

HOLLOW WORLD™

for all levels of play

Official
Game Accessory

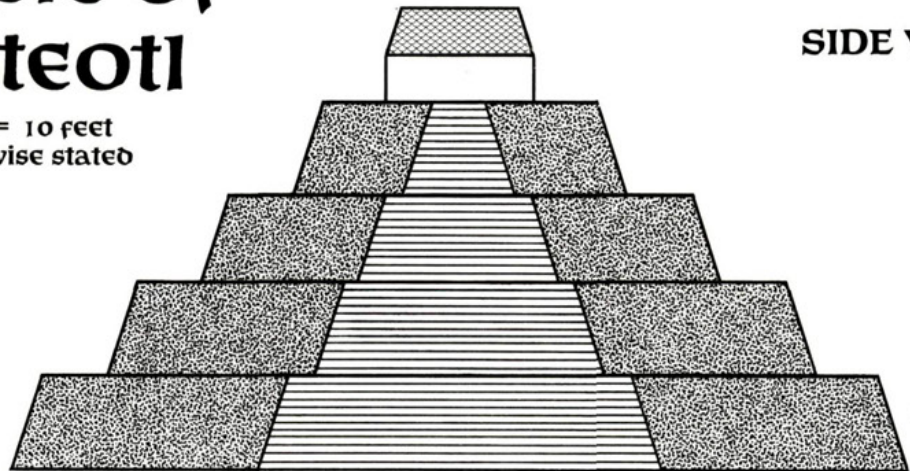
Sons of Azca

by John Nephew



A Temple of Atzanteotl

Scale: 1 sq. = 10 feet
unless otherwise stated



SIDE VIEW

Level 5

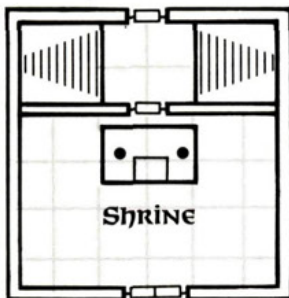
Level 4

Level 3

Level 2

Level 1

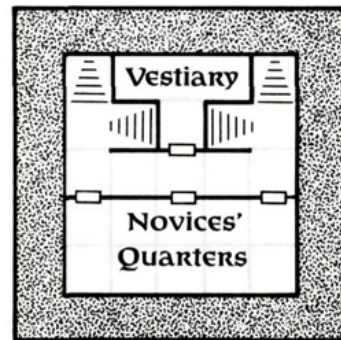
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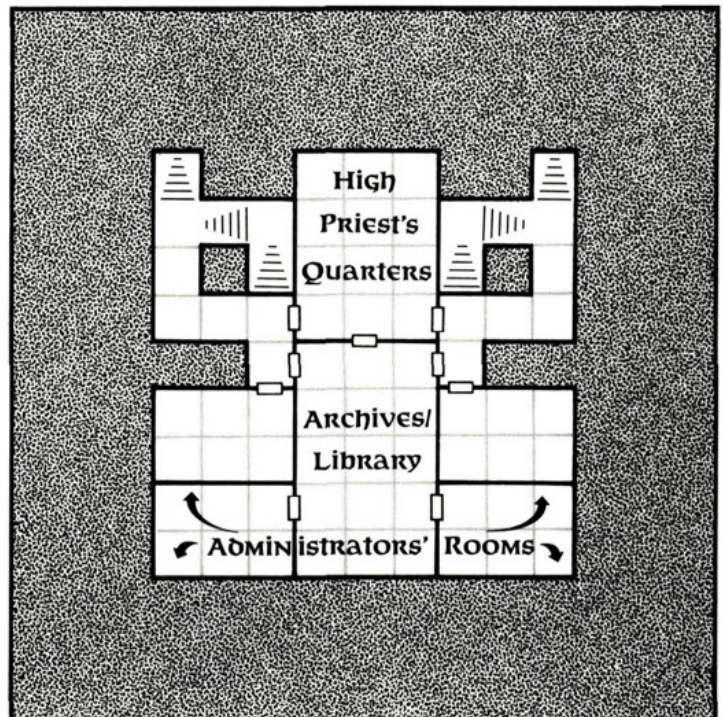
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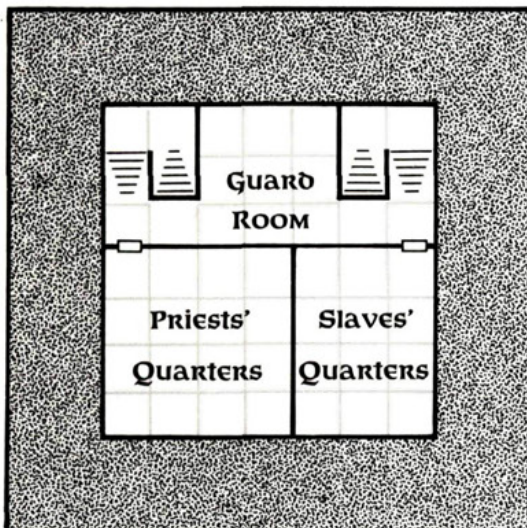
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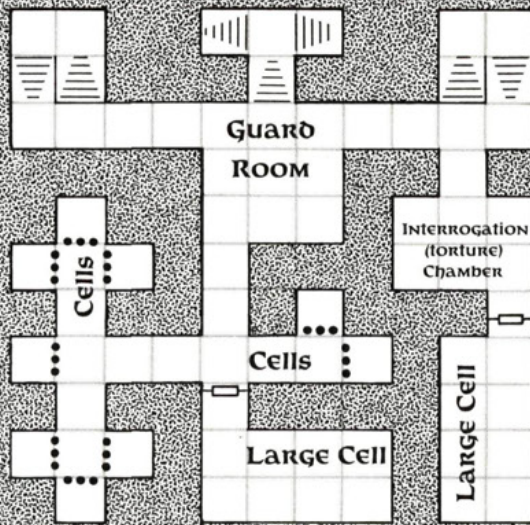


