to the will of the emperor.

Finally, the feather comes from a rare species of bird, which feeds on a special mushroom that can be grown only in the town using special techniques. If the Aztecs attack, the inhabitants will destroy the mushroom farm, the birds will die and the emperor will not get his feathers.



Sample Pochtecas

**Ocatli (Laughing Falcon),
Caravan Leader**

Age 21, 5'5", 135 lbs., black hair, dark eyes.

ST 9, DX 11, IQ 14, HT 10

Basic Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 5; Block 5.

Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1.

Advantages: Status 3 (caravan leader); Literacy. Ocatli is saving 5 points to pay for the increased status when he passes the slave-bathing rituals.

Disadvantages: Overconfident; Stubborn; Dependent (slightly competent wife)

Skills: Administration-17; Area Knowledge (Yucatán)-14; Broadsword-10; Carousing-11; Diplomacy-14; Gesture-14; Leadership-13; Merchant-19; Sacrifice-15; Savoir-Faire-16; Savoir-Faire (Merchant Banquets)-15; Shield-11; Theology-10.

Languages: Náhuatl-14, Yucatéc-14.

Weapons: None owned. One-handed *macauitl* (1d cutting damage) typically supplied by the guild for caravans.

Equipment: Shield typically supplied by the guild for caravans.

Ocatli's bravado and persistence has enabled him to rise quickly in the merchant guild. However, it has often annoyed both suppliers and customers. He recognizes his failings and often staffs his caravans with more experienced merchants whose counsel he can trust.

Continued on next page . . .

Still cloaked in darkness, the caravan loaded up into boats and left the city without looking back. In friendly areas, merchants traveled in one day only as far as the next town, an average of 13-18 miles away. Once there, the caravan recruited fresh porters from the local porter's guild.

In dangerous areas, the expeditions traveled only at night. They brought long-distance porters and merchant guards. Until they reached the neutral ground of a market town, merchants were fair game to enemy warriors and bandits.

If a *pochteca* died en route, his companions painted his face black and red. They then dressed the body in ornaments and paper and bound it to a carrying frame. The corpse was propped up on a mountain top; it was said he had not died but followed the sun to heaven. When the caravan returned, the family of the dead merchant cremated his body in effigy and held services.

The best days for a caravan to return were 1 and 7 House. An expedition would often wait at a nearby town so that they could enter the city on a lucky day. Under darkness, they slipped in by canal, with goods hidden under hides and cloth. They did not want potential thieves or jealous nobles to discover that they were wealthy traders. If questioned, the *pochteca* would deny owning the goods. He said that they were the property of the merchant chief. These goods never reached the merchant's house but instead went to the house of a friend or relative. The caravan leader reported their safe arrival to the merchant chief as the other caravan members placed their now-sacred walking sticks at the district temple. Meanwhile, the apprentices organized the Washing of the Feet feast to welcome the expedition.

Trade Routes

The *pochtecas* traded as far south as Guatemala and may have gone as far north as the Chaco Canyon of New México. The most important trade route went north from Tlatelolco, across the lake, to Teotihuacán, and around Tlaxcala to Tlaxtepec.

From there the route split. One path continued to the Pacific coast around Tehuantepec. Another route went north to the Xicalango, where the Chontal Maya controlled the sea trade around the coast of Yucatán. These people brought coral, seashells, jade, feathers and jaguar skins in their canoes.

Trade Monopolies

Imperial policies ensured the successful monopolies of the *pochtecas*, especially those from Tenochtitlán. Only that city's merchants could trade everywhere. Non-imperial merchants were forbidden to trade in the empire at all.

The best provincial luxuries flooded into the city as tribute. Moctezuma often awarded these tribute goods to deserving nobles. In turn, they sold these items cheaply to merchants just to get rid of them. When caravans brought tribute goods to the emperor, he sometimes chose only the best, leaving the rest to expedition members. This gave the *pochtecas* a source of free or cheap goods that they could trade below production cost.

To protect the jobs of city artisans, merchants dumped these cheap goods only in provincial and foreign markets. Outside artisans, discouraged by the low prices of artistic goods, stopped producing merchandise for sale. This made traders the only source of luxury outside Tenochtitlán. Attracted by higher art prices, many artisans moved to the capital, making it the artistic capital of the empire.

Trade Rolls

Use the rules for buying and selling (pp. B64, B190). Note that while deals can be struck anywhere, the actual exchange of goods and money must take place in a marketplace.

To get really cheap goods, the buyer must be trading in Tenochtitlán or Tlatelolco. If he rolls a critical success, then within 1d days he is offered additional goods equivalent in value to those he is buying. However, the cost of these new goods is only 1d×10% of the original price. If the merchant will not be in

Tenochtitlán then, the goods will be offered on his return. He must still buy the original goods.

For example, Ocatli rolls a critical success on his Merchant skill when buying \$10,000 worth of mantles in Tenochtitlán. Rolling a die for time, he gets a 4; within 4 days, he is offered an imperial surplus of \$10,000 worth of pottery. Rolling a die to determine the price, he gets a 3; he can buy these new goods for only 30% of the original price, or \$3,000. Note that these are wholesale prices.

Diplomacy and Spying

Pochtecas often passed messages of good or ill will between the empire and dignitaries of other towns. At the emperor's request, merchants often hinted that a town should begin paying tribute to Tenochtitlán. The caravan would conveniently offer to transport that tribute for free. Reactions to these messages can be rolled normally.

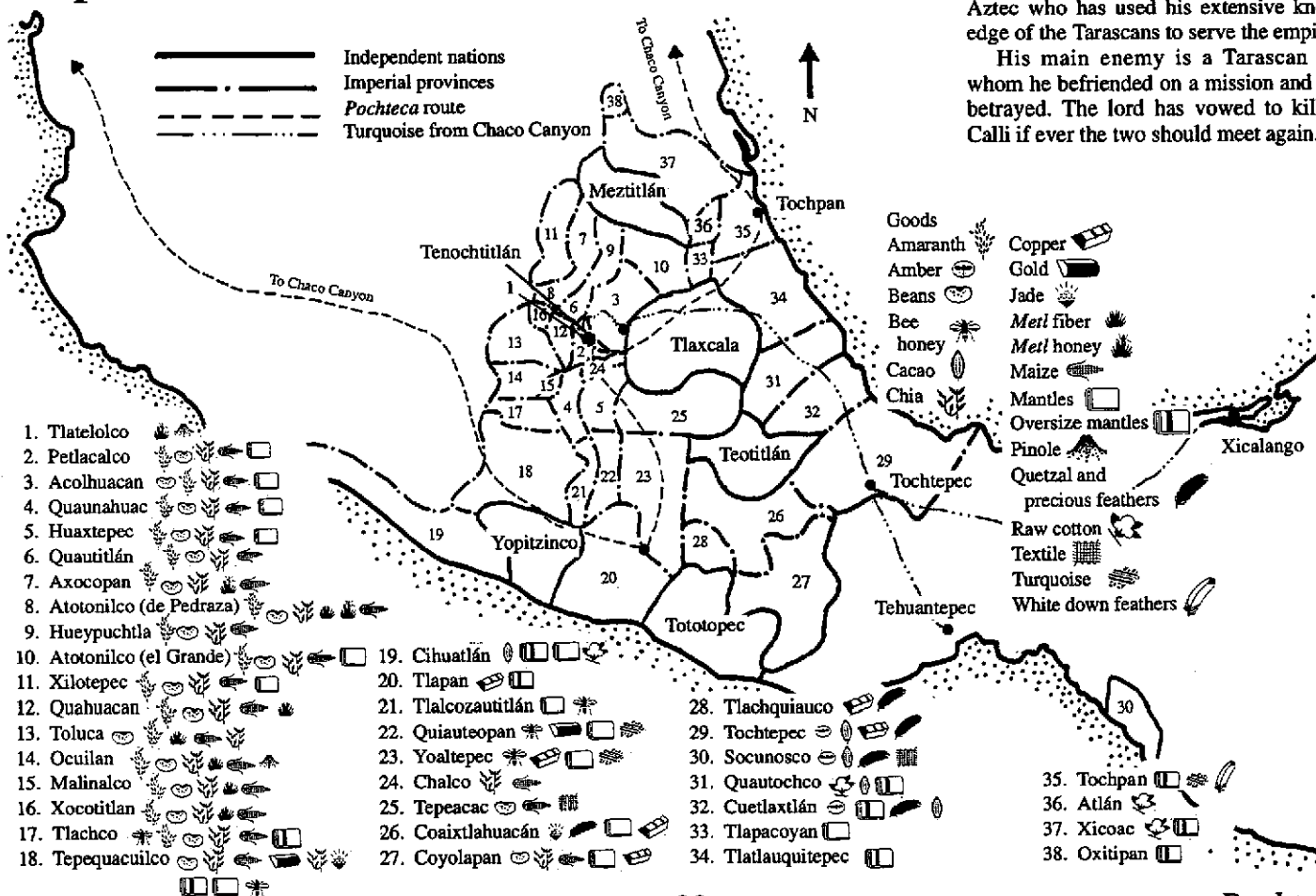
Merchants were often asked to start a fight with a town the emperor wanted to annex. Killing a *pochteca*, or even being rude to a merchant of high rank, was excuse enough for the Aztecs to declare war. An unpopular *pochteca*, or one with powerful enemies, could be set up as the victim in such a ploy . . . this is excellent adventure material.

A traveling merchant was typically asked to deport unusual activities in any town to his merchant chief. But most information was gathered by the disguised merchants, who traveled in small groups.

The GM should roll against the spy's Disguise skill to see if he is discovered. Discovered spies may be killed on the spot, without trial, or taken for a quick sacrifice.

The disguised merchant did his best to avoid death, unlike other members of Aztec society. His duty to the Emperor, to return with information and advice, was far more important than

Imperial Provinces and Goods



Sample Pochtecas (Continued)

Ce Calli (One House), Disguised Merchant

Age 30, 5'6", 135 lbs., black hair, dark eyes.

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 11.

Basic Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 5; Block 6.

Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d.

Advantages: Disguised merchant (status 3 at 15 points).

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (unmarried); Enemy (Tarascan lord).

Quirks: Likes chocolate with honey; Kind toward street kids; Solitary; Likes to tell ethnic jokes about Otomís; Carries a lucky amulet.

Skills: Acting-14; Area Knowledge (Tarascan domains)-14; Broadsword-11; Carousing-12; Diplomacy-15; Disguise-16; Gesture-14; Leadership-10; Merchant-11; Merchant Banquets-11; Sacrifice-13; Shield-12; Streetwise-12; Theology-12.

Languages: Náhuatl-11, Tarascan-13.

Weapons: One-handed Tarascan sword (1d+1 cutting damage).

Equipment: Tarascan shield. Clothing and goods typical to a Tarascan merchant, amulet made of hummingbird feathers.

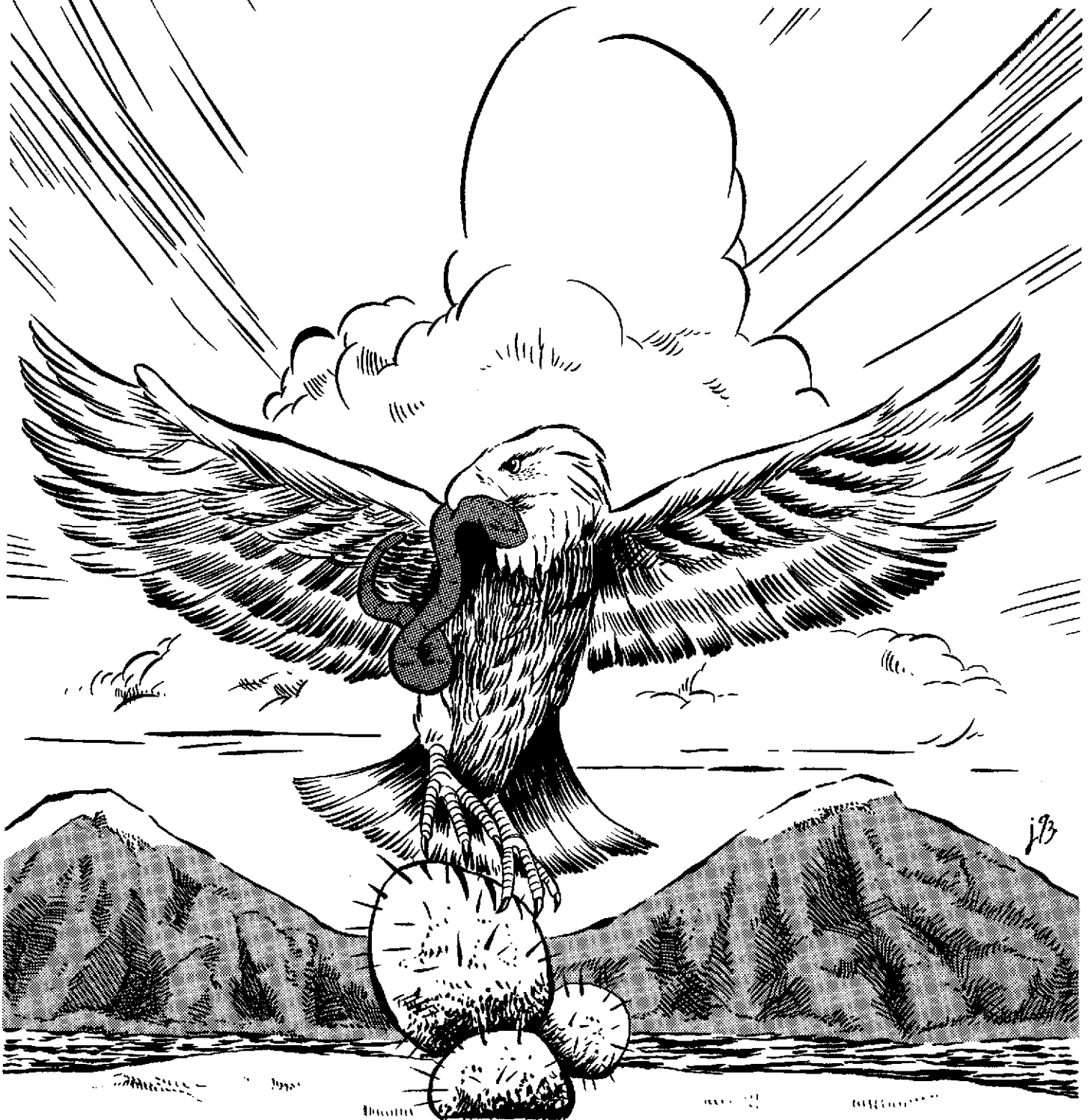
Ce Calli lived the first eight years of his life as an orphaned street rat in Tzintzuntzan. He was then adopted by an Aztec *pochteca* couple who kept him in relative luxury. He has since become a loyal Aztec who has used his extensive knowledge of the Tarascans to serve the empire.

His main enemy is a Tarascan lord whom he befriended on a mission and then betrayed. The lord has vowed to kill Ce Calli if ever the two should meet again.

8

HISTORY

Because designations for Aztec calendar years repeated once every 52 years, we cannot be sure which Western years correspond to the Aztec years. Thus, many dates differ from history book to history book. For more information on Aztec history, consult the sources listed on p. 126.



Prehistory

About 30,000 to 40,000 years ago, people from Asia migrated into the Americas using the land bridge across the Bering Strait. By about 25,000 B.C., they had spread throughout México. Around 8000-7000 B.C., many of these hunters and gatherers formed permanent agricultural settlements. The domestication of several plants such as gourds, squash, avocados and beans followed soon after. Maize, which quickly became a staple, was domesticated in 5000 B.C.

These developments set the stage for the first civilizations of México. Archaeologists and historians divide pre-Conquest history into three eras: the Pre-Classic (1700-200 B.C.), Classic (200 B.C.-900 A.D.) and Post-Classic (900 A.D. to the Conquest).

Pre-Classic Civilizations

During the Pre-Classic period, Mexican civilization began with villages and flowered with the foundation of temples, cities and writing. Village chiefdoms expanded into more complex societies, religion evolved to produce sophisticated funeral practices, and earthenware and handicrafts were produced and traded across regional networks.

Olmecs

The greatest Pre-Classic civilization, the Olmecs, lived on the Gulf Coast from 1500 B.C. to 200 B.C. All Mesoamerican cultures rose from this founding civilization. Their many contributions included the calendar, astronomy, numbers and the beginnings of writing. They spread their influence through religion and trade, not war. Their chief exports were art objects fashioned from jade.

The heavy rainfall of the Gulf area produced bountiful crops but frequent flooding. To protect against rising waters, the Olmecs built on islands or mounds, using earth or clay. Because stone had to be imported from many miles away, it was reserved only for sculpture.



Timeline

The timeline covers only the major points of Aztec history up to the Conquest and a few of the civilizations before it. Many pre-Conquest dates are speculative; the Aztecs rewrote their history often.

8000-7000 B.C.: Nomadic hunters and gatherers develop stable agricultural settlements, primarily in the highlands.

5000 B.C.: Maize is domesticated.

1700-200 B.C.: Pre-Classic Period.

1200-200 B.C.: Olmec civilization thrives.

200 B.C.-900 A.D.: Classic Period. Mayans, Teotihuacanos and Zapotecs flourish.

300-600: Teotihuacán pyramids built.

600: Teotihuacán is overthrown.

750: Quetzalcóatl heads east on a raft of snakes.

900: Post-Classic Period begins.

955: According to Aztec history, the first Age, the Age of Jaguars, begins.

10th-11th Century: Toltecs reach the height of civilization at Tula.

1111: Aztecs leave Aztlán.

1200: Toltec state collapses, forcing settled tribes to wander. Many wandering tribes move into the Valley of México.

1299: Aztecs reach Chapultepec.

1319: Expelled from Chapultepec, Aztecs proceed to Colhuacán.

1343: After sacrificing a princess of Colhuacán, the Aztecs are expelled.

1345: Tenochtitlán founded. The year 1325 is also given as the founding of México.

1358: Tlatelolco is founded.

1418: Tepanecs conquer Texcoco.

1426: Tezozómoc, Tepanec leader, dies.

1427: Itzcóatl of Tenochtitlán and Nezaualcóyotl of Texcoco lead Aztecs against the Tepanecs.

1430: Aztec faction wins. Conquest of Azcapotzalco.

1431: Burning of ancient historical records by order of Itzcóatl.

1433: Triple Alliance formed; Tenochtitlán, Texcoco and Tlacopan are capitals.

1440: Aztec conquests begin.

1441: Mayan capital Mayapán destroyed.

1450: Moctezuma I sends 60 sorcerers to find the legendary city of Aztlán.

1451-1454: Great Famine. Beginning of Flower Wars.

1465: End of Chalco wars. Mexican state annexes last independent Chalcán territories. Chapultepec aqueduct and other hydraulic works constructed.

1472: Nezaualcóyotl of Texcoco dies. He is succeeded by his son, Nezaualpilli.

1473: Tlatelolco rebels and is defeated by Tenochtitlán.

1487: Tenochtitlán Great Temple dedicated.

1500: The Great Flood.

1502: Moctezuma II becomes emperor.

1507: Last New Fire ceremony in Tenochtitlán.

1510-1511: Moctezuma II conquers Mixtec highlands and lowlands.

1515: Nezaualpilli of Texcoco dies. Cacamac becomes king of that city.

1519-1525: Spanish conquest of the Aztecs.

Rewriting History

Many events of the Aztec past contradicted their claim of being the superior civilization of Anahuac. For example, their barbarian origins contradicted their lofty image of coming from a mythical Aztlán and of inheriting the superior Toltec culture.

So, around 1431, Emperor Itzcoatl ordered all codices burned so that a more appropriate version of their history could be written. In particular, he extended Aztec glories well into the past, so his kingdom would seem ancient and wise. He also tried to burn the codices of other kingdoms, but without success. Many Texcocans delighted in baiting Aztec braggarts to remind them of their true barbarian origins. The GM should feel free to create alternate histories for the Aztecs and to change dates to keep Aztec-knowledgeable players guessing. Or he can send PCs on missions to destroy rival nations' archives.

A Wizard Talks To A Were-Jaguar

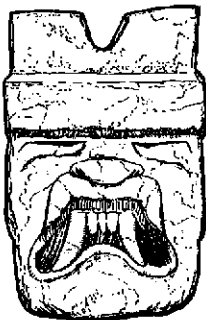
"Don't jump all over me for being frightened. I've never talked to a were-jaguar – not even one that used to be human. The mask you put on, did it look like this one? You found it in the Olmec ruins too? This one's a dud. But I knew that before buying it – used Detect Magic on it. Only about a quarter of them work nowadays.

"The good news is a magic word will turn that mask off. The bad news is, that word is lost through time. Hey! You try to bite me again and you're out of my house. Really? And who's going to change you back if you do kill me?"