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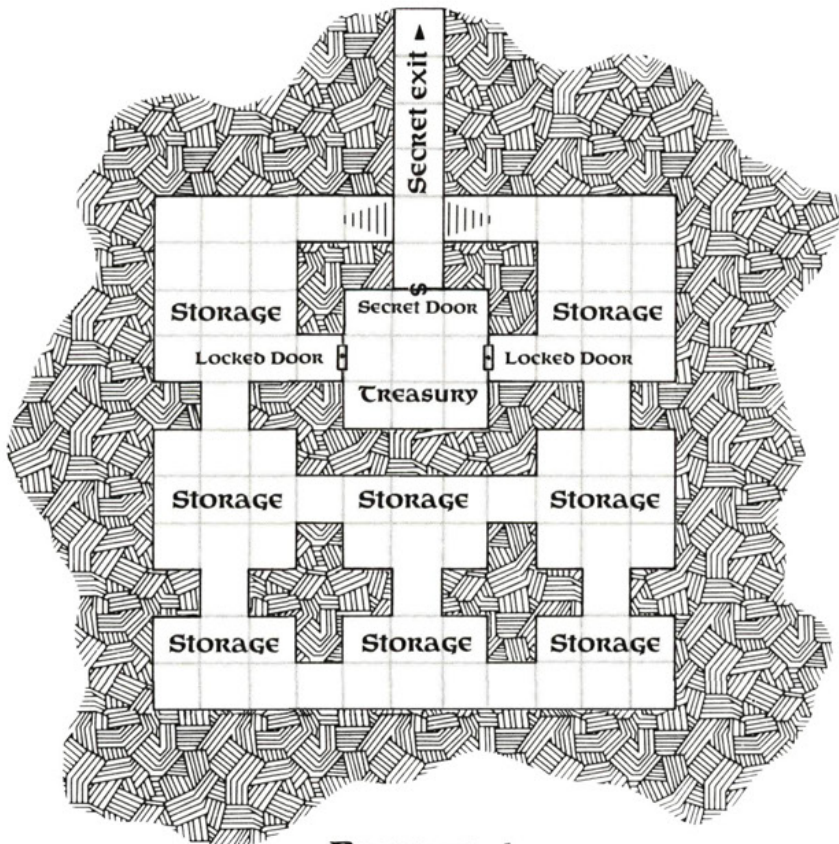


Level Three





LEVEL ONE



BASEMENT

The typical temple of Atzanteotl is a step pyramid, built of four massive, steep tiers of stone. At the top is a small stone building (level five) that houses the shrine of Atzanteotl, the altar on which victims are sacrificed, and staircases to the inside of the structure, to the shrine.

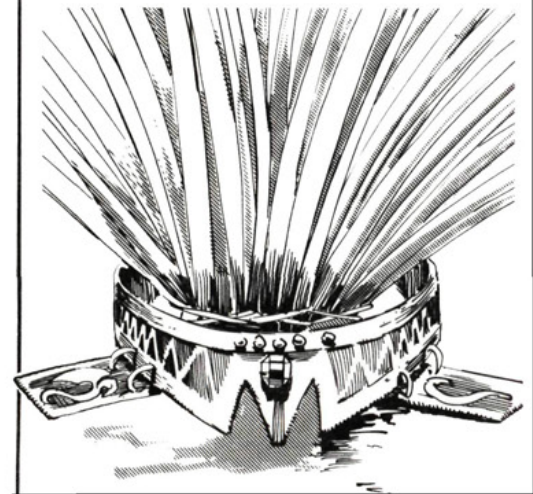
Moving down inside the structure, Level Four included the quarters of the novices, who spend much of their time in the temple, and the vestuary, where priests dress themselves for ceremonies. Ritual items, such as sacrificial knives, are stored in the vestuary.

Level Three includes a guard room near to the slaves' quarters, plus the room where the llamacazqui (priests) reside.

Level Two is the abode of the important temple staff: The High Priest and top administrators (all titled teohuatzin). The temple's library and archives are maintained here as well. They typically consist of dry material such as birth, death, marriage, and sacrifice records. Inspirational and devotional texts abound as well.

Level One is devoted to prisoners awaiting sacrifice. There is, of course, a guard room, cells, and even an "interrogation chamber" for questioning captured foreigners and criminals.

Beneath the ground, the pyramid's basement is a honeycomb of storage chambers. They are filled with grain and other taxes and tribute paid to the temple or government. The only doors on this level, always securely locked (and no doubt trapped as well), are around the temple treasury. No well-designed temple is without an emergency escape, and this, too, is typically on the basement level.



HOLLOW WORLD™

An Official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game Supplement

Ka's Adventurer's Guide to the SONS OF AZCA

by John Nephew

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ISBN 1-56076-138-5
9332XXX1501

Welcome to the Azcan Empire, the subject of the first *Ka's Adventurer's Guide* to the Hollow World from TSR, Inc. These *Adventurer's Guides* are much like the Gazetteers that detail the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game's Known World game setting; in fact, they are about the very same planet. There's one big difference: the nations of the *Adventurer's Guides* are on the inside!

This supplement, and those that will follow, are all designed to accompany the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set. If you do not own a copy of the boxed set, you may have some difficulty implementing parts of this supplement. For instance, you'll be missing much information on the Azcans' neighbors, and you won't have the boxed set's complete rules for character skills. While some information from the Boxed Set and earlier Gazetteers is condensed and summarized here (or expanded if relevant to the Azcans in particular), it's just not worthwhile for us to reproduce so much information, especially when there's so much that's new.

If you've been following the Gazetteer line, you may already have heard about the Azcans, and you know enough about the latest D&D® rules, such as skills, that you'll be able to get by just fine without the boxed set.

Even if this is the only D&D product you own, we hope you'll find it novel, intriguing and useful for adaptation to your campaign.

The Adventurer's Guide

This *Adventurer's Guide* describes the Azcan Empire of the D&D® game's Hollow World; its geography, customs, people, and history. In this package you'll find the following:

- This 64-page *Guide to the Azcan Empire*, including complete information for the Dungeon Master. Included is a 16-page pull-out section for players, presenting common knowledge concerning the Azcans, and showing how to create and role-play Azcan player characters.

- A 32-page Azcan Campaign Book, with ideas for Azcan-based campaigns, new monsters, and of course ready-to-play adventures;
- a full-color, fold-out map sheet depicting the Azcan Empire in full detail; and
- a three-panel cover portraying additional maps and floorplans.

Using This Adventurer's Guide

The first thing for player and Dungeon Master alike to do is to read the Players' Booklet.