"All I need to use is a Remove Enchantment spell. It's just a Shapeshifting enchantment. Your clothes and the mask should reappear again but the mask won't work any more. Go sell it to an art collector.

"So, how will you pay for my help?"

For more information on were-jaguars, see p. 105; Detect Magic, see p. B162; Remove Enchantment, see p. B160; and shapeshifting, see p. 75.



The Olmecs created the first planned ceremonial centers of Mesoamerica, which housed only the nobility. The masses of people who supported them lived in surrounding villages.

Though the Olmecs worshiped gods similar to Quetzalcóatl and Xipe Totec, their main cult focused on jaguars, the most important of which were the rain deities. They were represented as were-jaguars, combining infantile bodies and down-turned lips with jaguar fangs.

Classic Civilizations

The Classic era saw the development of planned urban centers and the perfection of astronomy, mathematics and writing. It was the golden age of art: mural painting, ceramics and mosaics were popular. Highly religious and structured societies developed, as well as sophisticated guilds, traders and markets.

Three cultures reached their peak at this period: the Maya in the Yucatán, the Zapotec of Monte Albán in the southwest coast and the Teotihuacano in Central México.

Classic Maya

The Mayans rose above all others during the Classic Period, influencing later civilizations with their discoveries. Among their notable achievements was a calendar more accurate than that of the Europeans at the time. They were also one of only two civilizations on Earth to discover the number zero.

Much of Mayan history remains unknown because so little of their writing has been deciphered. Only three of their codices survive to the present day, the rest having been burned by an overzealous cleric during the Spanish Conquest. Much of Mayan information comes from archaeological examination of the Mayan centers.

Classic centers had the temples, palaces and ball courts of the Aztec cities. Many were also fortified with wet or dry moats or walls. But unlike their Central México counterparts, Mayan cities were typically ceremonial centers, housing only the priests and the nobility. The bulk of the population, who supported these elite, lived in surrounding villages.

These cities also differed in that they were built primarily of cut limestone, softened by stucco. Ceremonial buildings were joined by *sachas* or white ways, which were elevated 15 feet above the landscape. The stucco paving made the roads very visible, even in the dark.

Mayan sanctuaries were also perched on pyramid-like structures. Unlike most Mesoamerican civilizations, however, these temples often hid the tombs of kings and dignitaries. Ceremonial offerings of jade, seashells and other valuable materials were often found inside the temple altars or just beneath the temple floors.

Overpopulation, revolt and war eventually destroyed the Mayan cities. Many remained forgotten and abandoned. These cities make prime targets for Post-Classic treasure hunters such as Aztecs.

After the Classic

Some Mayan cities gained pre-eminence after the fall of the Classic Maya. Chichén Itzá grew wealthy in the 10th and 11th centuries from trade. With two other cities, Uxmal and Mayapán, it formed an alliance that ruled the Yucatán for 200 years.

By 1194, Mayapán assumed total control in a civil war. In 1441, Mayapán's subject tribes revolted and sacked the city. The Mayans disintegrated into several independent states afterward (see p. 44).

Zapotecs of Monte Albán

Located on a defensible hilltop, the picturesque city of Monte Albán once reigned as the capital of the Zapotec culture. With over 2,000 artificial terraces for

both housing and agriculture, this mountain city once covered 15 square miles and boasted a population of 24,000 during its height from 250 A.D. to 500 A.D.

The city was primarily an administrative center. Hereditary nobles, reinforced by religion, led this warlike culture in conquering other tribes in the immediate Oaxaca region. The people worshiped Xipe Totec and Quetzalcóatl, as well as maize, snake and jaguar deities. They had a strong relationship with the Teotihuacanos. Many bas-reliefs show Teotihuacán emissaries conferring with Zapotec nobles. This association may have required Teotihuacán to reserve a district for immigrants from Monte Albán.

Monte Albán also had Mesoamerica's first necropolis. Over 70 tombs, built of masonry slab, have been found, mostly beneath courtyard floors. Most were entered through a flight of stairs. The typically rectangular tombs each held a single body, with niches in the wall for valuable personal effects.

Almost alone in Mesoamerica, the Zapotec physicians practiced skull surgery. At least ten skulls show drilling, cutting and scraping of the bone. One individual endured five such operations. The undeciphered hieroglyphs may reveal advanced medical techniques forgotten by Aztec times.

The Zapotecs excelled in ceramic and pottery. Their other arts, such as jade carving, were somewhat simple and crude.

In 800 A.D., Monte Albán declined for unknown reasons. Its Zapotec inhabitants moved their capital to a nearby city and remained there until the Conquest. Mixtec invaders who later conquered the Zapotecs sometimes used the city tombs.

Teotihuacanos

During the Classic Period, the city of Teotihuacán flourished in Central México. According to Aztec tradition, this city was built by a race of giants in the previous age, who were wiped out when that age ended. The gods later met there to create the current age.

In reality, the city foundations were laid in 150 B.C. by villagers whose agricultural advances doubled their numbers every generation. By 400 A.D., Teotihuacán reached its maximum population of 125,000 to 200,000 and its maximum size of 12 square kilometers.

The Teotihuacanos were highly structured: the priests led, followed by artists, farmers, and finally, warriors. It was the first true city of México, with nearly two-thirds of the society living within its boundaries. Even the farmers lived within urban limits and commuted to nearby fields.

The city controlled a large obsidian deposit nearby, which provided artistic materials and export goods. Craftsmen also imported turquoise, jade, cinnabar and other exotic stones from far regions of México. These they converted into small art objects, which they then sold through Mesoamerica. Cultural influence worked both ways: Teotihuacán motifs and sculpture decorated many Mayan cities, and Mayan influences in turn embellished this city.

Two city structures drew visitors from all over Anahuac. The 200-foot-tall Pyramid of the Sun attracted the religious while the marketplace brought in merchants.

By 750 A.D., the city was mysteriously abandoned. Some speculate that the people simply ran out of natural resources. Scorched buildings also suggest that a war tore the city apart.

By the time of the Aztecs, Teotihuacán, even in its abandoned state, remained a destination for religious pilgrims and a convenient starting point for merchant caravans. It is said that even Moctezuma II made a pilgrimage to this spot when his mind was troubled by the omens that presaged the Spanish Conquest.

Exploring the Ruins

Teotihuacán can serve as a typical ruin for adventurers to explore. The GM may lay out its structures as he wishes. By Aztec times, even the original names of the buildings were lost, and many of them were wholly buried under dirt and cactus. The locations of the main temples were well-known. However, the en-

Mayan Ruins

The Mayan area is littered with many ruins, mostly undiscovered. Only a few are described here – the GM should feel free to create new cities. Because most Mayan ruins will be ceremonial centers, adventurers are most likely to encounter only idols, religious items and the trappings of wealth. Adventurers searching for ancient art, weapons, or magic items would need to search the surrounding settlements, where the rest of the population lived.

Today many of these ruins are restored and cleaned. However, during Aztec times, jungle and forest covered the old structures, making them hard to penetrate. Many pyramids may look like forested hills rather than structures. Persistent explorers may need to dig to find long-buried entrances. Dates listed by the title of each ruin show when it flourished.

While each ruin's treasure will commonly consist of featherwork, jade, art works, seashells and precious stones, some may have valuables that can be found nowhere else.

Bonampak (700-900)

Bonampak was a small and unimportant ceremonial center, but its structures reveal the best mural paintings in Mesoamerica. The people in these paintings are realistic, with expressive faces and bodies ranging from athletic youth to paunchy age.

Treasure: Painters who study the murals in detail may find techniques that will enable them to revolutionize their own works (see *Improvement Through Study*, p. B82.) Such paintings will be unique in the Aztec world and will command high prices.

Chichén Itzá (5th-7th, 10th-11th centuries)

Chichén Itzá was located near two large cenotes or watering holes. Because these holes were viewed as conduits to the gods, the city became a place of pilgrimage. Valuable objects and people were often thrown into the water as sacrifices.

Tradition relates that Quetzalcóatl stopped in this city on his journey from Tula to the east. This seems to be supported by the Toltec influence in the city's art. Many scenes show Toltecs dominating Maya tribes or riding boats paddled by Mayans.

Among the temples, ball court and skull rack, the largest structure in the city is the Temple of Kulkulkan (the Mayan word for Quetzalcóatl). The steps that run down all four sides of this pyramid add up to 365, the number of days in a year. The city's most unusual building is the Caracol, a circular tower resting on two rectangular terraces. A narrow spiral staircase within the tower leads to an observatory at the top.

Treasure: When conditions are right (as determined by the GM, such as during a full moon), the Caracol becomes a two-way gateway leading to a temple in Tula.

Continued on next page . . .

Mayan Ruins (Continued)

Copán (460-801)

At an altitude of over 2,000 feet, Copán's ideal climate made the city the host for regional conferences. Astronomers and priests from all over the Mayan world met here to discuss the sky, compare calculations and improve the calendar.

The city features complex ruins with pyramids, courtyards and temples, many joined by intricate stairways. The Stairway of Hieroglyphics has 63 steps, carved with a total of 2,500 glyphs. The ball court is one of the finest in existence.

Treasure: One temple details the number of eclipses of the planet Venus in a million years. Similar esoteric astronomical data are described in many glyphs. An unscrupulous astronomer can use this information to make it appear that he controls the heavens and thus influences Aztec policy. More ethical individuals can sell the information to scientists and priests for their calculations.

Mayapán (1000-1441)

Invaders from Central México built Mayapán as a fortress. It sits on barren rock, with a wall 12 feet thick and 12 feet high. Though housing was available outside the walls, the interior held a population of 20,000. The city's public buildings are undistinguished and haphazardly placed. There are no skull racks, ball courts, or sweatbaths, and the temples are small and crude.

Treasure: Mayapán fell within Aztec memory. Thus, its location is common knowledge, and it is probably stripped clean of any valuables. However, here and there, in isolated reliefs or well-hidden codices, are the genealogies of many important Mayan families. These may be useful in proving or disproving the claims of heirs.

Palenque (642-783)

Palenque has the finest stone sculptures of the known Mayan ruins. On one side, protecting the city, are the well-forested Chiapas mountains. Two tributaries of the Usumacinta River pass through its center and are incorporated into the urban plan.

The palace stands on a large base, fronted by a many-stepped staircase. It is crowned by a three-story tower that served as an astronomical observatory and defensive tower. Walls with strategic openings made this city easy to defend.

Treasure: The Temple of Inscriptions is one of the few pyramids in Mesoamerica specifically built as a tomb. Only keen eyesight (Vision roll at -5) will notice that the floor paving differs in one area. Lifting the paving reveals a stairway buried in rubble. This staircase leads to a vault 23 feet long, 23 feet high and 12 feet wide.

Continued on next page . . .

trances to the civic buildings and apartments can be only discovered by judicious digging or by accident.

The *Pyramid of the Sun* is the second largest pyramid, by volume, in México. It stood about 240 feet high and ran 675 feet on each side of its square base. A temple once sat at the top. Some narrow tunnels lead to a clover-leaf-shaped chamber. This room was probably plundered during the time of the Aztecs. More than likely this was once an earlier temple on top of a smaller pyramid, which was later buried by the larger pyramid.

Another recent discovery was a multi-chambered cave directly underneath the center of the pyramid. It was roofed over with basalt and its enlarged walls were plastered with mud. According to the Florentine Codex, this may have been a burial chamber for kings. Perhaps it once held rich treasures, long since looted by grave robbers. Some historians speculate that these were the original Seven Caves of Aztec legend.

Nearby is the *Palace of the Sun*, a multi-roomed complex that was probably the home of the pyramid's high priest. This palace features many colorful and decorative murals.

The *Citadel*, which the Aztecs thought was a great fortress, was actually the home of the city's priests and rulers. At one end stands the beautifully decorated Temple of Quetzalcóatl, a pyramid.

The *Avenue of the Dead* joins the Citadel, the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon. The Pyramid of the Moon is only 140 feet high. This too has mysterious interior rooms.

The *Palace of the Butterfly* is the most elaborate and important building in the entire city. Stairways rise to the patio on the second story, before descending into a completely enclosed first story. The first story has columns carved with butterflies and water, and murals of birds, conch shells and water.

Residential complexes. Most city-dwellers lived in sprawling, one-story apartment complexes that were mazelike in construction. Inhabitants of each complex were related by kinship or occupation, in much the same way as inhabitants of a *calpulli*. Each complex also included craft workshops as well as living areas. One such complex belonged to artisans from Monte Albán. Remains of their tools and art forms suggest that Teotihuacán had a close trading relationship with the mountain city.

Aztec adventurers will find the many buildings throughout the city similar to the homes and businesses of Tenochtitlán. Obsidian workers, featherworkers, priests, vendors, merchants, painters, stonemasons, cooks and other city dwellers once lived and worked here. Many of their tools and artifacts remain to be discovered.

Post-Classic Civilizations

The Post-Classic period was dominated first by the Toltecs and then by the Aztecs, who eventually succumbed to an alien civilization, the Spanish.

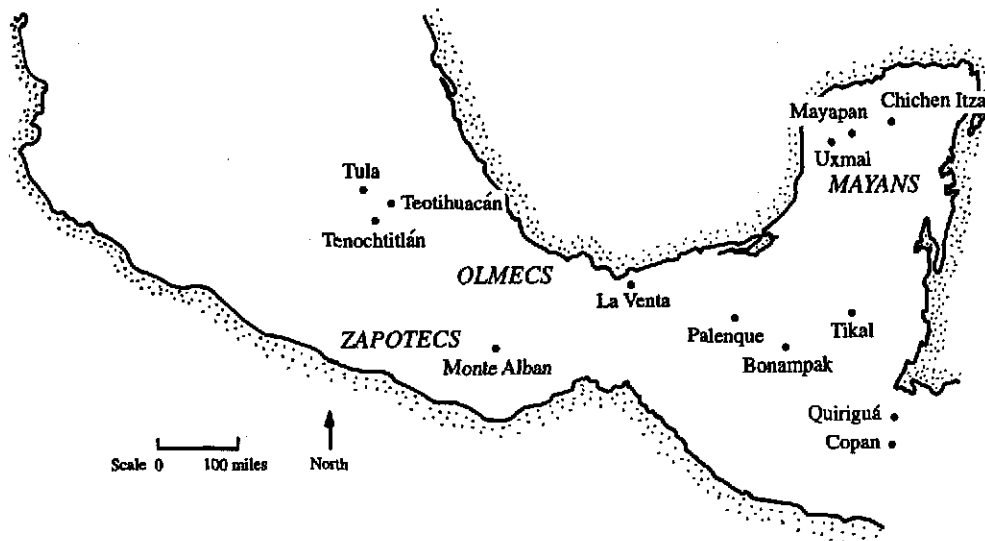
Toltecs

According to the Aztecs, the Toltecs were the first civilization of Anahuac. They developed many sciences such as medicine and astronomy. They were also skilled featherworkers, very religious and devout, and lived in a utopia where all were rich and happy. They were such skilled farmers that they grew cotton of different colors and raised birds with valuable plumage. The Aztecs fancied themselves direct descendants of the Toltecs.

In reality, the Toltecs were Chichimecs, who settled as early as 650 A.D. at the joining of two rivers. They called their city Tula, and themselves Toltecs, a name that means "artist." Unfortunately, they were anything but craftsmen. Toltec art pieces are stiff and crude, especially when compared with those of earlier cultures, such as the Teotihuacanos and Mayans.

The city grew rich on the obsidian mines that once belonged to Teotihuacán. Nearly 60,000 people lived there, raising food crops and converting local cotton

Major Ruins



into saleable cloth. In exchange for their fine green-tinged obsidian, they received luxury goods such as feathers, fruits and seashells from coastal towns.

Because the Toltecs worshiped Tezcatlipoca as their chief god, warriors formed a special caste of this militaristic society. However, their military conquests did not extend beyond their immediate area.

Before 1200, the Toltec civilization disintegrated for unknown reasons and barbarians destroyed their capital. This collapse sent many Chichimec tribes wandering across México. One of these tribes was the Aztecs.

Wandering

According to their own tradition, the Aztecs used to live in the fabled city of Aztlán. The god Huitzilopochtli then instructed his chosen people to found a new state. Seven *calpullis* followed his orders and left Aztlán. They stopped once at the mystical Seven Caves. (These caves were also the legendary point of origin of many Mexican tribes.) In this thorny area of wild beasts, they found a talking statue of their god, which gave them more instructions. The Aztecs bore the statue on their backs and continued on to Colhuacán (Curved Mountain) and Coatepec (Hill of the Snake) and finally into the Valley of México.

In truth, the Aztec were merely one of several barbarian tribes set to wandering by the fall of the Toltecs. They practiced temporary agriculture and hunting and their clothes were of crude *metl* fiber. Four priests, the highest social class of the tribe, carried an idol of Huitzilopochtli, dutifully setting it up and worshipping it wherever they stopped.

The Building of Tenochtitlán

By tradition, Huitzilopochtli instructed the Aztec wanderers to go to an island in the middle of the lakes in the Valley of México and await an omen. They found the omen in the form of an eagle perched on a cactus, eating its red fruit. The eagle represented the sun and the animal form of their deity and its heart-shaped meal represented human sacrifice. Here, they built their city and conquered the other inhabitants of the Valley.

Mayan Ruins (Continued)

In the center is the sarcophagus, covered with a carved slab 12 feet long, 6 feet wide and 10 inches thick. Resting inside is the skeleton of Lord Pacal, one of the city's best rulers. He has a piece of jade in his mouth and one in each hand. Each finger has a jade ring; each wrist has jade bracelets, and around his neck is a jade necklace. A beautiful mosaic mask of obsidian and seashell covers his face.

Quiriguá (692-810)

Quiriguá has few stone buildings and no pyramids. Its most important features are its many massive sandstone stelae – long, fat, stone poles, up to 25 feet tall, carved in bas-relief with glyphs, animals and people. Many are decorated with people and others feature strange animal and plant combinations. One mysterious glyph seems to say *something* about 90 million years.

Treasure: Does the 90-million-year date represent some time in the past . . . or future? Or is it a garbled measure of distance, pointing the way to an alien planet, populated by the creatures carved on the stela? Other glyphs may take their readers to the depicted times and places.

Tikal (3rd-7th centuries)

Tikal, the greatest of all Classic Mayan centers, was a true city with a population of 45,000 spread over 75 square miles. The center features pyramids and at least 80 stelae. Its snake-decorated architecture revealed strong connections with Teotihuacán.

Tikal architecture emphasizes height. Its tallest pyramid is over 200 feet tall and the palace rises five stories. The large buildings have high, pointed ceilings, with rooms less than a yard wide. Many walls are covered in glyphs.

Treasures: Most of the stelae depict richly-dressed rulers or priests. They were erected to commemorate specific events or the construction of buildings. Reading nearby glyphs will reveal that some stelae were actually evil sorcerers imprisoned in stone. The correct spell, accidentally read from other glyphs, can release them and their wrath.

Uxmal (987-1187)

Uxmal has two large pyramids and several beautifully-decorated buildings. Most impressive of these is the Governor's Palace, resting on a stepped terrace over 300 feet long by 80 feet wide. Like many buildings of the city, the outside walls of the palace are decorated with stone masks of the local rain god.

Treasure: Removing a stone mask reveals a secret compartment, which stores the god costume of the rain god's impersonator. The costume is enchanted with the spells of the deity, including most of the Water spells.

Tomb Guardians

Unlike some cultures, the Mesoamericans did not protect their tombs or temples with esoteric curses. Instead, false walls hid most treasures and immovable stones capped most tombs. However, sorcerers occasionally used armies of bees, spiders, scorpions, snakes and other creatures to fend off thieves. While only dozens of these animals may have originally guarded the valuables, over the succeeding generations they may have multiplied to thousands of dangerous adversaries, and perhaps mutated to more dangerous species.

A Guide Leads Adventurers

"I'm twelve but you'll find no better guide to Teotihuacán than me, sirs. I've played here since I was five. And for only \$10 too.

"The richer homes are by the main avenue here. The farther out you go, the poorer they become. What did I tell you – here's the door to the old palaces. Help me slide the wall open. Light your torches and watch your feet, sirs. It's tricky underground. Just follow me and you won't get lost.

"Wait here a minute, sirs. I forgot my magic powders upstairs. We'll need it for a couple of rooms. Don't move from this spot, sirs, or I won't find you again."

* * *

"HELLOOO! I'm up here. Above you – the hole in the ceiling. Miss me? Good. You see that basket I'm lowering down? Put all your money and jewels and weapons in it. After I bring it up, I'll let you out. What? Then you can stay down there. You won't find any treasure and you won't find any food or water and you won't find any way out. What, me afraid? I'm up here, outside, and you're down there, inside. You'll never catch me once you're out. I know this city better than you ever will.