The chapter "What Everyone Knows. . ." serves as an introduction to the Azcans. Various facets of Azcan life—from history to superstitions—are addressed. Each passage is told from a specific point of view, either native or foreign. Not all the information is accurate—not every speaker (even the native ones) has perfect access to the truth, and everyone has a bias of some sort. What you get is a kind of collage, and out of the various accounts you can grasp the essence of the Azcan culture and nation.

Following that overview comes information on how to create Azcan player characters. Though they can be clerics, fighters, magic-users or thieves, just like other humans, Azcans do have special benefits and penalties due to their cultural heritage and the magic of the Hollow World.

We also discuss game information of importance to player characters, including optional skills and magic in the Hollow World.

Finally, we provide a glossary of Azcan terms, including a helpful guide to the pronunciation of Mesoamerican-based words. Many of the terms in the glossary appear only in the DM's book—but it's okay for players to read them. Even with the definition provided, the words will not be completely understood by players; only the DM has the whole story. It can actually make things more interesting, though, if players have some incomplete



knowledge about various parts of Azcan culture. In the course of their adventures they'll be eager to learn more!

If you are only going to be a player, please stop after you've read through the Players' Section; and read no further than this point here. The information in the rest of this booklet is reserved for the Dungeon Master's eyes. Knowing secrets ahead of time will only spoil your fun.

Dungeon Masters, welcome! After reading this booklet, you'll be closer to a complete understanding of Azcan culture.

First we discuss the truth of Azcan history—something the players might never fully know, thanks to the shrouding mists of time and the Azcan emperors' habit of burning the histories commissioned by their predecessors.

We go on to discuss the unique Azcan calendar: how it works, what it means, and how the Azcans use it to predict the future.

The geography of the empire is described in

detail, from rivers to ruins, forests to forts. After showing *where* it happens, we move on to *how* it happens: Life in the Azcan Empire, for each different class of people.

Of course, we must say more about the people who control society and culture. We describe government and religion, the deeply intertwined pillars of the Azcan world; and trade, which almost has a separate existence.

Not everyone in the empire likes the way things are run. You'll learn about the "New Way," which combines religious convictions with revolutionary political aspirations. Player characters repelled by the savagery of Azcan culture will be pleased to learn of the New Way.

NPCs and monsters round out our survey of the empire. Finally, we go on to give the DM some solid material for play: ideas for campaigning in the Azcan Empire, plus adventures and adventure outlines.

By the time you've read this book, you'll be well prepared to run a thrilling campaign in the hot, merciless lands of Azca!

Hear me, for I am Atruatzin Quetzalcoatl, Immortal, yet once mortal, and who shall again through mortal eyes see the Land of the Red Sun, where my people suffer.

Well more than five centuries ago, my ancestors lived out their lives as nomads across arid lands. They were of many clans and tribes. These groups were violent, making war on each other as readily as on any other people or creatures they would meet. . .

The Immortals were supremely important to these desperate survivors. Their chief god was the sun, bringer of life and death, patron of war, who brought life and light to the world, and whose dangerous rays could smother the weak in heat and thirst. Other Immortals (long forgotten by today's Azcans) were honored as well, but it was the sun who held the hearts and imaginations of this violent people. Sometimes, to placate him, they would offer him living humans as sacrifice.

In due time these wandering tribes came across another group of people: the Oltecs. The Oltecs were tribes of the hills and mountains who had united and, ever so slowly, developed a civilization. The Azcans were captivated by the magnificent architecture, the enigmatic glyphs, and the sublime magics created by the Oltecs. Naturally, they made war on each other. Along with war, there was trade between the peoples. The nomads settled in the flatland rainforests by the Oltec hills, and began to mimic their neighbors.

The Oltec Conquest

As the Oltec civilization reached its zenith, it annexed the Azcan flatlands, through a combination of military conquest and mercantile colonization. The former nomadic tribesmen adopted even more of their masters ways; they even began to call their chief Immortal Otzitiotl, the name by which the sun god was

known among the Oltecs.

Still the Azcans (though they did not yet call themselves this) resented their conquerors, and retained their separate identity. Even as they assimilated many Oltec ways, the lowlanders kept alive the ascetic traditions that had made them strong in the desert.

What set them most apart from the Oltecs was their fierceness, their love of war and struggle that was cultivated from birth. Since time immemorial, the shamans of their ancestors had instructed newborn children on the violence of the world, and the necessity to be strong, in order to survive.

The Oltecs, on the other hand, were much more peaceful. Their conquest of the lowland tribes was more political and commercial, than military. Indeed, the ranks of the imperial armies were increasingly filled with soldiers of lowland descent.

Children of the Sun

Around the year BC 3500, a lowlander rose to become the military head of the entire Oltec Empire. He was of common birth—the lowlanders had no hereditary nobility, but selected their leaders according to merit and reputation. This fact was not in itself extraordinary; the man's tenacity in holding his heritage as distinct and important, however, was what created a turning point in history.

His birthname is lost, obscured in the sands of time, but his title is remembered: "I am the Azcan," he once declared, "the son of Azca. My people, you have forgotten even his name; you blaspheme by calling him Otzitiotl, in the manner of the Oltec worms. But his name is Azca, the glorious Sun, and we are his children." From that point on (and though they continued to call the Immortal of the sun by the name Otzitiotl) the lowland tribes began to call themselves the Azcans—the Sons and Daughters of Azca.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to take the Oltec throne by force, the Azcan retreated

to the lowland cities, which he declared free of the Oltecs' rule. The land drank rivers of blood as the former empire dissolved in a protracted civil war, for the Oltecs were loathe to lose their fertile lowland provinces.

The End of Time

After five centuries of struggle, an outside event brought to a close the days of Azcan-Oltec rivalry. This was the Great Rain of Fire, the Blackmoor cataclysm—the fiery end of Blackmoor's technological civilization. To the Azcans, who (apart from the most extraordinarily widely-traveled traders) knew nothing of Blackmoor, it was the end of the world.

The mythology of the Azcans had long predicted that the world in which they lived would end, and be replaced by another; and a cataclysm of earthquakes would herald this end.

Indeed, this is quite like what came to pass: The fearsome nuclear devices of Blackmoor were so powerful that they unleashed earthquakes, tidal waves, and volcanoes like as had never before been witnessed by human eyes. The blasts were so mighty, the very axis of the planet was shifted.

What had been a lush tropical rainforest, home of the Azcans, underwent a drastic climatic change. At the same time, fallout from the distant explosions—the “Great Rain of Fire,” as it was later known—resulted in disease, famine, and pestilence on a global scale.

The Azcan way of life simply could not survive under these conditions.

The Preservation

As the Azcan and Oltec cultures on the outer world hurtled toward what seemed inevitable extinction, two Immortals (both of them long followed by both cultures), Oztzitiotl and Kalaktatla, intervened. They summoned vast magical energies and transported the remnants of both civilizations to the interior of the planet. Many Oltecs and Azcans had already for-

saken their old ways and migrated or adapted to the new conditions; these were the ancestors of the Atruaghin Clans and the Ethengars.

In the Hollow World, the Immortals saw to it that both cultures, influenced by the *Spell of Preservation*, would endure and maintain their ways as of old. The lands in which they were deposited resembled the original homelands on the outer world. They were placed near enough to each other that they could continue their eternal struggle (or at least it seemed eternal, in their folklore).

But the Azcans had new neighbors as well. Neathar men were more numerous in the Hollow World than the outer realms, and the Azcans eagerly waged war against them. The Azcans returned to their new, blossoming capital of Chitlacan with rich booty, many slaves, and sacrificial victims.

The Winged Serpents

Across the millennium and a half after the arrival of the Azcans in the hollow world, among scores of priest-kings, one name stands out and is remembered: Atruatzin, who was called Quetzalcoatl, “the Feathered Serpent.” Atruatzin, say the legends, was master of every art known among Azcans: He was a clever craftsman, a shrewd trader, a wizard, a priest, and of course a warrior of stature befitting a great king.

When the evil elf Atzanteotl came into full Immortal status in the sphere of Entropy, Atruatzin was ruler in Chitlacan. He had ushered in an era of peace and prosperity, the like of which had never before been known. He promulgated wise laws, and ruled evenly and justly. To bind the empire together, he built an efficient network of runners who could carry news and messages throughout the land in a matter of days.

But ill winds brewed. Atzanteotl coveted the Azcan race, and would not rest until their hearts were thoroughly corrupted to his way.