"Yeah, the wall opens and closes easy – from outside. That's fine, I can wait all day and night.

"That's good, put it all in there. Feels heavy, like there's a lot. Listen, count to 500, slowly. Then go to the wall. Push it and it will open. Thanks very much, sirs!"

Tula

Tula covers six square miles and uses the multi-family complexes common in Teotihuacán. Its main palace features great columns that once supported a flat roof. A serpent wall surrounds the temple complex. At the stepped Temple of the Dawn Lord are four *atlantes*. These 15-foot-high columns represent warriors in full uniform.

The truth is a bit less fantastic. The Aztecs wandered from place to place, eking out a miserable existence. They even spent time at Tula, by then an abandoned wreck. When the Aztecs stumbled into the Valley, they discovered that all the good land had been taken by more civilized and more powerful tribes. They squatted in various cities such as Zumpango, Xaltocan and Ecatepec, only to be expelled when their savagery and crudity offended the local populace.

In the process, they picked up various gods, religions and customs. By the end of the 13th century, they found themselves in Chapultepec, a city of the powerful Tepanec empire, and just a few miles away from its capital, Acapotzalco. Annoyed by the quick growth of the Aztec population, the citizens of Chapultepec warred on them after a few years, sacrificed their ruler, and drove them out.

The Aztecs fled to Colhuacán, capital of the competing Acolhua empire. Feeling sorry for these wretched refugees, the Acolhuas set them up at Tizapan, a nearby village, where they were close enough to be watched and far enough away to avoid trouble. The Acolhuas also secretly hoped that the Aztecs would perish in that forsaken desert of volcanic rock, infested with wild animals and snakes.

Grateful to their new masters for this opportunity, the Aztecs used the snakes for food and set up housekeeping. Within a short time, they built temples and homes and were ruled by four priests, one of whom was called Tenoch. The Acolhuas were impressed enough by this that they attributed Aztec prosperity to divine intervention. They allowed the newcomers to trade freely in their markets and to intermarry with their citizens.

The Aztecs repaid their debt by asking for an Acolhua princess to marry their ruler and become queen and wife of their god. She was as beautiful as a precious necklace, which is what she became. The Aztecs sacrificed her to Huitzilopochtli and flayed her. A priest donned her skin for the coronation ball, to which her father, the emperor of the Acolhuas, was invited.

The Acolhua ruler was so furious that he drove the Aztecs out of their new village and into the middle of the swampy lake. This area bordered several other empires. The Acolhuas did not want to risk war because of these miserable savages, so they left the Aztecs alone, hoping that they would simply starve. The new settlement in the swamp became Tenochtitlán.

Empire Building

About 13 years after Tenochtitlán was founded in 1345, the swampy lake also supported another village, Tlatelolco (Place of Many Mounds). Both towns became tributaries and mercenaries of the Tepanec empire.

The two cities acted as one from the very beginning. Tlatelolco concentrated on trade and commerce while Tenochtitlán concentrated on war. The Aztec capital began with a village of mud and reed huts around a small temple to Huitzilopochtli. By the end of the 14th century, Tenochtitlán was building in stone and was large enough to ask for a chief from the surrounding mainland. (They had decided not to elect a ruler after the death of Tenoch.)

Their first ruler was Acamapichtli, the son of an Aztec nobleman and an Acolhua princess. Tlatelolco had as king a son of Tezozómoc, ruler of the Tepanec empire. Thus, these Aztec cities managed to associate themselves with both of the great empires of the Valley. Subsequent marriages also strengthened the Aztec relationship with other empires.

The Tepanec Empire

By the 1400s, the Tepanec empire had swallowed all the empires of the valley. It was ruled by Tezozómoc, a persuasive and shrewd statesman, who easily pitted foreign nations against each other, only to take over the remains. He often called on the capable Aztecs to help his wars of expansions. His councilors were dismayed at the growing power of this upstart vassal but Tezozómoc kept overruling and outliving them. He gradually reduced Aztec tribute to symbolic levels.

One of the important Tepanec conquests was that of the Acolhua empire, dominated by the city of Texcoco. In 1418, the heir to the Texcocan throne,

Nezaualcóyotl, hid in a tree and watched his father murdered by Tepanec soldiers. The youngster escaped with some followers to the mountains.

In 1422, he traveled to Tenochtitlán, at the behest of an aunt, an Aztec princess, and was taken under the wing of Itzcóatl, the son of the Aztec king. Nezaualcóyotl used his considerable diplomatic skills to become friendly with Tezozómoc. Eventually, the Tepanec emperor allowed the prince to return to Texcoco, though without any sovereign power.

In 1426, Emperor Tezozómoc finally died, after half a century of rule. His designated heir had the full support of the Aztecs. Unfortunately, another son, Maxtla, who hated the Aztecs, usurped the throne. This new emperor had none of the diplomatic skills of his father. He ruled through violence, thus alienating many allies. He reinstituted a heavy tax on Tenochtitlán, and assassinated its ruler and that of Tlatelolco. He also tried unsuccessfully to murder Nezaualcóyotl, who again escaped to the mountains.

Against the Tepanec Yoke

Tired of Maxtla's bullying, Itzcóatl, now the ruler of Tenochtitlán, easily found allies from the lakeside towns of Tlatelolco and Tlacopan, and from Nezaualcóyotl. He also asked two nations outside the valley, Tlaxcala and Huexotzinco, for an alliance.

By 1428, the allies had surrounded Acapotzalco, the imperial capital. After 114 days of siege, their chief general was killed. The army fled and the capital surrendered. The city fathers found Maxtla hiding in a sweatbath of the palace and dragged him before Nezaualcóyotl. They blamed the tyrant for all the wars and suffering. The Texcocan sacrificed Maxtla's heart with his own hand and then ordered that he be buried with all the ceremony befitting a great lord.

Tenochtitlán, Texcoco and Tlacopan formed the Triple Alliance and divided the Tepanec remains among themselves. The Aztecs suddenly realized that war was the key to power; almost overnight, warriors became the most important social class in Aztec society.

Nezaualcóyotl

When he ascended the throne, Nezaualcóyotl (Hungry Coyote) ushered in Texcoco's golden age. A skilled diplomat, engineer, philosopher and poet, he made his city the center of art, learning and justice, even as Tenochtitlán became the center of war and power. He built a dike across Lake Texcoco to control floods and a palace that was more magnificent than the one in Tenochtitlán. He initiated artistic competitions, especially in poetry, that attracted the best bards to his court. He himself was a master poet whose poems are renowned even in modern México.

Several harrowing escapes from death and injury gave him a reputation for divine protection, a reputation that he played up. In his teens, for example, the Tepanec king Maxtla ordered him strangled. Messengers duly followed these orders and presented the prince's head to the delighted tyrant. The next day, Nezaualcóyotl showed up alive and well. The wily prince had earlier convinced another boy to dress in royal robes and pretend he was the prince.

Nezaualcóyotl spent much of the tribute he received on the poor, the sick, the widows and orphans. In bad times, he often refunded the taxes of his citizens. He bought the unsold goods of the poorer vendors if they did not sell all their goods at the marketplace. He liked to wander among his people, disguised as a peasant or hunter, to listen to their complaints. He would then summon them to his palace and present them with gifts.

He built a magnificent palace with over 300 rooms. Chief of these was the audience room, dominated by a throne of gold and turquoise. Interspersed with courtyards and gardens were rooms for the courts, royal guard and royal archives. A special patio served as a university where philosophers, historians and poets could talk and teach.

In 1472, Nezaualcóyotl died a natural and much-mourned death. His chosen heir was seven-year old Nezaualpilli, who came under immediate threat from the

Aztlán

All that Aztecs knew of Aztlán, their legendary point of origin, was that it sat on an island in the middle of a lake, and that the inhabitants had to take canoes to the mainland. Historians have placed this island anywhere from a few miles off Tenochtitlán to all the way in California. The map on p. 5 shows its most likely position.

In 1450, Moctezuma I sent 60 sorcerers with gifts to find this city. They stopped at a hill called Coatepec in the province of Tula, summoning spirits through incantations. They begged the one that appeared to show them their magical city.

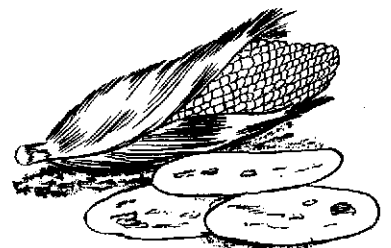
The spirit turned them into birds and animals and carried them to the shores of a lake. When the sorcerers assumed human form again, the locals confirmed that they were in Aztlán and brought them to the hill called Colhuacán. An old priest asked them to follow him up the hill. When the sorcerers obeyed, their feet sank deeper and deeper into the soft sand. Their indulgent lifestyles and rich foods had made them too heavy to negotiate the steep terrain.

The old priest took their gifts and scurried up the hill. He then came back for the sorcerers and carried them to the top with ease.

There they met an old, ugly and dirty woman named Coatlicue. She had not bathed nor changed her clothes since her son, Huitzilopochtli, left centuries ago. The sorcerers asked how she could live so long. She replied that no one ever died in Aztlán because they lived simply and because of the hill. The old priest demonstrated. He ran down one side of the hill and became a youth of 20. He ran up another side and became an old man again.

She warned them that the Aztecs had become old and tired because they were spoiled by mantles, feathers and chocolate. They would be ruined by their rich lifestyle and would eventually be conquered by a greater power.

When the sorcerers told Moctezuma I of what had transpired, he wept. He took the gift of Coatlicue, a plain *metl* mantle and loincloth, and placed it on the idol of Huitzilopochtli.



Rulers of Tenochtitlán

Founder: Tēnoch (Cactus)
1375: Acamapichtli (Handful of Reeds)
1395: Huitzilhuilitl (Hummingbird Feather)
1417: Chimalpopoca (Smoking Shield)
1427: Itzcóatl (Obsidian Snake)
1440: Moctezuma I (Angry Lord)
1469: Axayacatl (Face of Water)
1481: Tízoc (Bloodletter)
1486: Auítzotl (Otter)
1502: Moctezuma II (Angry Lord)
1520: Cuitláhuac (Keeper of the Kingdom)
1520-21: Cuáutemoc (Descending Eagle)

The Great Famine

In 1450, bad harvests were followed by a year of early frost that destroyed all the maize, the Aztec staple. Fortunately, maize reserves covered the losses. In 1452, frosts again destroyed the maize, followed by a drought that prevented seeds from being sown the next year. By 1454, no maize was to be had in Tenochtitlán or in the Valley of México.

Starvation killed many Aztecs, especially the elderly. Even vultures, rarely seen in the Valley, appeared in great numbers to feed on the dead.

The Gulf coasts suffered no such shortages, being blessed with rain and a lack of frosts. The Aztecs started selling themselves and their children to the people of the coast in exchange for maize. (Children could later be redeemed for the same amount of maize when the famine was over.) Waves of valley dwellers marched to the coast, shackled with the wooden collars of slavery.

Emperor Moctezuma I blamed this famine on the anger of the gods. When it was over, he decided to increase the supply of human sacrifices, so that the deities would never visit such wrath again. He found his limitless supply of captives by waging a perpetual war against the Tlaxcalans and Huexotzingans. Because these captives were more civilized and shared Aztec customs, they were also more pleasing to the gods. Thus began the Flower Wars, whose object was not conquest but to capture sacrificial meals for deities.

To underscore his intentions, the emperor also decreed that war was to be the main occupation of the Mexicas. Only warriors were to be treated as nobles and given their privileges. Those who did not go to war, even if they were sons of the emperor, were considered low-status citizens and would work as such.

Finally, Moctezuma assured his empire a more steady supply of food by conquering the eastern nations, where food remained in abundant supply.

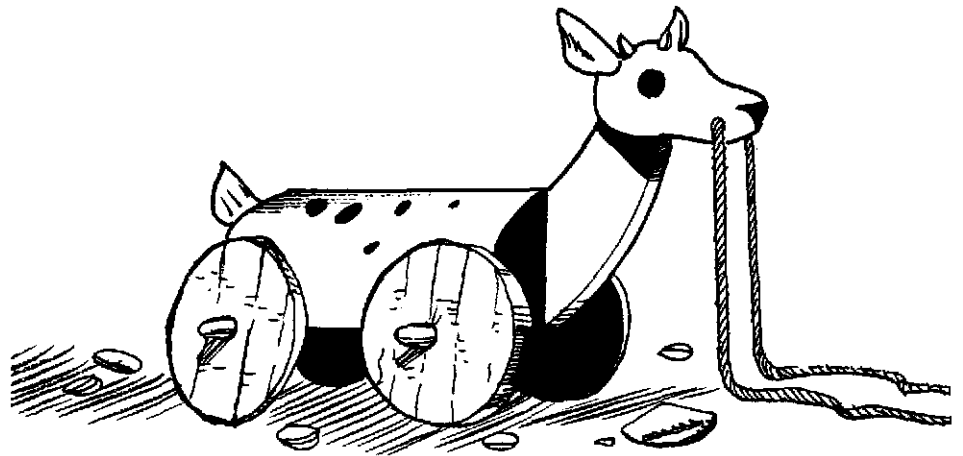
three regents (and other sons) who were assigned to protect him. The two other rulers of the Triple Alliance immediately rushed the boy to Tenochtitlán to crown him king. The Aztec emperor spent time in Texcoco afterward to guard the boy and the city from the machinations of his relatives.

Nezauapilli

The heir to Texcoco, Nezauapilli (Hungry Lord) was second only to his father in achievement. He was also an accomplished engineer, enlarging the palace and advising the emperor on aqueduct building. His poetry, though not as magnificent as his father's, was also widely admired. His diplomacy kept Texcoco a force in the Triple Alliance, rather than a tributary, and his wisdom was much valued by the Aztecs.

He was sterner than his father and not as charitable. A great sorcerer, he foretold the destruction of the Aztec empire.

Nezauapilli was also a great lover, leaving nearly 2,000 concubines and over 150 children when he died. Because he did not designate an heir, several of his sons vied for the throne in a civil war. All sides finally compromised on Cacama as the ruler of Texcoco. The lands won by his rebel brother, Ixtlilxóchitl, did not return to Cacama, thereby splitting the Texcocans into two factions. The rebel faction would come to haunt Moctezuma II during the Conquest.



The Aztecs Expand

Aztec expansion continued unchecked. The most famous emperor was Moctezuma I, who extended the boundaries of the empire beyond the Valley to both coasts. One of his greatest achievements was the conquest of the hot lands of the Gulf Coast. For the first time in history, the capital received tribute of exotic goods such as cacao, rubber, cotton, fruits, feathers and seashells.

The next ruler, Axayacatl, continued the conquests of his predecessor and also conquered Tlatelolco, the sister city of Tenochtitlán. Offended by the insulting behavior of a few Tlatelolcan citizens, he invaded his neighbor, killed its ruler and replaced him with a military governor. The Tlatelolcan city council lost any voice it had in forming Aztec policy.

Axayacatl's brother, Tízoc, died only after six years of rule, poisoned by a general who thought him too weak. His more aggressive successor, Auítzotl, established Aztec dominance all the way to the Pacific, up to the modern border of Guatemala. He also encouraged trade, raising the *pochteca* merchants to prominence.

In 1502, Moctezuma II ascended the throne. He tightened the laws of fashion and gradually increased the power of Tenochtitlán so that Texcoco and Tlatelolco were merely names of the Triple Alliance. His manipulation of the Texcocan succession brought that city to civil war. The war ended only when rival princes split that city's tributaries between them.

AZTEC BESTIARY

9

Many types of wildlife inhabited the lakes, mountains and jungles of the Aztec world. Common beasts included turkeys and deer, which served as food. Rarer tropical birds were so seldom seen that their skins and feathers became valuable goods.

Monsters were the rarest of all creatures. If they appeared at all, it was far from human settlements and only to presage some ominous event. Just before the Conquest, a few appeared mysteriously in Tenochtitlán itself, only to disappear again.



Aztec Monsters

These monsters primarily live in the Valley of México.

Acóatl

ST: 24 Move/Dodge: 8 Size: 1 hex
DX: 13 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 50 lbs.
IQ: 5 Damage: 1d crushing.
Victim also suffocates if the animal is successful in plugging up his nose.
See p. B91.
HT: 15/15-30 Reach: C

The *acóatl* was a long, thick snake with a big head, fiery eyes and a forked tail. It typically dug a small pit near the water's edge, filled it with fish and then hid in the water. When someone came to gather the fish, the monster shot out and wrapped its long body around him. It inserted its forked tail into the victim's nostrils and squeezed him until he suffocated. Like many snakes, the *acóatl* swallowed its meals whole.

If the victim fled out of reach, this snake shot a venomous stream (range 6 hexes) that stunned its target as per p. B99; a HT roll is necessary to avoid the stunning effect. Then the *acóatl* dragged the victim into the water to drown.

Auítzotl

ST: 20 Move/Dodge: 10/7 Size: 1 hex
DX: 14 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 100 lbs.
IQ: 5 Damage: 1d-4
HT: 13/5 Reach: C

This catlike animal lived near water, typically in caverns. The *Auítzotl* baited its human victims in many ways. It could drive schools of fish to the surface, cry like a baby, or stir the water into foamy waves. These unusual events usually drew a passerby to investigate.

When the victim came too close to the water, the *Auítzotl* pulled the victim into the water with its humanlike hands. After the prey had drowned, his eyes, teeth and nails disappeared down the animal's throat. Often, the victim's skin remained unblemished.

Because Tlaloc sometimes commanded this animal to summon people to Tlalocan, the *Auítzotl* became an omen of death.

Mazamitli

ST: 5-14 Move/Dodge: 9/7 Size: 1 hex
DX: 15 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 100 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: (clawing and biting) 2d-2
HT: 13/6-8 Reach: C

This animal was about the size and shape of a small deer and typically hid in a herd of deer, which apparently couldn't recognize it. When hungry, this predator revealed hooked claws to seize unsuspecting prey – sometimes a deer, sometimes a hunter! It then opened its thick jaws and used its fangs to rip its catch from neck to belly, scattering entrails with its claws. The *mazamitli* then feasted on the remains.

Ghosts

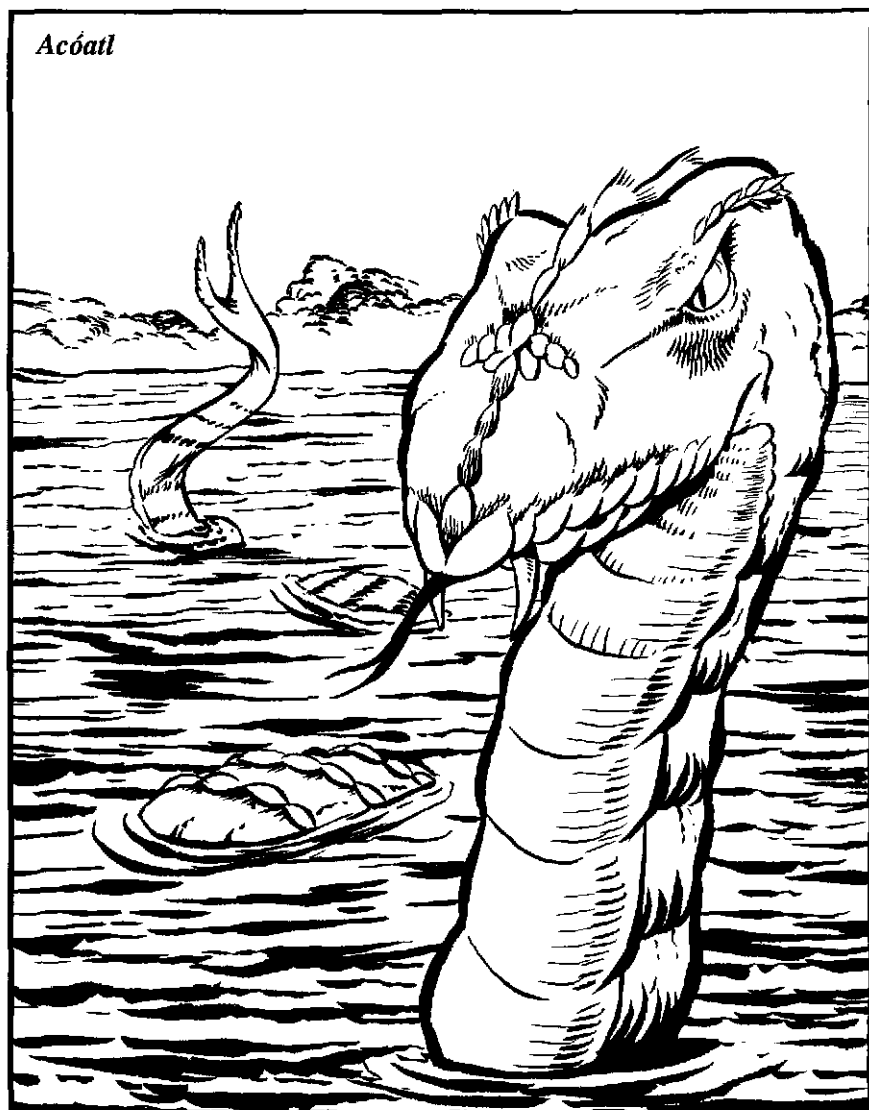
Ghosts often appeared to reveal both good and bad information and are thus useful for revealing GM hints to straying adventurers. Some ghosts appeared to ask family members to behave better.

Ghosts also arrived as punishments from the gods. In such cases, they appeared as insects who fastened on the body to suck the blood and the soul away from the victim. They also appeared as the happy souls of dead relatives in the form of butterflies, to reassure everyone that all was well.

One common ghost, even in modern times, is the Weeping Woman. She appears dressed in white, with long, flowing hair, moaning loudly and fearfully. Her usual cry, "Alas, my children," forewarns death, danger, or misfortune.

Ciuateteo

Though most ghosts were harmless, the *Ciuateteo* (Little Princesses) were vengeful goddesses who used to be women who died in childbirth. They particularly hated children and attractive men. They might appear at any time, but on the day 1 Monkey they descended to Anahuac in swarms, making this a bad day for the young and the handsome!



Sometimes one appeared on a river bank, as a well-formed lady with long, black hair. When she turned, however, she revealed a bare skull. At other times, they appeared on the road as a swarm of ghosts who cursed their target with palsy and strokes. They often appeared as beautiful women who seduced unwary travelers; the victims of these ghosts twisted and contorted as they lost the use of their limbs.

Most travelers appeased the *Ciuateteo* by leaving offerings at their shrines. Many of these small temples dotted the crossroads.

Use typical Aztec female stats for each *Ciuateteo*. However, each also has the ability to cast several spells including Itch, Spasm, Pain, Clumsiness, Curse, Strike Blind/Deaf/Dumb, and Pestilence.

Headless Tezcatlipoca

When he appeared on earth as an omen, the god Tezcatlipoca often chose the form of a headless specter, with two flaplike openings in the chest. It moaned continuously and chased anyone nearby.

All those near it have to make a Fright Check roll or scatter in terror. Those brave enough could reach into its chest and try to pull out its heart. To do so, one must first pass the Fright Check, and then win a quick contest of DX (12) or Brawling skills (18) against the specter. It will then grant the holder one wish in return for its heart, and vanish.

Hitting it with a weapon causes it to disappear. It will typically disappear after a few minutes or if chased or grappled.

This monster only appears as a serious omen, presaging such events as a major famine, war, or disaster.

Use the stats of an average Aztec male with DX 12 and a Brawling skill of 18.

Quetzalcóatl

This was not just the name of a god, but also of a fantastic flying serpent. Quetzalcóatl (Plumed Snake) would command a high price at the imperial zoo, if it were ever caught. It lived in the Totonac country, and was about an arm long. On the back of its head and all along its spine, the skin resembled quetzal feathers. Its belly was red and its tail looked like cotinga feathers.

This snake was very dangerous. When attacking a man, it flew into the air on a great wind and swooped down on the victim to bite him. After discharging its poison, it died. Anyone bitten must make a HT roll every ten minutes, beginning at -3, and increasing by -1 thereafter. Thus, after an hour, the roll is at -8. A failed roll means damage of 1d+1. A critical roll means death. Normal snakebite techniques can be used to slow down the poison (see pp. 107 and B143). However, only a spell can cure the victim.

Tzitzime

ST: 10-15	Move/Dodge: 6-7 (ground and flight)
DX: 10-18	PD/DR: 4/5 Weight: 50-60 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: (biting and clawing) 2d
HT: 15/20-25	Reach: C Size: 1 hex

These female demons lived in the night sky and could come out at any time, particularly during eclipses. During the end of the fifth age, a swarm of them would descend to devour all men. Tradition has it that they were once stars that fell to the underworld.

They appear as large, ugly humanoids with claws instead of hands and feet, and dirty, disheveled hair. Their mouth and jaws are completely skeletal and they wear earrings composed of human hands and hearts.

They will devour anyone that they find. Thus satiated, they return to the night sky.

Non-Aztec Monsters

Should adventurers journey beyond the Valley of México, they may encounter the monsters of other cultures.

Flying Jaguars

Flying jaguars once commonly ranged throughout the Olmec area but are now very rare. They had large, beautifully feathered wings – jaguar feathers would be incredibly valuable! Stats are as for regular jaguars (p. 107), but because they can fly, Move/Dodge is 18/9. They are also smarter, with IQ 5 or occasionally 6.

Giants

ST: 30-40	Move/Dodge: 15/4	Size: 3 hexes
DX: 11	PD/DR: 4/5	Weight: 2,000-2,400 lbs.
IQ: 10-15	Damage: as weapons	
HT: 12/21	Reach: 2	

The Mesoamericans believed that giants built many ancient structures of Anahuac, such as the pyramid of Cholula. Their fossilized bones (the remains of Pleistocene mammoths and mammals) were found everywhere and ground up to be used in medicines and potions. The average giant stands 20 feet tall and uses huge weapons which are otherwise like those of normal Mesoamericans.

Were-Jaguars

ST: 10-16	Move/Dodge: 5-6	Size: 3 hexes
DX: 10-14	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 150-200 lbs.
IQ: 10	Damage: teeth, 1d+1 cut	
HT: 10-13	Reach: C	

Were-jaguars existed on the Gulf Coast, primarily during the time of the Olmecs. However, a few remained during the time of the Aztecs. They are born through the mating of a jaguar and a human, usually a female.

They assumed a variety of forms. Most common was the infantile-looking human with a cleft, down-turned mouth and jaguar fangs. Some were-jaguars looked very jaguarlike with human hands or faces. Note that were-jaguars are not the same thing as sorcerers who temporarily assume jaguar form. Were-jaguars are a separate hybrid species and are susceptible to normal weapons. Unlike were-creatures in European folklore, the were-jaguar's bite is just a bite. It does not turn the victim into a monster.

Stats for the infantile-type jaguar are typically: *ST:* 10-16, *DX:* 7-14, *IQ:* 10, *HT:* 10-13. Its teeth do 1d+1 cutting damage.

Stats for the infantile type are given above. Stats for the jaguar type are as normal jaguars but with IQs running in the human range.

Natural Creatures

Birds

Eagle

ST: 4-5 Move/Dodge: 18/9 Size: <1 hex
DX: 12 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 4-12 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 1 cut
HT: 13/4-5 Reach: C

All species of eagle were symbols of bravery. Aztec hunters had a unique way of stealing their eggs: they placed a reed basket on the bird's head. The eagle, fearing an attack, tried to kill the basket by carrying to a high distance and dropping it on the rocks. Meanwhile, the hunter spirited away the eggs and young.

The eagle is clumsy on the ground (Speed 1, Dodge 6) but terrible while swooping (60-70 mph, which is a Move of 30-35).

Falcon

Several species of falcon hunted birds and small animals in Mesoamerica. For more information, see p. B142.

Owl

ST: 2-3 Move/Dodge: 12/6 Size: <1 hex
DX: 11 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 2-4 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 1d-2 cut
HT: 7/3 Reach: C

Evil sorcerers were thought to transform themselves to owls, so most Aztecs feared these animals. Hearing an owl croak or hoot over the house on which it perched meant that someone in the house would die soon. Seeing one of these birds, especially on a day beneficial to evil sorcery, was a very bad omen!

Tropical Birds

ST: 1-3 Move/Dodge: 18/9 Size: <1 hex
DX: 14+ PD/DR: 0 Weight: 5 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: 1d-4
HT: 10/1-4 Reach: C

Parrots, troupials and cotingas lived in the tropical jungles, all with valuable plumage. The most valuable belonged to the quetzal bird. The male had two 20-inch long tail feathers that were coveted by imperial featherworkers.

Over 300 species of hummingbird lived in the New World. Most were associated with the sun and warfare. Hummingbirds could be resurrected. When cold at night or during the winter for short periods, they became torpid. They then seemed to come to life again in the heat of the sun. Portions of real hummingbirds are carried as a talisman or eaten to produce courage and virility.

Use Tracking to find a bird and then Traps to capture it. Roll on Animal Handling skill to detach any feathers without damaging the creature or its plumage. Sometimes hunters handled the animal with grass (+1 to Animal Handling), so as not to damage the feathers. A failure harms the bird in some way. A critical failure

harms the bird and destroys its plumage. The hunter must nurse a carelessly injured bird to health or suffer the wrath of local inhabitants . . . and deities.

Turkey

ST: 4-5 Move/Dodge: 12/6 Size: <1 hex
DX: 10 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 10-25 lbs.
IQ: 2 Damage: none
HT: 10/4-5 Reach: C

Nearly every family prized their turkey as the most valuable domestic animal. The poor only occasionally got any meat at all, but the emperor feasted on turkey almost every day.

Water Birds

ST: 1-4 Move/Dodge: 18/9 Size: <1 hex
DX: 13 PD/DR: 0 Weight: 5 lbs.
IQ: 4 Damage: none
HT: 10/1-4 Reach: C

Many water birds such as ducks, teals and cranes were common in the lakes around Tenochtitlán. They were hunted primarily for food.

Pelican

The pelican reigned as the king of the water birds because it commanded other water creatures, who attended it in the middle of the lake. When angered, this bird ordered its subjects to flap their wings. The resulting winds raised waves that overturned boats and drowned people.

Pelicans were both a delicacy and an omen. When a hunter caught one, he immediately clasped its bill so it would not regurgitate the contents of its stomach. He then cut its belly open. If he found a precious stone or feather within, the hunter would prosper and capture many animals. If he found a piece of charcoal, the hunter would die soon.

Coyote



Insects and Arachnids

Cochineal

The cochineal was a scale insect that lived on cactus plants. They were often raised to provide a valuable red dye used in makeup, inks and paint. After the Conquest, this dye was exported to Europe for hundreds of years, until the discovery of chemical dyes.

Spiders

ST: 1	Move/Dodge: 2	Size: <1 hex
DX: 13	PD/DR: 0	Weight: 1 oz.
IQ: 1	Damage: Poison.	
HT: 2	Reach: C	

Sorcerers often used poisonous spiders such as black widows and tarantulas to guard their valuables. Spider bite effects range from trivial, to painful but basically harmless (-1 on DX for an hour, and make a Will roll not to yell when first bitten), to deadly.

A typical dangerous spider might do 1 hit of damage per hour for 8 hours if a HT roll is failed, or for only 2 hours if the roll is succeeded. The GM rolls; the patient doesn't know whether he will recover or keep getting sicker! Some spider bites had strange, or even magical, effects.

Scorpion

ST: 1	Move/Dodge: 2	Size: <1 hex
DX: 12	PD/DR: 0	Weight: 1 lb.
IQ: 1	Damage: Poison.	
HT: 2	Reach: C	

Averaging about two and a half inches long, dusty tan in color, scorpions are easy to miss and easy to step on. They retaliate with a quick sting. Many species existed in Anahuac, ranging from harmless to deadly. Initial symptoms for stings from all types are the same: possible pain at the sting point, followed by numbness that travels toward the body. The poisonous variety paralyzes the respiratory muscles and causes a heart attack, sometimes within a few hours. Only magic can treat this sort of sting; otherwise, death is almost certain.

Anyone stung by the poisonous variety must make a HT roll 30 minutes later and *again* every 30 minutes, beginning at -3 and increasing by -1 every roll. A failed roll means the venom does damage of 1d. A critical failure means death. A critical success means the poison stops working; an ordinary success just gives the victim an extra 30 minutes of life . . . Give +1 to HT if the venom is immediately sucked out.

Land Animals

Coyote

ST: 4-6	Move/Dodge: 9/7	Size: 1 hex
DX: 14	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 25-45 lbs.
IQ: 6	Damage: 1d-3 cut	
HT: 14/8-10	Reach: C	

The coyote was a cunning stalker that hunted small animals and birds. It could be both vengeful and grateful. If a hunter attacked it or tried to steal its catch, the coyote would stalk the

hunter and try to hurt him, often with several of its companions. If a hunter saved its life, from a snake for example, a coyote would bring three to four birds, such as turkeys, to the hunter.

Crocodile

ST: 20-28	Move/Dodge: 8/7	Size: 5-7 hexes
DX: 14	PD/DR: /4	Weight: 900-2,000 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d+2 cut	
HT: 13/24-30	Reach: C	

Crocodiles are aggressive and will attack humans. In water, they bite and try to drown prey. On land, one can whip its tail (1 hex reach) for 1d crushing damage. This is a slam attack (pp. B112-113) which hits unless the victim Dodges successfully. On land, its Speed is reduced to 2. Its soft underbelly has PD1, DR2.

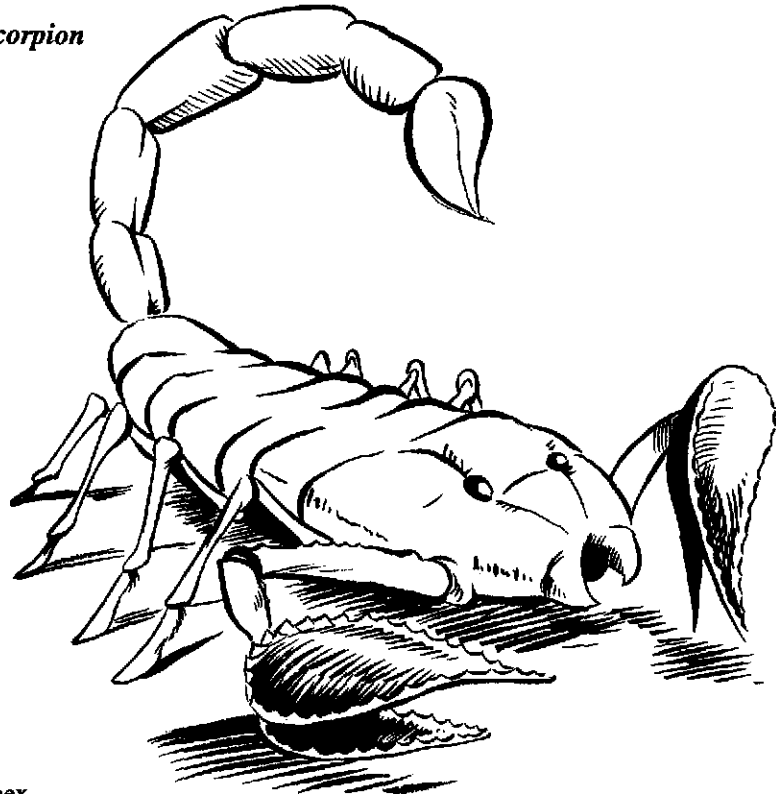
Deer

Many species of deer were hunted for their skins and meat. The most common was the white-tailed deer, which would raise its tail as a warning when alarmed. For more information, see p. B142.

Dog

Dogs of all sizes were popular pets and sources of food. The most common was the *itzcuintli*, which was small, hairless, pudgy and barkless. It made an ideal meal and its high metabolic rate was useful on cold nights. Mesoamericans placed this dog on their feet to use its body as a heater. Though many other breeds inhabited Mesoamerica, the chihuahua is the only one we know of. Dogs were sometimes buried with the dead to act as guides in the beyond. See p. B142.

Scorpion



Jaguar

ST: 16-20	Move/Dodge: 9/7	Size: 2 hexes
DX: 14	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 150-300 lbs.
IQ: 4	Damage: 1d+2 cut	
HT: 15/14-18	Reach: C	

The prowling jaguar was the most important wild animal in Mesoamerica, and the most feared. Its spotted pelt represented the night sky and the interior of the earth, and was highly valued as a trade item. Many sorcerers adopted it as their animal counterpart. The jaguar hunted only at night and showed strength, speed, nobility and pride.

The Aztecs called the jaguar "ocelotl." However, moderns use the word "ocelot" to describe a much smaller spotted cat. Don't confuse the two; the little ocelot is a spitting ball of fury, but the jaguar is a deadly hunter, solidly built, deep-chested and bigger than a leopard.

The jaguar was considered notoriously difficult to catch because it caught any arrows shot at it and broke them with its teeth. The skilled hunter shot one arrow for the jaguar to catch and then a second arrow with a leaf at the tip. The leaf fluttered to distract the jaguar and a third arrow could then kill it. (To make this legend true, the GM can let jaguars roll against their DX of 14 to catch any arrow fired at them, once per turn – unless something distracts them.)



Monkeys

See p. B141. Mesoamerican monkeys were small, like spider or howler monkeys, and lived in the eastern forests and jungles. When confronted, these monkeys run and sometimes abandon their young. The young monkeys can then be taken, tamed and sold as pets.

Small Game

ST: 1-4	Move/Dodge: 4	Size: <1 hex
DX: 11-14	PD/DR: 0	Weight: 5 lbs.
IQ: 4	Damage: 1d-5 or 1d-4	
HT: 12/2-5	Reach: C	

The Aztecs hunted many small animals, including rabbits, hares, otters, armadillos, iguanas and gophers, for food and medicine. These stats should cover most of these animals.

Snakes

See p. B143. Snakes were edible, but some were dangerously poisonous. Seeing one was generally considered a bad omen, and rattlesnakes are quite venomous. Modifiers to the HT roll: +1 if venom is immediately sucked out; +1 if tobacco is rubbed on the wound.

Plants

Metl

A desert plant with broad, sword-shaped leaves, *metl* grew in the higher altitudes. (The Spanish called it *maguey* or *agave*.) Though it flourished in the wild, by the time of the Aztecs the plant also grew on farms. Every part of the plant was useful. Its leaves were cooked for food; processed to form paper, or fiber for rope or cloth; or dried for use as roofing material. Its thorns became needles for piercing the skin during ceremonies. Its whole leaves thatched the roofs of huts or formed the walls of shelters. Finally, its roots were also turned into rope or could be cooked and eaten.

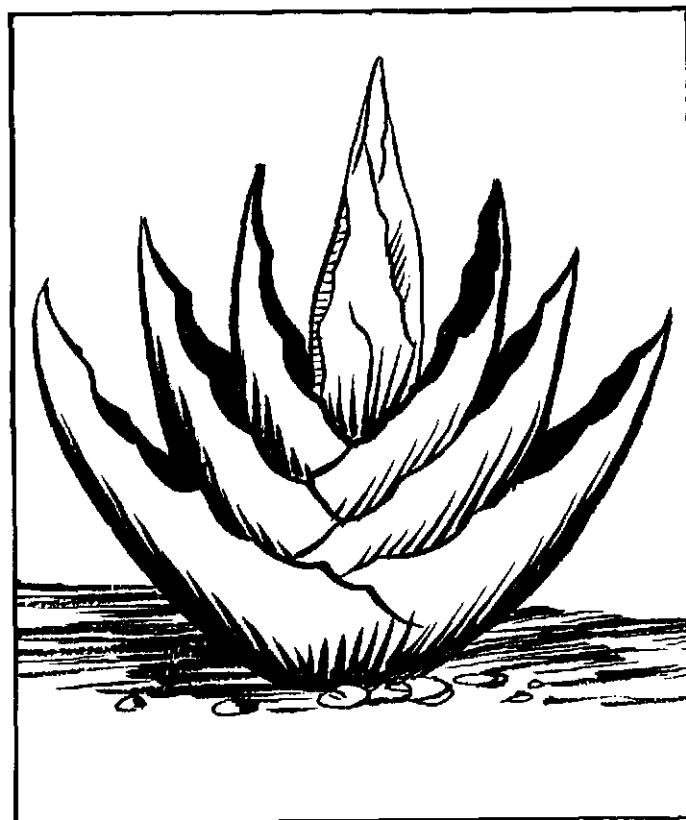
Metl was most valued for its sap, which produced an intoxicating and healthy alcoholic beverage called *octli* (or *pulque* by the Spanish). The plant needed to grow for 8 to 12 years or more for this purpose, after which its juices were harvested. The higher the growth altitude, the longer the maturation period, and the finer the wine.

Nopal

Nopal was the name for several species of cactus that grew wild and on farms in Anahuac. All typically had flat, oblong pads covered with thorns and occasional flowers. The pads, peeled of thorns, were a favorite Aztec food, and they could be eaten raw or cooked. They were also ground up to provide a strong medicinal drink. Different species produced edible fruit, ranging in color from white to red and in flavor from sweet to disagreeable. Though the Aztecs enjoyed the nopal fruit, the Chichimecs valued it most.

Ololiuqui

This hallucinogenic mushroom served in many religious or medicinal ceremonies, and occasionally as a banquet amusement. The Aztecs believed that its visions could foretell the future if properly interpreted (see p. 74).