Because Atruatzin resisted the dark Immor-

tal's temptations, Atzanteotl manipulated others in the religious and governmental hierarchies, leading to an overthrow of the emperor. Atruatzin fled to the mountain fortress of Quauhnahuac, but eventually he was dislodged from there.

As Atzanteotl consolidated his power over the Azcans, Atruatzin and his last followers fled through the earth, and finally built themselves a settlement underground. Atruatzin named it Mictlan, after the mythical home of the dead. The only building they had time to make of stone was a temple.

All too soon, a band of elves—the ancestors of the Schattentalfen, who were already being swayed by Atzanteotl's whispers—came upon this place, took the settlement by force, and re-named it Aengmor. Once again, Atruatzin was dislodged by Atzanteotl's machinations; and now the last of his followers had perished.

Atruatzin's path mirrored that of his nemesis, Atzanteotl: He went from the Hollow World to the Known World. He emerged among peoples descended from the Azcans and Oltecs, and adopted their ways. He became a hero of their culture, and followed the Path of the Polymath to Immortality. As an Immortal, he took his name from among his adopted tribes: Atruaghin. But he did not forget his native people.

In the Hollow World, meanwhile, the myths and prophecies of Atruatzin grew. They became a beacon of hope among those who prayed for the end of Atzanteotl's diabolical rule.

A day of reckoning is coming soon, they say, when war will come amongst the Immortals, and Atruatzin will return to challenge Atzanteotl for the fiery throne in the sky.

Atruatzin's Dream

There exists an ancient legend—suppressed by Atzanteotl's priests, but kept alive by those who hope and wait—that tells how Atruatzin was driven from Chitlacan:

In his age, wise Atruatzin fell ill, and for many days writhed with the fever. Afterwards, when he told what he had seen, he confessed that he could not know whether it was real, a dream, or some stranger thing spawned of Immortal will.

Three wizards had come to him, and prophesied Chitlacan's doom.

The first was broad of chest, of raspy voice, and wore a mask of mottled green stone, adorned with the teeth of terrible lizards. "My child," said the wizard, though Atruatzin's life had marked the movement of more calendars of stones than anyone was alive to remember, "you will leave this city, for there comes one whose power, in your infancy, you cannot withstand." Atruatzin responded, "No! I am an old man and will never leave my city, nor betray my people, though it cost me my very soul."

A second wizard came before him, and it was as though Atruatzin was looking upon a clear pool, so like unto his own was this stranger's face. "My twin," said the wizard, "bow down before me, honor me, and I will deliver you all the world; hand in hand we will rule, as brothers, unto eternity!" Again Atruatzin declared, "No! I will never bow down and honor any save our Immortals who have protected us and saved us from the end of the world. Nor will I ever acknowledge a twin, a proper equal, as my overlord. I would sooner struggle for eternity than live in submission to such a one."

Finally there came a third wizard, shining like the sun, who spoke to him thusly: "You will wander many long miles across and through and beneath the earth, to the great sea of reeds where, alone, you will find a home. You will behold the rising and falling of chiefs and kings and nations, but you will not die of your age. You will return, made child again, to reclaim your people, your children. You must do this

because you are the link that closes the circle, you are both the son and the father. Though this world perish, you are seed of the next." A third time Atruatzin cried denial. "No," he wept, "I am but a man, an old man, who will soon lie down to rest forever beside his father and brothers, who were mortal as am I."

When Atruatzin awakened from the fever, his mind was clear and his body was as though he had lost fifty years of aging. The disease had taken much of the city, however, and so Atruatzin and his people retreated to the clean air of the mountains. When he returned he found that liars and imposters had taken control of the land, saying he was dead of the plague. These evil men blasphemed the temples with a new god whom, they claimed, had spared those who had survived, and would make the Azcan people great.

Thus was Atruatzin left bereft of his

kingdom. Then too he lost his home in the mountains. His followers fled into the bowels of the earth, through the court of Xochiquetzal and stranger wonders. For a time they found repose in a place they named Mictlan, "the place of the dead," for, they said, "we were like unto wandering souls of the dead, and here we have found rest." In Mictlan they marvelled that Atruatzin did not age. "Surely," they whispered, "he must be truly blessed, or cursed, by the Immortals." But Mictlan too was stolen from him by the pale, thin men.