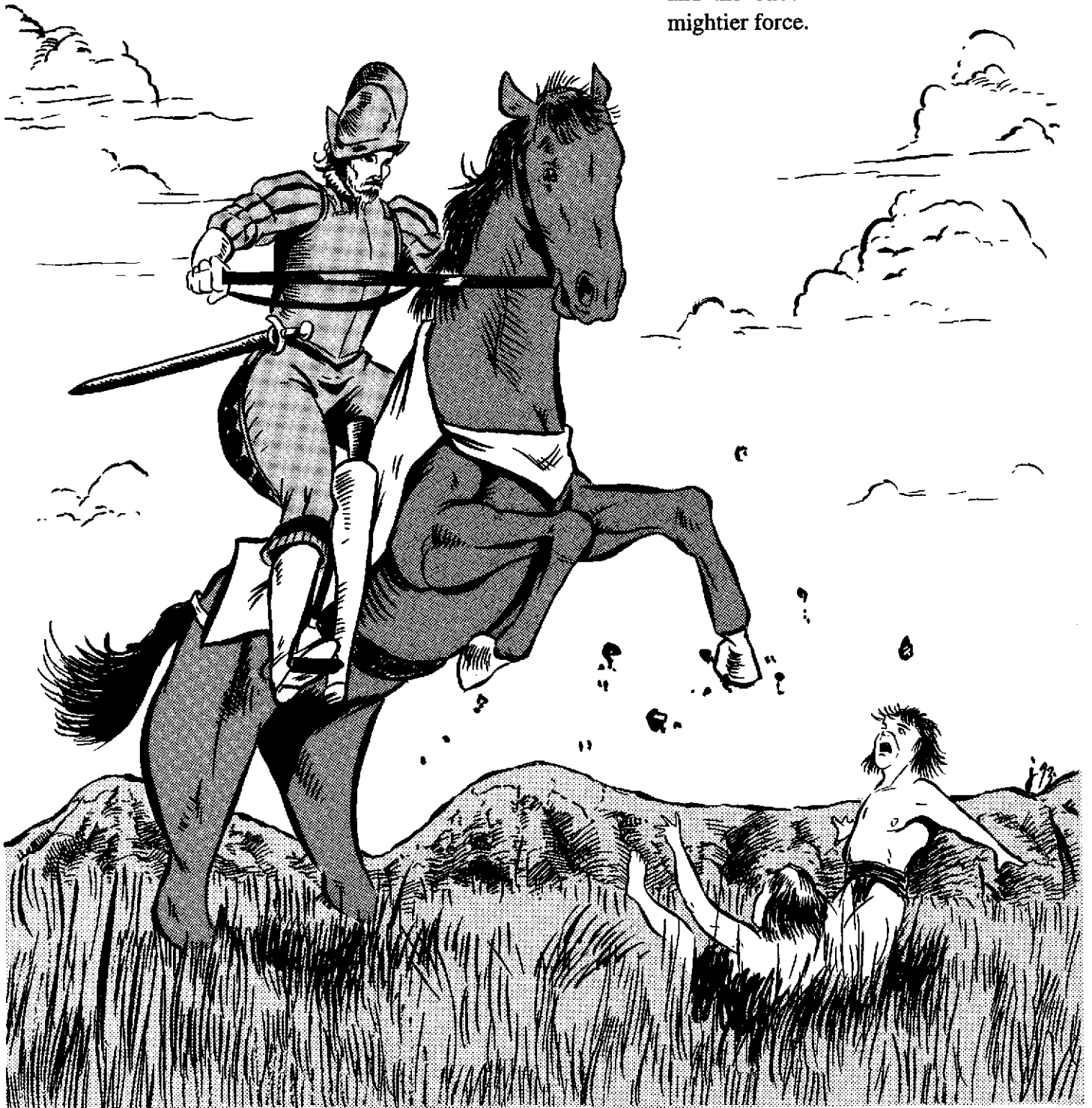
Tobacco

The tobacco plant was important to the Aztecs. Tobacco was smoked for relaxation, using long reed or clay pipes. It was also burned as a sacrifice to the gods, or rubbed between the fingers or on the body as part of a cure or a magical spell.

THE SPANISH CONQUEST

10

In 1519, the Conquest linked Aztec fate to that of Spain. Evil omens proved true, and the once-invincible Aztecs fell to a mightier force.



Spain and the New World

By 1492, nearly every court in Europe had rejected Columbus and his bold proposal to find a westward route to Japan and China. In desperation, Columbus turned to Spain, a country without the seafaring reputation of either England or Portugal. Realizing the enormous returns of a new sea route, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand decided to gamble on the sailor's dream. Columbus sailed into the unknown with three small ships and a crew of 90.

Conquest Timeline

- 1492:** Columbus discovers America, under the sponsorship of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain.
- 1496:** Santo Domingo, the first Spanish colony of the New World, is founded.
- 1500, April:** Cabral of Portugal discovers Brazil.
- 1504:** Hernán Cortés arrives in the New World. Queen Isabella dies.
- 1516:** Charles I becomes ruler of Spain on the death of King Ferdinand.
- 1517-1519:** Omens foretell the end of the Aztec empire. Two expeditions from Cuba happen upon the Mexican mainland.
- 1519, March 4:** Cortés and his men land on the Gulf coast of México.
- 1519, June 27:** After the death of his grandfather, Emperor Maximilian, Charles I receives his title and his estate, becoming Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.
- 1519, August 31:** The Spaniards enter Tlaxcalan territory.
- 1519, September 2 and 9:** The Spaniards defeat the Tlaxcalans, who become their allies.
- 1519, October:** Spaniards take Cholula.
- 1519, November 8:** Cortés enters Tenochtitlán for the first time and meets Moctezuma II.
- 1520, May 28:** Narváez arrives in México to arrest Cortés. He is soon killed in battle.
- 1520, July 1:** The Aztecs rise against the Spanish. Moctezuma II is killed.
- 1520, July 10:** *La Noche Triste:* The Spaniards abandon Tenochtitlán. Only a quarter of them escape alive.
- 1520, December 31:** Cortés returns with a large army to conquer the Aztecs. He establishes his base at Texcoco.
- 1521, May 13:** Spaniards lay siege to Tenochtitlán.
- 1521, May 6:** Spaniards destroy the Chapultepec aqueduct.
- 1521, August 13:** Tenochtitlán surrenders. Emperor Cuátemoc is captured as he tries to escape by canoe.
- 1524:** Twelve Franciscans, the first group of Spanish clergymen, arrive in Vera Cruz.
- 1525:** Cuátemoc, the last Aztec emperor, is executed.
- 1537:** Pope Paul III's bull describes New World Indians as true men.
- 1547, December 2:** Hernán Cortés dies in Spain.

The West Indies

The royal investment paid off handsomely when Columbus discovered the Bahamas on October 12, 1492. To prevent interference by Portugal, the major seafaring nation of the age, Ferdinand and Isabella asked Pope Alexander VI, a Spaniard, to legitimize Spanish claims to the New World. His vague pronouncement prompted Spain and Portugal to negotiate the Treaty of Torsedillas in 1494, which drew a line down the New World. Portugal received the territory of Brazil, which was east of the line. Almost everything else was west of the line, and became Spanish. Colonies sprang up in Santo Domingo (1496), Puerto Rico (1508) and Cuba (1511). The profits from these ventures came mostly from gold mined in local rivers and sugar grown on large plantations by enslaved Indians.

Looking for more workers, the Spanish colonials sent forays to nearby islands. Two such expeditions stumbled onto the Mexican mainland and brought back tales of advanced civilizations and gold. Governor Velásquez of Cuba decided to send a third exploratory expedition under the command of Hernán Cortés, eventual conqueror of the Aztecs.

Cortés Arrives

Cortés was a well-known character in Cuban society. An adventurer and duellist, he had served loyally in Velásquez' original conquest of the island. When Velásquez became governor of the island, Cortés became his trusted secretary. Then the two quarreled (Cortés was imprisoned more than once) but finally made up again.

Cortés used all his influence to become captain of the expedition, and all his wealth to finance it. The governor became wary and decided to find another captain . . . but Cortés got word and left early, evading the frantic governor's attempts to arrest him.

Spain and the New World





Spain and the Aztecs

Cortés landed on the Mexican mainland on Good Friday of 1519. Spread among 11 ships, the expedition had a complement of 500, with: 100 sailors, 13 musketeers with arquebuses and 32 crossbowmen. Rounding it out were 14 artillery pieces, 16 horses, and 200 male and female natives from the islands. Jerónimo de Aguilar (see sidebar, p. 112) joined them when they landed, serving as translator between the Spaniards and the natives.

Hearing about the landing, Emperor Moctezuma II was distraught. For two years, omens had predicted the end of his empire. Now this new arrival of godlike beings seemed ready to fulfill the prophecy.

The Gift Exchange

For several weeks, Moctezuma sent gifts of clothing, jewelry and food to the newly arrived strangers. He instructed his messengers to treat these potential gods with respect and even offer themselves as food, should the deities need that kind of nourishment. Fortunately for the emissaries, the Spaniards found the suggestion repugnant.

The Spaniards responded by sending messages of good will and gifts of glass beads. They demonstrated their cannon, making the ambassadors faint. The messengers were asked to demonstrate the renowned Aztec fighting skill, but they refused, saying that the emperor would kill them if they harmed the visitors.

The Spaniards also showed their remarkable “two-headed beasts” in local skirmishes. The Indians promptly surrendered at the sight of these demonic men on horses. When Moctezuma heard these reports, he wept with fear. Yet the Aztec ruler was puzzled. If these beings were gods, why didn’t they enjoy the bloody meals? But if they were men, how could they work such strange magic?

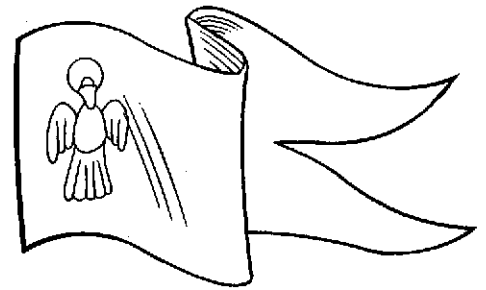
Whoever they were, Moctezuma decided they had to be kept away from his empire. He sent powerful sorcerers to cast spells, and guides to lead the Spaniards through dangerous paths, so they could fall over cliffs. None of these tactics worked.

Spain in the 16th Century

Just before the beginning of the century, Spain won the province of Granada from the Moors and much of Italy from France. This event ushered in the Golden Age of Spain: the small kingdom grew into an empire that controlled territories as far away as Asia.

In 1516, King Ferdinand died and Charles I became the ruler of Spain. Three years later, the king became Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, inheriting the title and dominions of his late grandfather, Maximilian. Those new territories included the Netherlands, Germany and Austria.

The Spaniards, impressed with their newly enlarged empire, saw themselves as God’s chosen people. It was their duty to bring Catholicism and civilization to all the peoples of the world. This expansion would be fueled primarily by the discoveries of Christopher Columbus. Eventually, the empire would encompass the West Indies (1496), México (1521), Peru (1533) and the Philippines (1565).



The Coming of Quetzalcóatl?

The often-told tale of Moctezuma expecting Quetzalcóatl to return is more fiction than fact. No such tradition existed before the Conquest.

It is true that Quetzalcóatl supposedly left México in the year One Reed and sailed east. That designation also corresponded to 1519, the year Cortés arrived. But Quetzalcóatl never planned a return trip. Although Moctezuma might have thought the Spaniards were gods, all such thoughts disappeared when he discovered the visitors did not eat human blood.

The story of Quetzalcóatl’s return surfaced only after the Conquest. Cortés may have created it to justify to his new subjects his right to control México. Or Aztec historians may have invented the tradition to explain that only such mystical assumptions could have destroyed their mighty empire.



Jerónimo de Aguilar

"I am grateful to be in the service of Spain again. It is all I ever wanted to do, even in 1511, when I was a churchman on my way to Hispaniola. Our ship ran aground on a strange beach – we now know it as the Yucatán peninsula. At first we thanked the Lord for our lives. We even met some natives who took us to their town and fed us. Then we cursed Him – because these natives were fattening us like pigs. They sacrificed many sailors on their heathen altars.

"Unlike some of my fellows, I could not believe this was the will of God. I escaped and hid in the jungle. But I am not a forest man and soon I was hungry and sick again. The Indians captured me again and I feared for my life. But they were a different tribe and their chief enslaved me instead. Yes, I could run again but where would I go? So I stayed and tried to serve God by showing the savages how a true Christian should live.

"I remained celibate, though the native women tempted me often. I also shunned their riches and worked hard. When I learned their language, I spoke to them of European ways, of the people and of God. They listened to me with good humor and did nothing else. But the chief admired my ways so much that I became his close adviser, guarding his wives and property when he was away. Slowly, the ways of Spain left me and I became more Mayan.

"The Lord always rewards the worthy, even when they have strayed. For eight years after my shipwreck, my chief received a letter and gifts from Cortés. Spain had come to rescue me! The chief tried to persuade me to stay – he could have forced me, if he wanted to. I think God told him – yes, He speaks to savages in His own way – that I would be happier with my kind.

"So I joyfully met the expedition at Cozumel. At first, Cortés refused to recognize me as his countryman. My skin was browned to a native appearance and my clothing and speech were Mayan. Only when I forced a few words of forgotten Spanish through my Mayan tongue did the Spaniards welcome me.

"My Spanish came back a few weeks later. That is when I started as translator between the Mayans and the Spanish."

Reactions of Aztecs and Spaniards

To the Spaniards, the natives of México were savage and idolatrous pagans who were misled by the devil. Though the explorers found the well-built and spacious Aztec cities impressive, they loathed the human sacrifices and native "idols." They wanted to bring the primitives to civilized Christianity through education and force.

The Spaniards have a -3 reaction to most natives. That reaction goes up to -2 if the native is a king or a powerful lord, and to -1, if the native is baptized into Christianity.

At first, the Aztecs saw the Spaniards as divine beings. Thus, Europeans initially get a +5 reaction. When the visitors are found to dislike godly things, such as blood, this bonus disappears. Finally, when the Spanish are seen as dirty barbarians who crave gold over more civilized valuables such as feathers, Aztec reaction drops to -5.

The March to Tenochtitlán

Over time, Moctezuma vacillated between fear of these divine beings and anger that anyone would dare invade his empire. This unintended strategy might have stalled the conquistadors indefinitely, had not Cortés encountered five Totonacs on a beach. These supposedly loyal Aztec subjects openly hated the emperor and complained continuously about him. Cortés suddenly realized that not all the Indians supported their divine master.

The conquistador marched inland, toward the cities of these Totonacs: Cempoala, its capital, and then Quiauitlán. The chiefs welcomed the Spanish warmly, offering shelter and food, after a suitable exchange of gifts. When Aztec tax gatherers came upon Cortés, he imprisoned them to prove his power to the Totonacs. He then released them to return to Moctezuma. The Totonacs, terrified of Aztec reprisals and impressed by Cortés's boldness, allied themselves with the Spaniards. The conquistador decided to enter Tenochtitlán and capture the Aztec emperor. Moctezuma in turn decided that these Spaniards were to be prevented from entering Tenochtitlán at all costs.

Pitched Battles

Cortés sent a letter to the Tlaxcalans with ritual gifts to start a war with them. At first, the Tlaxcalans tried to drive Cortés away with sorcery. Then they fought him twice and lost. They finally submitted to the Spaniards, offering them food, shelter and soldiers. This new alliance terrified Moctezuma, especially because this implacable foe of the Aztecs had been so easily defeated by the invaders. He begged Cortés not to come to Tenochtitlán because the way was rough and dangerous. He even offered gifts of gold as tribute to Emperor Charles, if Cortés would not approach.

Gold only drove the conquistador onward. His expedition reached the sacred city of Cholula, where his troops massacred the citizens in front of the Temple of Quetzalcóatl. He feared that a conspiracy, led by Moctezuma, would trap and destroy the Spaniards.

By this time, the emperor had no illusions about the holiness of the visitors. They were powerful and dangerous, but mortal men. Moctezuma tried one last ruse. He sent an impersonator to greet Cortés. Unfortunately, the Tlaxcalans discovered the ruse and the Spaniards sent him back with the message that Moctezuma could not deceive them. Wherever he might hide, the Spaniards would find him.

Resigned, the Aztec emperor ordered his subjects to welcome the Spaniards when they reached the Valley.

Entry into the Valley

The expedition climbed to the crest of Ahualco, just south of Lake Chalco for their first glimpse of the Valley. They gaped at its magnificence: between forests of cypress and pine, lake waters, gardens and fields, rose clean, white pyramids,

buildings and causeways of an advanced civilization. The city, with its population of several hundred thousand, was bigger than any European city at the time.

As the force moved toward the city, curious Aztecs temporarily left their labors and jostled each other to glimpse the strangers. The Spaniards greeted these attempts with good humor. Eventually, one finely dressed Aztec introduced himself as the king of Texcoco. Cortés greeted him with an embrace and thanked him. They all lodged in Ixtapalapa.

The next day, at Fort Xoloco, the king of Texcoco brought the conquistador to a city causeway and waited. Four high lords bore a regally dressed man toward them. Aztecs of all ranks bowed their heads and averted their eyes as the emperor passed. Some even prostrated themselves before him.

Cortés dismounted and approached the Aztec ruler, who left his litter to greet the Spaniard on foot. They approached each other as equals and spoke with formal courtesy.

In the City

As the party entered Tenochtitlán, the Spaniards found that the beauty, order and spaciousness of the capital surpassed the finest Spanish cities. The zoo alone brought much amazement, because Europe had nothing of the kind.

They went first to the imperial treasury. There, the Spaniards pounced on all the riches there, tearing the gold from the insignia, the shields and the artistic works. They did the same thing to Moctezuma's private treasure house. Despite this, Moctezuma treated the conquistadors with respect, offering them food, water, shelter and a chapel.

In return, Cortés held Moctezuma hostage in the palace, yet relations between the two moved from cordiality to respect and friendship. The conquistador, seeing that his troops were safe with the emperor, left for the coast to battle newly-arrived Spanish rivals. He left Pedro de Alvarado in charge.

The Feast of Huitzilopochtli

While Cortés was away, Alvarado gave permission to the Aztecs to celebrate the Feast of Huitzilopochtli. The citizens massed in their dress uniforms and finely-decorated weapons to begin a dance.

The Spaniard misinterpreted the gathered warriors as an attack. In a panic, he ordered his men to charge the gathered crowd. By the time the Spaniards had retreated to Moctezuma's palace, many great chiefs and lords were dead. The Aztecs rebelled at this Spanish treachery and surrounded the palace, watching all entrances so none of the invaders could escape.

For 23 days, the Spaniards remained under siege, kept safe only by their imperial hostage. At the same time, the citizens prepared their city for war, dredging the canals, placing ramparts and building barriers. They were preparing for the return of Cortés.

Spanish Politics, Aztec Treasure

Some time previously, Cortés had sent a request to King Charles of Spain, asking for direct confirmation of his right to Mexican exploration. The conquistador gave up a fifth of his treasure and convinced his men to do the same so that the king would receive a sizable booty. In addition, Cortés also sent codices, featherwork, art objects, four Indian slaves and a letter about his adventures. News of this treasure ship soon reached Governor Velásquez, who tried unsuccessfully to detain it. He resolved once again to arrest Cortés.

Meanwhile, some disgruntled followers of Cortés conspired to steal a boat and sail back to Cuba. They were caught on the day of their departure and many of the ringleaders were executed. To prevent this from happening again, Cortés dismantled all the ships of his fleet except for one small vessel. To the complaints of his men, he pointed out that this would strengthen their resolve to continue their quest for God and country.

Hernán Cortés

One of the pivotal figures of the Conquest, Hernán Cortés began life as the son of a nobleman. His ordinary education qualified him to work as a notary, first in Seville, then in Hispaniola.

Cortés was every Spaniard's ideal of a leader. In his mid-thirties during the Conquest, he was tall, muscular and agile. He wore a fashionable beard that contrasted with his pale skin, and paraded around in simple but rich clothing. He excelled in swordplay and horsemanship. As a leader, he was both brave and intelligent, combining diplomacy with great strategic and tactical skill. He could appear cheerful and friendly or single-minded and calculating. And, of course, he was always chivalrous and romantic toward the ladies.

He tried to be just and fair toward both Spanish and Aztecs. Once, he ordered one of his men publicly hanged simply for stealing two turkeys from a native.

Typical of Spaniards of the time, Cortés was fanatically religious and credited his successes only to God. It was his duty to bring Catholicism to the Aztecs so they could join the civilized world. This religious devotion sometimes threatened his good judgment. Once, after his friend, the chief of Cempoala, refused to be converted to Christianity, Cortés angrily ordered his men to destroy all the idols in the main Cempoalan temple. This rash act nearly led to war. Fortunately, a translator reminded the chief that without Cortés, the Cempoalans would fall prey to Moctezuma's vengeance. In resignation, the chief prayed that his gods would forgive this barbaric act and not blame his subjects.

A close second to his religious zeal was Cortés's lust for gold. This lust drove him all the way to the Aztec capital. The artistic value of Moctezuma's gifts escaped him. He simply stripped any golden artifacts of extraneous trappings and melted them into ingots for easier transport.

For his services to the Spanish crown, Cortés received the title of Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca in 1529. (In the New World, the *Marquis* without a name always referred to Cortés.) He also received 23,000 Indian vassals, and territories in Oaxaca and in the Valley that covered 20 of the largest cities in the country. Though he never became the viceroy of México, Cortés was appointed the Captain-General of New Spain.

On his way back to México, Cortés died near Seville on October 11, 1547. All the citizens and nobles of that city gave the conquistador a grand funeral, befitting Spain's high regard for him. As for the Mexicans, only one "monument" to Cortés exists. The famous Mexican artist, Diego Rivera, has enshrined him in a mural at the National Palace. He is portrayed as a hunchback, deformed by syphilis – a punishment for his sins against the Aztec people.

Omens of the Conquest

Eight omens predicted the fall of the Aztec empire. Moctezuma II would not believe his soothsayers' interpretations of these events. He had many of them dragged by the neck around the kingdom until they were dead and even destroyed their homes and banished their relatives.

A comet stretching from zenith to horizon was the first omen. For a full year, it was bright enough to turn evening into dawn.

A fire broke out mysteriously in the temple of Huitzilopochtli in a local village. The entire temple burned because the fire could not be put out.

In a light sprinkle without thunder, a lightning bolt struck the temple of Xiutecutli in another town.

A comet appeared again and split into three parts.

The lake waters whirled and foamed without wind, flooding and destroying some homes.

An unseen woman cried out, "Oh my dear sons, we are about to go. Where shall I take you?"

Fowlers captured a strange, gray bird, which they showed the emperor. On the bird's head was a round, circular mirror, through which the emperor saw the heavens, the stars, and the Fire Drill constellation, an evil omen. He also saw an army in the mirror, dressed for war, riding on large deer. The soothsayers could see nothing in this mirror.

Several two-headed men were captured at separate times. Each was brought to the emperor. However, the minute he looked at them, they disappeared.

Why the Tlaxcalans Lost

The Tlaxcalans were fierce fighters whom even the Aztecs could not defeat. So how did more than 30,000 of them lose to an army of a few hundred Spaniards? Why did they surrender so easily when their losses were no greater than those suffered against the Aztecs?

The Tlaxcalans were not fighting the Spaniards for dominance. After all, they really did not know the Spaniards' true intentions, nor did the Spaniards own any tribute-producing lands. The Tlaxcalans may merely have been testing the Spanish, to see if they were a powerful enough force. Having discovered that the conquistadors possessed formidable tactics and weapons, the Tlaxcalans then submitted to them so they could have allies against their lifelong enemy, the Aztecs.



The Battle with Narváez

In March 1520, the governor sent Panfilo de Narváez to the Yucatán to arrest Cortés. This nobleman led a squadron of 18 ships and 900 men, including 80 cavalry, 80 arquebusiers, 150 crossbowmen and heavy guns. Cortés decided to attack Narváez with only 266 poorly-equipped men and five horses. To disguise their true intentions, both leaders exchanged cordial letters and envoys. But Cortés managed a surprise attack under cover of night and rain, killing Narváez.

Many of the surviving intruders had seen Narváez and his officers as overconfident and pompous. Cortés had little trouble convincing them to join him, with promises of a share in any treasure. But the victory celebration was short-lived. A messenger had arrived from Tenochtitlán bearing bad news: the Aztecs had rebelled against Alvarado.

Return and Escape

The conquistador quickly returned to the Aztec capital, with a well-armed force of nearly 1,000 Spaniards and thousands of Cempoalans and Tlaxcalans. The city seemed deserted; he proceeded to the palace to rescue and berate the holed-up Alvarado. Only then did the hidden Aztecs attack.

A fierce battle ensued for several days. At the request of the Spaniards, Moctezuma ascended the rooftop of his palace to try to quiet his people. His subjects merely mocked him, calling him a weak woman, and renewed their attack. Moctezuma was then mysteriously killed.

According to the Spaniards, an Aztec missile had killed the emperor. According to the Aztecs, it was a Spanish murder. In any case, the Spanish hostages

mourned the death of their friend, and their only safe way out. They treated the body with full military honors and turned it over to the Aztecs, who cursed it as they burned it.

The Spaniards remained in the palace for four days. After their supplies were gone, they decided to sneak out one drizzly night, with all the gold they could carry. As the army filed out on a causeway, a woman discovered them and raised an alarm. The Aztecs attacked again, killing nearly three-quarters of the escapees. Many Spaniards drowned rather than give up their heavy gold. The survivors fled to the mainland shore, where they were not pursued. This night became known as *La Noche Triste* (The Sad Night).

The End of An Empire

The Spanish regrouped at the towns of their allies. For nine months, they gathered both native and European reinforcements, proceeding from town to town and province to province. Some places, such as Chalco, welcomed the growing army as liberators. Others were deserted when the Spanish came. And some cities, such as Xochimilco, resisted until they were burned to the ground.

On April 28, 1521, the Spaniards returned with a Spanish force of 700 soldiers, 86 horsemen, 188 musketeers and crossbowmen and 15 cannon. About 300 men manned 13 brigantines (see the sidebar), which were disassembled, carried over land and reassembled on Lake Texcoco. In addition, Cortés was supported by tens of thousands of Indian allies and 16,000 native canoes. Texcoco offered to be his headquarters and chief ally. That city was now ruled by Ixtlilxóchitl, who had once been denied the city's throne by Moctezuma II.

Final Battles

The Aztecs proved stubborn and resourceful enemies. They set stakes in the lake to temporarily ground the brigantines. They quickly emptied canals that the Spanish had filled in to provide bridges for their horses. To forestall one Spanish attack, all the women of the city dressed in warrior uniforms and stood on rooftops to insult the advancing attackers. The Spanish, surprised at this sudden appearance of warriors, pulled back at the last minute.

Any soldiers or horses captured by Cuauhtemoc's forces were immediately sacrificed so their heads could be displayed in full view of the enemy. But despite Aztec prowess on land, they could not match the Spanish forces on the water. The ships were floating fortresses, easily fending off native canoes and shooting both arrows and cannon from any point on the lake.

The Siege

Time was on the side of the conquistadors. They destroyed all fresh-water aqueducts into the cities and blockaded any sources of food. The Aztec citizens lived on wood, straw and grass. In desperation, some mothers ate their babies, who could no longer be fed.

Smallpox took many casualties. The Aztecs had neither resistance nor cure to this European disease. They tried ineffective spells, herbs and the sweatbath. The disease killed in every class of society, including Moctezuma's brother, Cuitláhuac, who died after only a few weeks as emperor.

An omen forced Cuauhtemoc, the last ruler of the Aztecs, to surrender. One night, a whirlwind of fire descended from the heavens, turning and spitting embers. It circled the remains of Nezaualcóyotl's dike, headed for the mainland, and then disappeared. In it, the emperor saw the sun and his empire falling, both disappearing forever.

The Surrender

The next day, Cuauhtemoc left a weeping city in a canoe paddled by two men. After 80 days of siege, the remaining citizens yielded to the Spanish on the day One Snake, in the year Three House.

The Spanish Brigantines

According to Cortés, the ships were the key to the whole war. In only five months, workers hurriedly built them near Tlaxcala. They then disassembled the vessels and rebuilt them on a shallow stream bed near Lake Texcoco. This distance from the lake protected them from any attacks by Aztec canoeists. Cortés ordered 40,000 Texcocans to build a canal in seven weeks so the ships could be floated down to the lake.

The square-rigged brigantines averaged 42 feet long and 9 feet wide. (The flagship measured 48 feet long.) All had at least one sail mounted on a mast amidships. Half sported a second mast on the rear deck. Each was probably flat-bottomed and strengthened with a false keel for protection against the shallow lake bottom. Collision bulkheads gave ramming ability. The draft was about two feet and the deck towered from four to seven feet above the water.

Each carried a crew of 25: one captain, 12 rowers and 12 musketeers and crossbowmen. Some of the crew also handled the cannon, which were mounted on at least half if not all the front decks.

Either because of weather or strategy, the brigantines were frequently dead in the water. During such times, sailors furled the sails tightly against the yards, to allow the crew to support land forces with firepower. Even the rowers put aside their oars to join in the fray.

Exact numbers for each ship's speed and maneuverability are unavailable. For gaming purposes, use an average speed of 7 to 9, and a maneuverability of -2 to -3. The Boating skill (p. B68) can cover most ship maneuvers. For more information on gaming with ships, see *GURPS Swashbucklers*.

Cannon

The exact types of cannons used by Cortés are unknown, though he had several heavy pieces and falconets. Cannons on his Lake Texcoco brigantines were most likely naval guns but may have been field pieces simply mounted on the ships.

For gaming purposes, assume the heavy guns weigh an average of 4,000 lbs, required 12 lbs. of powder to shoot an 18-lb. shot and cost about \$87,500. The gun malfunctions at 12, does 6d×8 of damage, with an accuracy of 3, a ½D of 400 and a Max value of 2300.

Cortés used his cannon primarily to destroy city structures such as buildings, temples, fortifications and causeways. He also used them against men. GMs who want to dispense with complex damage effects can use these guidelines instead. A direct hit can kill one or more warriors and destroy the limbs of the survivors. One shot can easily destroy Aztec structures made of the lightweight *tezontli* stone. It can also sink a native canoe.

For more information on cannons, see *GURPS High-Tech* or *GURPS Swashbucklers*.



Smallpox

A PC can catch the highly infectious smallpox virus by touching a diseased person or contaminated object, or by even breathing virus-tainted air. After a 12-day incubation period, the victim develops a high fever, headaches and chills. Four days later, the characteristic rash shows up on the face, limbs and sometimes over the torso.

The rash develops from red bumps into pus-filled blisters. The blisters break and dry up in about nine days, sometimes forming scabs. When the scabby coverings break off, they often leave deep pits and scars that mar the appearance. A person who recovers from smallpox is immune from any further attacks.

Unfortunately, the disease lacked a cure in 16th-century Europe or America. No fewer than a quarter of the Europeans who caught smallpox died. They at least tried isolating the victims, which prevented the spread of the virus. In the New World, about half the native population died from the disease in the first few decades of the 1500s because they did not have the natural immunity of the Old World.

Use the *Contagion* rules (p. B133) to determine the spread of the epidemic. Because smallpox is highly contagious, all rolls are at -2 for Europeans and -4 for native Americans. Note that Aztecs do not know enough about the disease to avoid contact with infected persons. Many of the sick will rush to the sweatbaths to try and cure themselves, only to spread the virus in its enclosed spaces.

Use the normal recovery rules for generic illnesses (p. B133). For Europeans, all HT rolls are at -1. For Aztecs, the rolls are at -2. A natural 3 or 4 means the disease has vanished.

Survivors must roll against their full HT to find the effects of smallpox on their appearance. A failure reduces a victim's appearance by one level (i.e., from Attractive to Average). A critical failure reduces it by two levels (i.e., from Attractive to Unattractive).

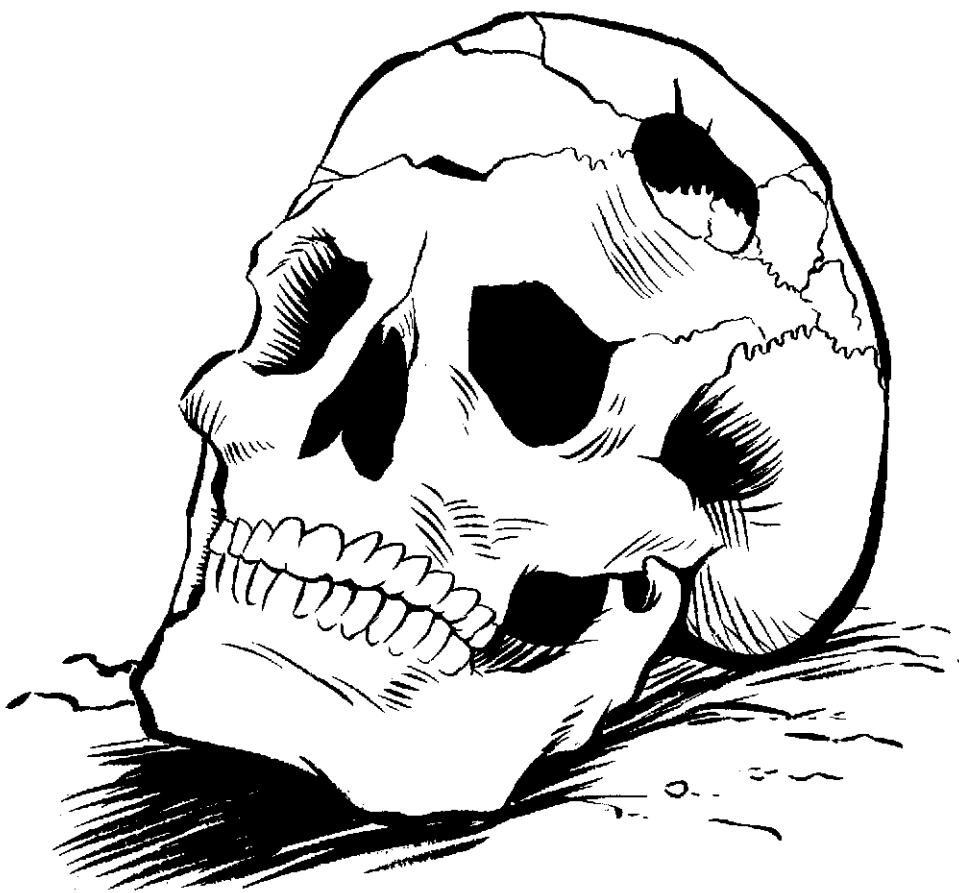
When the Spaniards entered the capital, they were aghast at the foul smell rising from the unburied bodies. The corpses massed so thickly on the streets, they had to step gingerly or fall over them. Few Aztecs remained to dispose of the dead.

The conquerors' priority was gold. They looted the common people, stuffing any precious metal into their clothing. Women and men were branded or marked as slaves, servants and messengers.

Cuáutemoc and the Lost Treasure

Cortés eventually found Cuáutemoc. At first, the conquistador refused his men's requests to torture the emperor into revealing the location of the Aztec gold. But when they accused Cortés of siding with the Aztecs, he relented. All Cuáutemoc would reveal was that some treasures lay at the bottom of the lakes. Embarrassed by this Aztec display of courage, Cortés rescued the prince from further pain.

The Spaniards scoured the city and the lakes but found few valuable pieces. In the lake, they discovered a large disk of gold, carved to represent the sun. Any other pieces had been hidden by the population.



Aftermath

Many citizens of the empire thought they had merely exchanged one emperor for another. They kept many of their customs and the tribute that once went to Moctezuma now went to Spanish administrators.

Unlike many Aztec lords, however, many Spaniards showed no concern for the good of the people. Instead, they appropriated as much land, labor and tribute as they could for themselves, reducing many proud Aztecs to poor and miserable slaves.

The Friars

For four years after the surrender, many Aztecs did not know what religion to follow. Their old gods had died, but many of their temples still stood. Though Cortés talked of a new religion and a new god, he could not convert the masses of Indians with a few priests.

It was not until 1524 that conversions began in earnest. Twelve Franciscans, dubbed the Apostles, arrived in México. Poorly dressed and humble, they walked barefoot from the coast of Vera Cruz to México city. Because their manner and self-denial was in keeping with the old Aztec ideals of the clergy, these Franciscans were warmly welcomed by the Indians.

Clerics continued to arrive, attracted by the chance to create a Christian continent unhampered by the corruption of the Old World. Indians were hailed as noble savages, who did not know how to sin. The friars demanded full personal liberty for these subjects, to bring them peacefully and willingly into the Church. Many advanced unsuccessful schemes to create Christian communities where Indians could live freely.

The clergy did not make any headway with the Indians until they learned Náhuatl. Then the Indians discovered Catholic ideas such as self-mortifications and the many saints, which translated directly into the self-sacrifice and pantheism of their own religion. Soon, a new kind of Catholicism was born: one that combined the theology of Spain with the native Indian practices of México.

México City

After exploring several sites, Cortés decided to place his capital on the site of the former Aztec capital. He destroyed the Aztec buildings and filled in the canals and lagoons. On top of the ruins of the Temple District, he built the Metropolitan Cathedral, the National Palace and a Franciscan convent. Broad avenues replaced the narrow Aztec streets. Large, multi-story, Spanish-style homes replaced many smaller Aztec residences. The once-proud capital of the Aztecs turned into the Spanish México City, complete with tiled-roof mansions, multi-storied government buildings and baroque churches.

Masters and Slaves

Stories of a strange world full of free land and hidden gold attracted many settlers to México. Neither shipwrecks nor pirate attacks deterred these adventurers. For a few decades after the Conquest, México City became an exciting and dangerous frontier town.

The native Indians became an exploitable resource. Under the Spanish *encomienda* system, worthy settlers acquired an allotment of Indians who served with labor and tribute. More often than not, the Indians came with lands. In exchange, the *encomendero* was supposed to protect his Indian vassals and teach them about the Christian religion.

Unfortunately, many Spaniards chose to assume the privileges of the *encomienda* while ignoring its obligations. They forced the Indians to work under harsh conditions that ordinary Europeans could not endure. Cattle, sheep and an inefficient Spanish agricultural system quickly depleted Indian lands, as normally abundant resources passed from Indian to Spanish needs.

Debates in the first half of the 16th century concluded that the Indians were not slaves; that they had to be instructed in the Christian faith; that they had to be protected by the crown in their subordinate status; and that they had to perform services in return for this protection.

Pope Paul III's bull of 1537 described the Indians as true men, who could understand the Catholic faith and wanted to receive it. Many clergymen were on the Indian side and made impassioned pleas to Emperor Charles to begin reforms. Small wonder that the Indians gradually saw these friars as their protectors and easily accepted aspects of their faith. Visits by royal officials also confirmed the Indian plight. By 1542, comprehensive laws were passed that weakened the *enco-*

Why the Aztecs Lost

How could a few hundred Spaniards defeat an empire of millions? First, it was not just a few hundred Spaniards. Native nations, hostile to the Aztecs, provided thousands of allied troops to the Spaniards. As the Spaniards kept winning, more and more natives changed sides, cutting into the military and manufacturing power of the Aztecs.

By lucky coincidence, the Spaniards entered Tenochtitlán during the harvest and before the start of the combat season. Thus, the Aztecs could not divert their manpower from agriculture to war at that time. The Spaniards professed a mission of peace and because they did not follow normal war protocol, the Aztecs presumed they were peaceful.

The differences in military capability favored Spain. True, the Spaniards had advanced weapons, but the Aztecs easily coped with them. What was harder to handle were the advanced European battle tactics displayed by the Spaniards. The natives still used their ritual straight-line strategies while the Spanish more flexibly separated their forces to attack.

Finally, the two sides were fighting different kinds of wars. The Aztecs were fighting a war of governmental dominance. They only wanted to prove to the invaders that the empire was more powerful. In fact, they wanted to capture the Spaniards for sacrifice, not destroy them. On the other hand, the Spanish fought a war of destruction. They even killed civilians and destroyed cities, rather than let them escape from Spanish rule.

Spanish Government in the New World

A viceroy represented Emperor Charles in distant colonies, while in Spain, councils represented the colonies. The councils met at court, digesting information from and sending orders to the viceroys.

A judicial system, called the *audiencia*, checked the almost unlimited power of the viceroys. The system judged all actions in the colonies, and could curb and control the viceroy's administrative powers.

For example, the viceroy of México depended on the Council of the Indies, who advised the king on Mexican affairs. Its recommendations, if approved by the king, went to México, where the viceroy could or could not put them into effect. The *audiencia*, holding court in Mexican cities, continually advised, warned, or praised the viceroy, depending on the situation.

The Rest of The Conquest

Though Cortés had subjugated most of México by conquering the Aztecs, several areas of resistance remained. The largest of these areas belonged to the Maya.

Francisco de Montejo began the conquest of the lowland Maya in 1527 with an army of 380 men and 57 horses. He had several disadvantages compared to Cortés. He found no central government to conquer. Instead, he had to overcome 16 separate countries to subdue the region.

By this time, the Mayans had learned from Aztec mistakes and Spanish displays. They did not try to fight the Europeans in open fields but used guerrilla tactics. They succeeded in repelling the Spaniards until 1535 when the conquistadors started winning territory. Finally, in 1542, the Spanish succeeded in founding Mérida, their first town in the Yucatán.

Pedro de Alvarado used the highland Maya's constant bickering to his advantage. He encouraged one city to betray another and one tribe to ally with him against another. The highland cities of Uatlán and Iximché fell as early as 1524. By the year after, nearly all of them had fallen to the Spanish Conquest.

Tayasal, a Mayan city in the middle of Lake Peten, remained independent until 1697, though Cortés had previously visited it. A Franciscan priest convinced the city's rulers that the Mayan calendar predicted the city and its religion would fall to Christianity. Resigned to this fate, the city allowed the Spanish to take over.

Catholicism in the New World

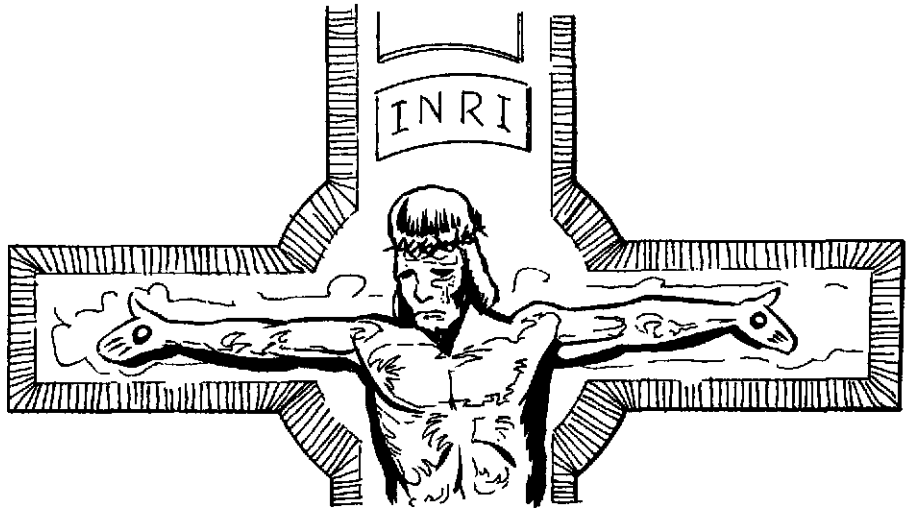
The Aztecs saw the Catholic religion as merely another version of their own and quickly substituted Catholic personages for their old deities. For example, Toci quickly became the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ was Quetzalcóatl.

The Catholic hierarchy would have none of this. They were horrified enough by the barbaric human sacrifices without having their religion suffer this kind of transformation. To stamp out any traces of the Aztec deities, they destroyed idols and used temple blocks to build great cathedrals. They desperately tried to impress upon the natives that the Christian religion was a better and different way.

But the Aztecs never saw their old religion disappear. They merely added new names and rituals to it. Even today in México, during the Christian holiday of Christmas, the Aztec god Quetzalcóatl doles out gifts to good children, standing next to a Catholic manger portraying the birth of Jesus Christ.

mienda, or at the very least transferred many of them from private to royal hands. However, in practice, the system did not disappear until the 1700s.

As the decades passed, a new culture emerged, one that was neither Aztec nor Spaniard. Typically born of both native Indian and Spanish parents, the Mexican combined both cultural sensibilities to see the world in new ways.



Spanish Characters

Many types of Spaniards journeyed to México to start a new life. First came the soldiers and sailors who conquered the country. Then came the bureaucrats and clerics who wanted to impose administrative and religious order; the poor, who wanted to escape serfdom in Spain; the nobles, who had lost all their wealth because of inflation caused by American gold; and Jews, seeking freedom from an oppressive Christian government. Finally, women, who made up about 5% of the immigrants in 1519, comprised nearly 28% of the new arrivals by 1560.

Typical Spanish characters are described below. Note that many advantages or skills that depend on the environment or on a culture must be relearned. For example, Literacy, Writing and any language-dependent skills such as Fast-Talk will require relearning for effectiveness with the native Mexicans (see p. B43).

Skill in Náhuatl or any native Mexican languages can almost never be learned by a Spaniard "formally," but can be picked up as described on p. B54.

Bureaucrat

The new colonies required a civil service to handle justice, land grants, taxes and immigration. Bureaucrats ranged from minor officials such as notaries to governors of entire provinces.

Advantages: Literacy in Spanish is required, as is Patron (the crown or a higher-level bureaucrat). Wealth and Status will depend on his level in the administration.

Disadvantages: Land-owning bureaucrats may feel contempt toward the Indians, suffering from Intolerance and Sadism. Those who simply worked for the government and remained without wealth may have Duty toward the Indians. Greed is also common.

Skills: Writing (Spanish), Law and Administration are required. Also useful: Detect Lies, any Language (Náhuatl would be especially useful), History, Research, Riding and any Social skills.

Clergyman

Clergymen, from humble friars to bishops, flooded into the New World eager to convert this virgin territory to Christianity.

Advantages: Clerical Investment (5 points, required). Literacy in Spanish is required. A few who have spent much time in study will also have Literacy in

Náhuatl. Also useful: Charisma, Empathy, Patron (a religious order) and Voice. A high-ranking priest may have both Status and Wealth. Language Talent may be useful.

Disadvantages: Duty and Sense of Duty (usually to Spain or to the Indians), religious Fanaticism and Vow (usually chastity and in many orders, poverty). Some may have the regular lay vices of Greed and Intolerance.

Skills: Theology (Catholic) is required. For those who have spent at least 1-2 years in México, Náhuatl language skill is required for communication with the Indians. History and Area Knowledge will also be useful. More mundane skills include Administration, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, History, Law, Politics, Research, Savoir-Faire and Teaching. Picture-Writing and Artist aid those interested in the codices.

Settler

To many Spaniards, the new world was effectively uninhabited and ripe for European expansion. Adventurers, thieves, farmers, merchants, scholars and criminals all took advantage of this opportunity.

Advantages: Alertness, Danger Sense, Combat Reflexes, Intuition, Luck, Strong Will and Toughness would all be useful for unknown dangers and opportunities.

Disadvantages: Religious Fanaticism is common, even for non-clerics. Enemy (usually Spanish law) might be a cause for leaving Spain. Bully, Intolerance and Sadism could all be directed toward the natives. Greed is also common.

Skills: Merchants can have Merchant, Accounting and Fast-Talk; farmers would need Agronomy; and thieves and criminals can have any of the Thief skills.

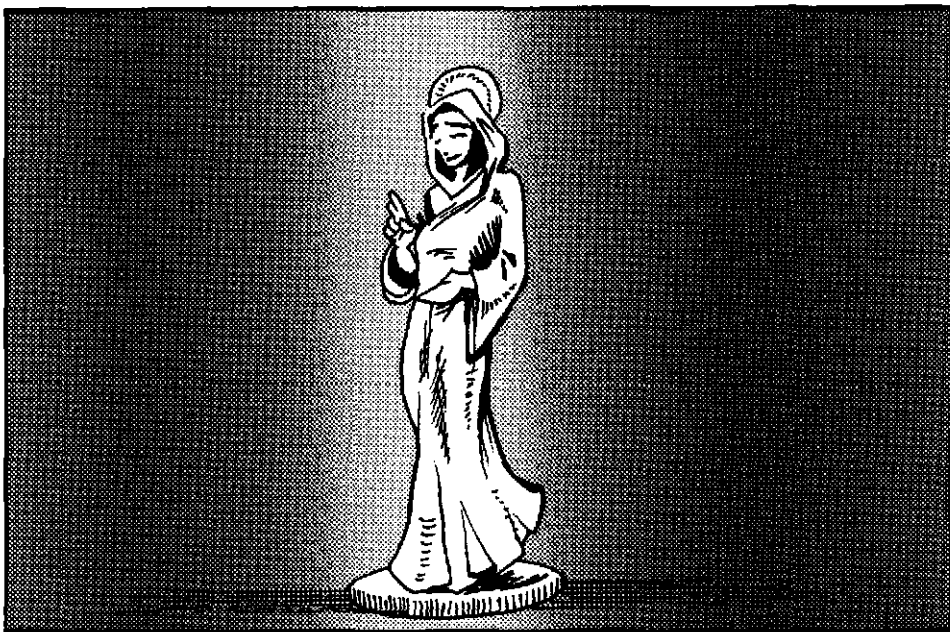
Soldier or Sailor

The soldiers came first, and they kept coming for centuries.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Common Sense, High Pain Threshold, Luck, Military Rank, Rapid Healing, and Reputation.

Disadvantages: Typical military disadvantages such as Bloodlust, Cowardice, Greed, Megalomania and Overconfidence. A military man can also have an Enemy or go Berserk at times. Duty and Vow to Spain or to México are also common.

Skills: Combat/weapon skills include Black Powder Weapons, Crossbow, Gunner (especially for sailors) and Broadsword. For those on land, consider Armoury, Leadership, Riding, Strategy and Tactics. Sailors will also find Navigation, Seamanship and Swimming to be useful.



Fray Bernardino de Sahagún

The *Florentine Codex* is one of the great sources about the Aztecs. It was written by Father Bernardino de Sahagún, who was born in Spain, about 1500. While still a student at the University of Salamanca, he decided to become a Franciscan friar.

In 1529, he arrived in México and soon distinguished himself by his pure life and zest for preaching. He quickly learned Náhuatl to become the top European speaker of that language.

Although he eventually managed several important monasteries, he gave them up to pursue his dream: to convert the natives to Catholicism. In his new position as a lecturer at the College of Santa Cruz, he noticed that missionary efforts were failing miserably, primarily because the Spanish clergy knew nothing about the Aztecs and could not relate to them.

He decided to change that by writing a description of Aztec life. This description would be written in Náhuatl first, so missionaries could learn the language. His method was simple. He asked natives who did not know Spanish to answer some survey questions. He did these in three separate Mexican towns to eliminate bias. Many answered him using pictographic writing.

By the 1550s, he submitted these answers to his native students at the college, who elaborated on the answers and the pictographs using the Náhuatl language, written in the Latin alphabet. He gathered the results into the *Florentine Codex*. In the 1570s, he also translated his work into Spanish.

Sahagún respected the Indian culture even more after he completed his work. He realized the Aztecs had a worthy civilization that had been destroyed by Spanish greed and ambition. As a tireless champion of the Indians, he rose to a senior position in the Tlatelolcan government. Unfortunately, his many disagreements with the Spanish government forced him to resign after five years.

When he died in 1590, he was much mourned by the Indians, who loved and respected him. They remembered him as a friendly, humble and poor champion who put their welfare above his own.

11 THE AZTEC CAMPAIGN

The Aztec culture was very unlike European society. The more the players can adopt the Aztec mindset, the more effective and *different* the Aztec campaign will be. Aztec PCs should believe in the destiny of the Empire, the might of the gods, and mankind's duty to support them with sacrifice. They should *know* that there are lucky and unlucky days, that magic is everywhere, and that their civilization is the highest and most beautiful ever to exist.



The GM can help the mood by using simple props. A reed mat for the floor can represent a *petlatl*. To sit in the Aztec manner, men can fold their knees up to their chests; while women fold their legs to the side, if female. Proper snacks are easy to come by: corn chips, bean dip or tomato salsa, and a chocolate drink.

The GM should start each game session with one or more omens (see p. 61) that will require a soothsayer for interpretation.

For a game with a medieval or classical flavor, use 16th-century English. Such speech peppers sentences with "thee" and "thou art" and an occasional "thou sayest." This type of English increases the other-world feel of Aztec society. Or you can use 16th-century English for formal Náhuatl and ordinary English for informal modes.

Selecting a Period

Aztec adventures can be set in three different time periods, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Pre-Conquest. Players who want to see their fortunes and culture grow, unhampered by external disasters, may want to adventure many years before the Conquest.

Conquest. More warlike players can pick this period, with skirmishes, raiding parties and ambushes. The GM may want to postpone or change the dates of the Conquest to keep his players guessing. European characters can appear at this time.

Post-Conquest. Those interested in playing European adventurers, or in guerrilla battle against the invaders, can choose this period. Post-Conquest México had something of a Wild West feel, with more lawlessness and unpredictability than either Tenochtitlán or Europe. The status of the Aztec was uncertain: he could be a defeated minority, a converted heathen, or a pretender to Spanish society. Someone born of Aztec and Spanish parents would be interesting to play as he struggles to reconcile his identity in both cultures.

Historical/Fantastic Adventures

The Colony

This straightforward mission is good for beginners. The Empire hires the party to help establish a fortress-colony of 300 Aztecs on the border of a hostile nation. The journey will be through rough terrain filled with forests and wild animals. And the enemy may attack at any time.

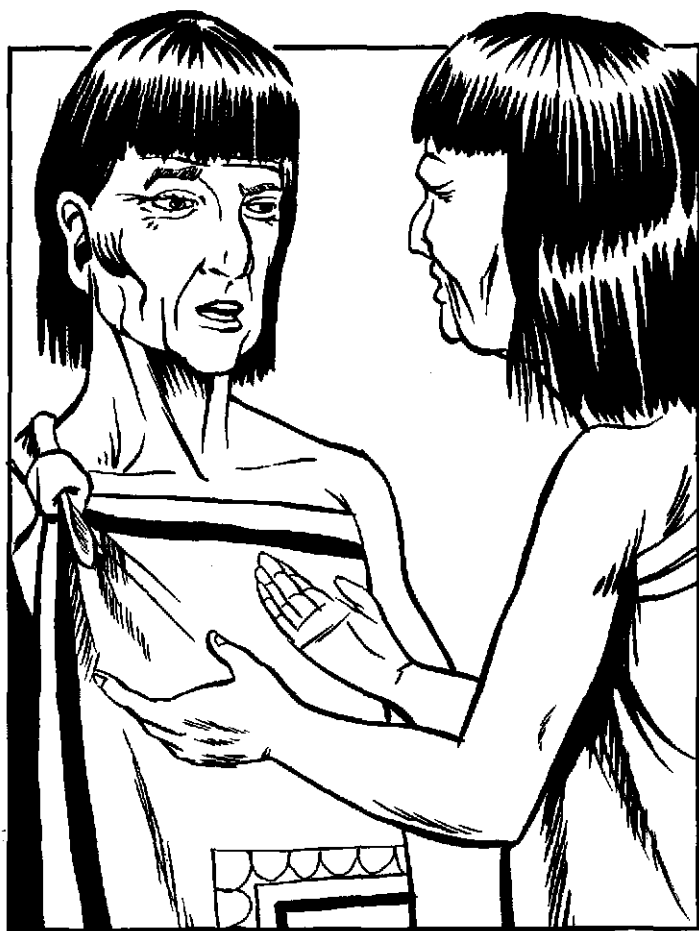
Army Brat

This adventure is suitable for a party of veteran warriors. By tradition, nobles can send their boys for training with the army. Most of the new recruits are well-behaved and obedient. But the son of a high official is a complaining, spoiled brat who dislikes receiving commands. After one outburst, the party disciplines him. He threatens them, saying, "You'll regret doing this to me."

The veterans take their charges out with the army for maneuvers. Suddenly, a cloudburst fills their ravine with a dangerous flash flood, drowning many soldiers. The veterans manage to save themselves and all their wards, save for the brat. They cannot even find his body. Is he dead, or lost and hurt? Or is he hiding so the veterans will have to deal with his parents?

The Hunt

This adventure works best for a mixed party that includes a priest, a few warriors and a scholar. They are hired by a hunter or



artisan who wants to search for a rare item in the Mayan provinces. The warriors are needed as guards, the scholar to locate the item and the priest to ensure that none of the gods are displeased during their venture. This hunt may take them to a far jungle, through an unknown ruin, or to a hostile tribe.

The Glyph of the Heir

As a gesture of good will, the emperor sends the party with many gifts to the coronation of a Mayan *batab*. The installation ceremonies are quickly disrupted by a stranger claiming to be the rightful heir. Both claimants can recite the secret knowledge of the forefathers perfectly.

Because the Aztecs are respected foreigners and therefore unbiased, they are hired to escort both men and some town elders to a lost Mayan ruin where genealogical glyphs can prove who is the proper heir. Not only will the adventurers have to find a lost ruin based on a very general map, they will need to protect their charges from jungle dangers and prevent each claimant from killing the other!

Zoo Kept

A Totonac entertainer is regaling his audience in a small Tlaxcalan frontier town. Suddenly, complete silence falls as he speaks of the Aztec zoo's latest acquisition: a sullen dwarf albino who is unable to speak. The crowd breaks into questions and lamentations all at once.

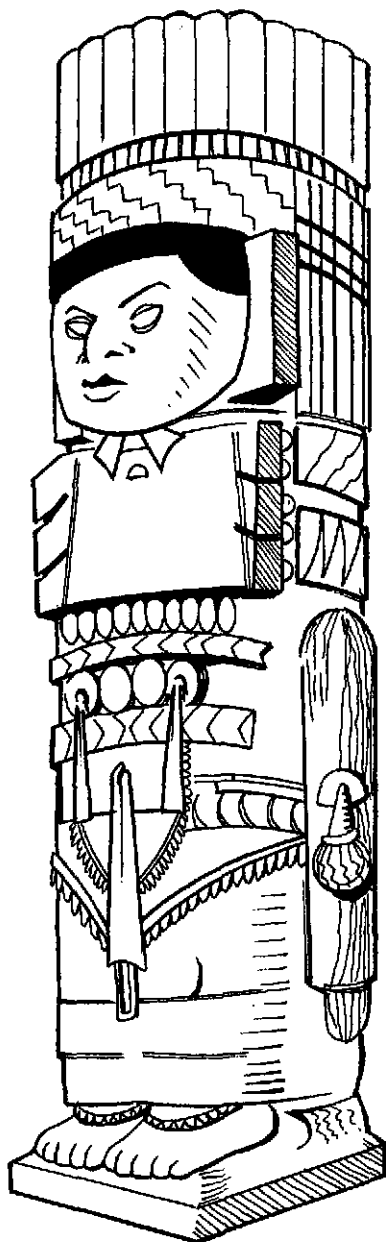
Eventually the storyteller is able to piece together a tale. The albino is a powerful wizard-priest of this town, missing for many months. He is mute, so to work any spells, he has to drink great quantities of *ololiuqui*. He was out gathering this herb, when he was obviously kidnapped by the miserable Aztecs.

The townsfolk want him back . . . but it is not simply a matter

of asking the empire to hand him over. For one thing, the Tlaxcalans are at war with the Aztecs. For another, the emperor is unlikely to release such an unusual curiosity just for the benefit of some scraggly townsfolk.

The town chief forms a group to rescue their priest. The Totonac entertainer is reluctantly pressed into service as their guide. All the volunteers will be richly rewarded if they get back alive. They must surmount several challenges: how do they cross miles of hostile Aztec territory and enter the capital without ending up on the sacrificial block? If they do reach the zoo, how can they spirit away a popular attraction under the noses of scores of guards and spectators? Even at night, the zoo is crawling with keepers. And the emperor's guards will trail the escapees.

It turns out that the priest was kidnapped by unscrupulous merchants from another town, who took him by surprise, and eventually sold him to the royal zoo for a large profit. The albino will not return willingly until the adventurers help him track down the kidnappers for revenge. He will teach his rescuers several rare spells, enchant their weapons, or provide them with powerful magic talismans for their help.



Duelling Calpullis

A group of goldworkers in the *calpulli* of Tlatilco is disgusted by the way they are treated by the *calpullec* and their council of elders. They feel they are unfairly taxed, simply because they produce the most income in that district. The goldworkers have title to the land of their homes because of a historical fluke.

The council of the Xihuitonco *calpulli*, on which the goldworkers border, sees an opportunity here. Having these artisans reside in their ward would be a source of great revenue, even with fair taxes, and bring great prestige. They quietly begin making overtures to the goldworkers to join them. The council of Tlatilco will have none of this and do their best to make up with the goldworkers, appealing to their sense of loyalty.

At first, the meetings between all three parties are amicable, but tense up quickly. The goldworkers are seeking to play one *calpulli* against the other, to obtain the best concessions. Both districts offer tribute breaks, gifts, banquets and slaves. Then, the accidents and injuries start happening . . . and then mysterious deaths. Is it magic?

The goldworkers' guild, located in another district, is very concerned. These "negotiations" are disrupting the work of the Tlatilco goldworkers, whose goods are needed in quantity for an upcoming celebration. They also intervene.

The adventurers can be hired by either *calpulli* as go-betweens or "persuaders." They can also be hired by the goldworkers' guild or the artisans themselves to provide security until negotiations are complete. These potential employers will stress the need for discretion. If higher government officials are involved, such as the emperor, their meddling may complicate the situation.

The Surgeon

The ruler of an important Aztec town has suddenly fallen into a coma. His physicians know the problem is with his head, but cannot cure him. It is rumored that the Tarascans have knowledge of advanced head healing. The state dispatches a group to ask for help: a diplomat for negotiation, the physician familiar with the ruler's condition, a rich merchant for his wealth and contacts and some warriors for protection.

The group will have to travel through hostile territory. Only the merchant's contacts can protect them.

After a few skirmishes, they eventually reach the city. The merchant's contacts send them to a local physician, who, after discussing the patient's condition with the Aztec healer, concludes that only surgery can save him. The only surgeons available live south of the city, many days away by boat. These doctors will also be expensive.

The adventurers will have to travel down the Pacific coast to the unknown territory of South America. The surgeon will of course be Incan. The GM could place him anywhere from a border outpost to the Inca capital of Cuzco.

If the surgeon reaches the patient in time, he will operate and remove a tumor. If the ruler recovers, all will be richly rewarded. Otherwise, the adventurers and the surgeon will be accused of Tarascan subterfuge. They will all have to run for their lives to survive.

Mythic Adventures

To The Other Side

Strange omens are plaguing the capital. The emperor chooses the daughter of a nobleman to ask the gods directly what is going on. She was selected for this honor because she is a hunchback

and therefore divinely blessed. She is to be sealed in a mountain cave believed to lead directly to the other world.

The nobleman publicly agreed to this, but his family soothsayer has told him that he must save his daughter . . . her life, not her death, will permit the gods to help the Empire. He secretly hires the party to spirit his daughter away to safety before she begins the journey to the cave. He will pay them handsomely for their efforts and their discretion.

Unfortunately, the party arrives too late for the rescue . . . the victim has been taken a day early. They must now find the cave to which she was taken. When they find it, they discover that it is swarming with workers and guards . . . rescue must wait until after she is sealed within.

After the sacrificers have left, the party must laboriously find a way into the sealed cave. When they enter, they will find no one there. Instead, they'll discover a dark hole, which, should they chance to pass through, will take them to the Other Side.

The Other Side

Depending on the head start the daughter had, the searchers may have to travel far to find her. Presumably, she is just as lost and trying to find the nearest god. The explorers will find this new world strange and frightening. A Theology roll will give general information, with penalties of -1 to -5 for specific details. Priests who arrive at the level ruled by their deity can roll without penalty.

See the descriptions on p. 59. In general, any of the 13 heavens will look very much like México but greener, with flowers, birds, butterflies and fruits everywhere. Any of the nine underworlds will look like the desert plains, with a sky that is either dark or lit by a pale, moonlike sun. There will likely be volcanoes, earthquakes, floods and so on.

Everywhere on the Other Side, magic is commonplace. Anyone they meet is probably magical. Any bird, flower, or butterfly can turn into a useful warrior or foe. Any warriors they meet will most likely challenge any males to a Flower War before giving any answers. (Female adventurers will be treated with respect but indifference. If they happen to be priestesses or have a handicap, they will be treated with consideration.)

PC victories will reward them with answers. Losses will cause the warrior to disappear in disgust. Note that if a PC is killed in the Other Side, he will automatically teleport to whatever level of the afterlife he belongs on. He may be trapped permanently on the level he is on, or may find his way back to the party. (A Theology skill of 18+ is needed to know these facts. Otherwise, the adventurer may come up with all sorts of wrong conclusions.)

The Chac Mool

Eventually the wanderers will meet a living *Chac Mool*, a messenger designed to carry human hearts to the gods. He seems disoriented and lost. When questioned, he will reply despondently that some evil warriors attacked him. They stole the heart he was carrying and disappeared. Now, he is trying to find it.

Did some demons or evil sorcerers truly take the heart? If so, what did they want with it? What could they possibly do with the heart of someone who is already dead? And what about the owner of the heart? Will he want to know where it is too?

If they can help him, he can lead them to the princess; if they can rescue her, she will have been befriended by a god or goddess, and learned a secret which will solve the empire's current problems! The details are up to the GM, so they can tie in to the rest of the campaign.



The Real Quetzalcóatl Returns

It is the year One Reed, and rumors of a godlike being on the eastern coast of México turn out to be true. The real Quetzalcóatl has returned on a raft of snakes and is on his way to the capital. He appears as an old and bearded wizard, wearing priestly clothes. He has only one message: human sacrifice must stop. The gods do not need blood but can make do with sacrifices of flowers and small animals.

Almost at the same time, rumors of another godlike being surface. This deity is Tezcatlipoca, also appearing as a sorcerer, approaching the capital from the west. His message is to ignore Quetzalcóatl. If the Aztecs stop their sacrificial practices, he and all the other gods would be destroyed, leaving Quetzalcóatl to rule as dictator. Tezcatlipoca's explanations sound consistent. But they may also be untrue. After all, is he not known as the Mocker of Men, who delights in throwing misfortune into men's plans?

Confused, the emperor consults his priests and soothsayers. They say that the other deities, especially Huitzilopochtli, have remained silent on this issue. The gods, they remind their lord, do not interfere in each other's wars.

Each of the approaching deities is gathering legions of followers. Each wants to speak to the emperor to convince him his side is right. The adventurers have a simple decision to make: whose side will they follow? Whose side is most likely to win in a battle between the two?

The End of the World

Barely a few weeks after the Spanish destruction of Tenochtitlán, the troubles began. The sun rises and sets at erratic times, following none of the predicted paths. Then, after a few more days, the sun's light slowly dims. It seems that without human blood, the sun cannot survive after all.

This realization throws all Indians into a panic. Some resort to human sacrifice once more, but unfortunately the presence of the Spanish makes this ineffective. Many soothsayers can no longer consult the gods or the future because of this block. Aztec wise men predict the end of the world unless the Spaniards are driven away to allow the nourishment of the sun on a grand scale. Meanwhile, victims must be sent directly to the sun to forestall its end.

The Spaniards of course, dismiss all this as superstition, even though they cannot explain the solar anomalies. They refuse to leave, and they brutally punish those who blame them for the omens.

The party has two options: they can join the rebellion to help drive away the Spaniards. Or they can journey to a distant part of México, untainted by the Spaniards. Finding such a place will be half the battle. Once located, a powerful wizard can open a gate to the gods' abode and send the party, with two or three suitable sacrifices – volunteers, of course! The party's goal is to deliver these victims directly to the sun so he can be consulted on how he can best be revived. The party may also need to contact other deities for help in ridding their land of the Spaniards and restoring universal order.

Crossover Campaigns

Variant campaigns can be created with other *GURPS* worldbooks:

GURPS Swashbucklers

Throughout the 16th and 17th century, adventurers from Spain and other European countries descended upon Mexico in search of the lost Aztec treasure. Mexico City became a lawless place, the ideal location for swashbucklers and pirates in search of adventure to travel to. Sailors on their way to the Philippines (then a Spanish colony) could stop here, before transferring to the Manila galleon. Mexican citizens also travelled to both Europe and Asia from here.

GURPS Cliffhangers

From the late 19th century until today, teams of archaeologists have swarmed into Mexico to explore its undocumented ruins. Among the serious scientists were reporters in search of stories, thieves stealing artifacts for greedy collectors and missionaries seeking to convert unknown tribes. Treasure-hunters looting the ancient ruins may have to deal with fantasy beasts and curses as well as jungle creatures, bandits and the Mexican police and army. Present-day cliffhangers can also involve criminals using the jungles as a haven for gun-running and drug smuggling.

GURPS Time Travel

Time Tours, Inc. might offer visits to the Aztec culture, particularly to modern-day Mexicans in search of their roots. Tourists, jaded by the usual vacations, will pay plenty for a front-row seat at a human sacrifice – and the guides will have to make sure that the visitors don't get *too* closely involved! The lost Aztec arts of featherworking and weapon-making will interest modern artists. And some fanatics may want to change the past, so that the Aztec empire still exists.

A 16th-century campaign can use the *cenotes* as doorways to other places and times, such as the present. What would happen if a modern archaeology student, exploring such a formation, surfaced in pre-Columbian America?

GURPS Fantasy

The Banestorm sucked up a small city on the outskirts of Tlaxcala and deposited it *intact* near a populated area of Yrth. Its warlike people immediately conquered their neighbors and began the sacrifices. Will they succeed in creating a new empire on this planet?

GURPS Horror

Cable workers accidentally broke into a small temple underneath Mexico City, next to a busy subway station. Excited archaeologists believed that the temple housed the ashes of some prominent Aztec priests and quickly took them to the university for further study.

Almost immediately, the murders began. The corpses all shared one horrifying aspect: the gaping holes in their chests were missing their hearts. Was someone or something unleashed by the temple and is it feeding on human hearts?

The Aztecs also believed that all kinds of ghosts and spirits inhabited the world and had to be appeased by sacrifices and prayers. A GM can easily turn any campaign into a horror one by unleashing a spirit that cannot be dealt with by normal means. Perhaps this spirit belonged to that of a lost culture such as the Olmecs and Toltecs and all knowledge of how to appease it fell with that civilization.

GURPS Space

Were Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca ancient astronauts who once fought their battles in Mesoamerica? Perhaps both will return some day to check up on their lost colonies.

What if the Aztec empire survived into the space age? They would rule many planets. Aliens of every description would fill the zoo, and blood of many colors would run down the steps of the Great Temple.

Most of the important temples will be in space because this is as close to the gods as one could get. Aztec science can accommodate religion by moving the underworld and heaven from their earth location to some outside dimension. Space and time warps might transport the unwary traveler to those dimensions.

GURPS Rome

In *New Barbarians*, an alternate-timeline science fiction novel by Kirk Mitchell, the Roman Empire survives into the present and clashes with a technologically-advanced Aztec empire!

GURPS China

There is no historical record that the Chinese never crossed the Pacific, but some emperors did experiment with naval travel and warfare. And there are puzzling fragments of evidence – a pottery style, a statue of a man in lotus position – that could indicate some link between China and Mesoamerica.

In an alternate world, the Chinese might have landed in Mexico many decades before the Spanish. Among other innovations, the Chinese can hasten the Aztec move from pictograms to true writing. They can also help the Aztecs combat the spread of smallpox through inoculation, which they discovered long ago.

Their most important contribution to the empire would be military knowledge. The Conquest might have turned out differently if the Aztecs had been better ordered – and if they had had guns and rockets.

GLOSSARY

See p. 3 for pronunciation of Aztec words. A *pl.* shows the plural form of the word; *sing.* shows the singular form. Aztec words without a designation keep the same form in the plural or singular. A few Mayan words used by the Aztecs are included here.

Acheautli: A constable, executioner, or military trainer.

Acxotecatl: Merchant general, the highest-ranking of the merchant guards.

Anahuac: The known world.

Atlatl: A spear thrower.

Atoli: A breakfast porridge made out of maize and seasoned with pimento or honey.

Batab: Mayan town chief.

Calli: House.

Calmecac: The more advanced Aztec school, usually attended by the children of nobles and merchants, or those who wanted to be priests.

Calpixqui: The tribute collector and often the only Aztec presence in a conquered province.

Calpullec: The chief official of a district or *calpulli*.

Calpulli: A district or ward of a city. Inhabitants of a district were typically related and worked at similar jobs.

Calpultéotl: The chief god of a *calpulli*.

Chia: The herb sage.

Chichimec: Barbarian. General term used to designate any one of the "uncivilized" tribes north of the Aztec empire, such as the Otomí.

Chimalacalli: An armored war canoe.

Chimalli: A circular war shield.

Chinampa: Man-made island used for farming on the lakes in the Valley of México.

Ciuacóatl: Snake Woman. (1) The Aztec prime minister and highest imperial official behind the emperor. (2) An important goddess.

Copal: A fragrant tree resin burned as an incense and as a sacrificial offering.

Cuauchic: Shorn One. The highest knightly order, open only to nobles.

Cuaupilli: (pl. *cuaupilitin*) A meritocratic nobleman, usually promoted from commoner status through his war deeds.

Cueitl: A woman's ankle-length skirt.

Ehuatl: A feather mantle worn by warriors.

Halach Uinic: Mayan word for king.

Huehuetlatolli: Ancient Word. A long-drawn-out speech that displays skill in the Náhuatl language, used during celebrations.

Huey Tlatoani: Revered Speaker. One of many titles for the Aztec emperor.

Huilpilli: A woman's blouse.

Ichcaupilli: Body armor made of quilted cotton.

Ichpocacalli: School for girls.

Icpalli: Woven chairs with backs.

Ihilia: That part of the soul that contains desires and passions.

Itzcuinli: A small, hairless, barkless dog, raised for food.

Ixiptla: (1) The "god disguise" which enabled its wearer to assume the person of the deity. (2) The official wearer of the god disguise.

Macauitl: The Aztec sword made of wood with obsidian blades.

Maceualli: (pl. *maceaualtin*) Landless peasant, next to the lowest rung on the social ladder.

Maxtlatl: Loincloth.

Metl: A cactus used for food and clothing.

Mictlan: The lowest level of the underworld. Abode of Mictlantéotl, god of death.

Náhuatl: The Aztec language.

Naualli: (pl. *nanaualtin*) (1) A sorcerer or shapechanger. (2) A person's animal double. (3) The animal form of a shapechanger. (See p. 76 for the Aztec words for several "specialist" magicians.)

Naualoztomeca: Disguised Merchant. A high merchant-guard rank.

Nemontemi: The five useless and unlucky days at the end of the secular year.

Octli: An alcoholic drink made from the sap of the *metl* plant, called *pulque* by the Spanish.

Ollamalitzli: The ceremonial ball game played by two teams of nobles. The object of the game was to hit a rubber ball into a small stone ring.

Ololhuqui: A mushroom that induces hallucinations. Used in religious ceremonies.

Otontin: (sing. *otomitl*) "Otomí knight," the second highest knightly order, open only to nobles.

Oztomeca: (sing. *oztomecatl*) Merchant warrior. Those members of the traveling merchants who served as guards.

Patolli: A popular board game in which pieces raced around an X-shaped board with 52 spaces.

Petlatl: A woven reed mat used as a seat and bed. Also the seat of a government or business concern.

Petlacalli: A cane container strapped to the forehead of a porter with rope. Used for carrying goods.

Peyote: Cactus button. A hallucinogen used in magic and medicine.

Pilli: (pl. *pipiltin*) Hereditary noble.

Pinole: A drink made with toasted maize flour mixed with water.

Pochteca: (sing. *pochtecatl*) Traveling merchants.

Pochtecatlailotlac: Supreme chief of merchants.

Quachic: The Shorn Ones, the highest Aztec knightly order.

Quetzal: A rare bird which produced very desirable feathers.

Quimichin: (pl. *quimichtin*) Spy, mouse.

Teatlantime: Slave sacrificer. A high-ranking class of merchants.

Tecouanime: Slave dealer; a very high merchant rank indicating great wealth.

Tecpan: Community center.

Tecpatl: (1) Flint. (2) A knife with a flint blade.

Tecutli: (pl. *tetecutin*) Noble or lord.

Telpochcalli: The lower of the two Aztec schools, open to all commoners.

Temazcalli: Steam bathhouse located in the courtyard of nearly every Aztec home.

Teocalli: A temple, usually an enclosed sanctuary on top of a pyramidal base.

Teopatl: The black body paint worn by priests to increase endurance.

Teotl: A deity or god.

Teponaztli: A two-tone log drum.

Teyahualonime: Surrounders of the Enemy, a high-ranking merchant guard.

Teyolia: That part of the soul in which personality and knowledge resided. This was the part that continued after death.

Tezontli: A soft, volcanic stone used for buildings in Tenochtitlán.

Tiangui: Market.

Tlachtli: The ball court on which *ollamalitzli* was played.

Tlacochealco: The House of Darts, or arsenal.

Tlalocan: Fabled home of Tlaloc, the rain god. The heaven where those who died by drowning go.

Tlamanime: Knowers of Things. Aztec wise men.

Tlameme: Professional porter.

Tlatoani: (pl. *tlatoanime*) Speaker. King or ruler of a province or town.

Tlatocan: Great Council. The governing body of Tenochtitlán, just behind the vice-emperor, composed of the highest nobles.

Tlauitztl: A war suit worn by the most important warriors, encasing both the torso and limbs.

Tlillan: A sanctuary in the Temple District that housed the statues of foreign gods.

Tlimatl: Mantle or cloak worn around the shoulders by males.

Tolteca: (sing. *toltecatl*) Artisans whose skill supposedly descended from the Toltecs. These artisans include featherworkers, goldworkers and workers of precious stone.

Tonalli: That part of the soul responsible for magic. Also refers to a person's day sign or fate.

Tonalpoualli: Daybook, containing the sacred calendar.

Tonalpouqui: Daybook reader.

-tzin: Suffix meaning "lord," as in Moctezumatzin for Lord Moctezuma.

Tzitzimime: Twilight demons who will swarm over the earth at the end of the current age.

Tzompantli: Skull rack.

Ueuetl: A small, upright drum played with both hands.

Xiquipilli: (1) An army. (2) 8,000, the number of troops in an army.

Xochitl: Flower.

Yiautli: An anesthetic drug given to victims of the fire sacrifice.

Foreign Terms

These words were brought to Mesoamerica by the Conquest, or created afterwards to describe Aztec concepts.

Amaranth: A grain, vital to Aztec agriculture.

Cochineal: A small insect whose body was ground up to produce the color red for cosmetics and paintings.

Codex: An Aztec book made from deerskin, painted with pictographs and folded up like an accordion.

Conquistador: Conqueror. A Spanish soldier who explored the New World by force.

Day sign: The number and sign of the day in the sacred calendar under which an Aztec was born.

Daybook: A book used for fortune-telling in which all the days of the sacred calendar were listed.

Encomendero: A master, sometimes a protector and sometimes nearly a slaveowner, under the *encomienda* system.

Encomienda: A feudal system where a worthy Spaniard received an allotment of Indian laborers in exchange for protecting them and teaching them about Christianity.

Liquidambar: A fragrant tree resin.

Maize: Corn, the Aztec staple.

Pulque: Spanish name for *octli*, the fermented drink made from the maguey or *metl* plant.

Tortilla: A flat, round bread made of corn and used to wrap meats, vegetables, or fruits.

Volador: A ritual in which performers dressed as macaws tied themselves to the top of a long pole and "flew" around it on ropes.

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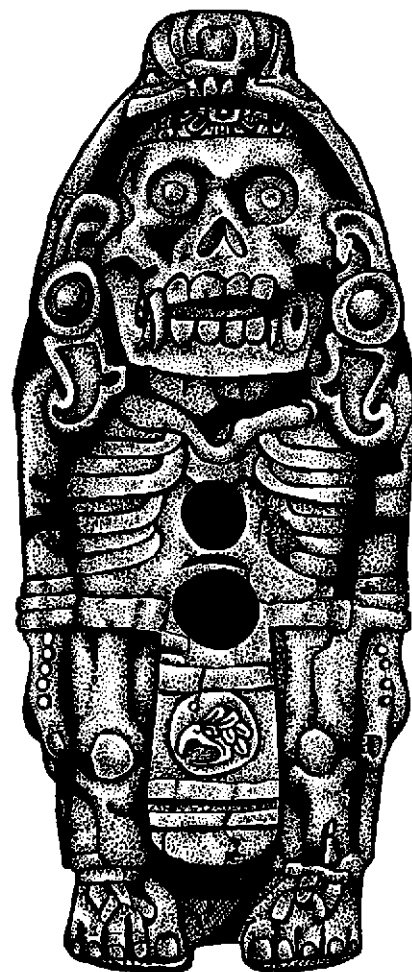


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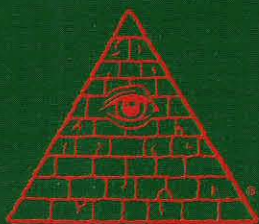
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ERRATA

This is the known errata for the print version of *GURPS Aztecs* when this PDF was created:

Page 41: Quimichetl's Move is 4. He has Wealth: Comfortable, Reputation +1, and Alertness +1. His Phobia is mild.

Page 93: Under Diplomacy and Spying, a traveling merchant was typically asked to report (not deport) unusual activities.

The last sentence is incomplete. His duty to the Emperor, to return with information and advice, was far more important than nourishing the gods with his death.

Page 110, sidebar: 1519, March 4 should be "1519, March 13."

Page 111: Under Spain and the Aztecs, Cortés landed on the Mexican mainland on March 13, 1519 at the mouth of the Tabasco River. After a few days, he sailed further north and made landfall on March 24, 1519, Good Friday.

Page 113, sidebar: In the last paragraph, Hernán Cortés died on December 2, 1519.

Page 121: In the first paragraph, delete "if female" from the description of women's sitting posture.



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