As the years dragged on, Atruatzin was heartened by the third wizard's prophecy, and it gave him strength. He would again see his Azcan land and people, whom he loved. As he remembered the first two wizards—the one's advice, the other's temptation—he tested and prepared himself so that, though in guise of a babe, he would have the strength to overcome his



treacherous, deceiving nemesis.

And so we wait for Atruatzin Quetzalcoatl, the master of all crafts, who will deliver us from the lies and illusions of Atzanteotl, that dark shadow of a winged serpent. Atruatzin's might will peel away this world of illusion, bring it to a close, and usher in a new paradise in which we will live in peace and blessedness.

Arrival of the Schattentalfen =

As time went on, other races arrived in the Hollow World; especially hated were the Schattentalfen, who appeared about 2,400 years ago. The dark, clerical Azcans and the pale, magical Schattentalfen hated one another on sight and began an intermittent war whose ferocity was even greater than that of the conflict with the Oltecs (who had by now been driven far back into the mountains). Though Atzanteotl also guided the Schattentalfen, he didn't mind them fighting with the Azcans; he'd never let them wipe one another out. He also considered the warfare and hatred useful for tempering both races.

Recent Years

Thanks to the *Spell of Preservation*, change comes slowly in the Hollow World; one century in a Hollow World culture is usually a lot like the one before, and the one that will follow. The Azcan Empire is no exception. Rivalry with the Oltecs continues, as does that with the more dangerous Schattentalfen. Trade with the Traldar and Milenians is very brisk (though periodically interrupted by large outbreaks of merry piracies), and the Azcan cities' princes are inevitably at each others' throats.

The empire is not at a complete standstill, however. The New Way—a religious-political sect that challenges Atzanteotl's hegemony, and awaits the prophesied return of Atruatzin—remains shrouded in secrecy, yet steadily grows.

Other recent events are described in the various chapters of this book, and their dates are noted on the timeline below.

Timeline of Azcan History =

The Azcans have a different understanding of time than outsiders. They understand it in cyclical terms (which you'll see better when you've read about their calendar). As such, the term "timeline" is itself contradictory to an Azcan, because time does not travel in a line.

The Azcans mark four historical events of great importance: The Conquest (supposedly the conquest of the Oltecs; actually, as you already know, they just won their independence); the Destruction or Preservation (when the outer world was apparently destroyed, but the Azcans were saved); the Revelation (when Atzanteotl purportedly revealed himself as the guardian and savior of the Azcan people); and the Great Conquest—a future date when, Atzanteotl has promised, the Azcans will rule this world. As you can see, this is like a circle, because it returns to Conquest in the end.

Years and dates (excepting the ever-important astrological symbols) are blurred by the Azcans, just as time itself is confused by the never-setting red sun of the Hollow World. The Azcans tend to make estimates of how many years ago something happened—and these estimates are often far off the mark. Years are sometimes marked, with a modicum of accuracy, according to how many years the current sovereign has reigned.

Further exacerbating the problem, and the frustration it would give historians from another culture, is the prerogative of each new emperor to burn all the histories recorded at the command of his predecessors and commission new ones (favorable to himself, of course). This means that Azcan "history" is as convoluted as mythology and folklore, inscribed with generations of intentional and accidental errors of fact. Naturally the present histories are written so as to glorify the current

tlatoani or emperor, and present him as the true chosen avatar of Atzanteotl, the pinnacle of Azcan historical progress.

Fortunately, we game designers and Dungeon Masters can, like the Immortals, pretend omniscience and compile timelines like the one below. It puts the events of Azcan myth and history in chronological order, with the year equivalent according to the outer-world Thyatian calendar: years BC, "Before Crowning," and AC, "After Crowning" (of the first Emperor of Thyatis).

BC 4,000: Protected by deep forests and sheltering hills, and isolated from the blossoming technological civilization of Blackmoor, the Oltec culture arises.

BC 3,850: A group of warlike, flatland tribes are colonized by the Oltecs. These tribes fiercely cling to their distinct heritage in spite of the Oltec conquerors.

BC 3,500: Following a failed military coup, a rift occurs in the Oltec civilization, as the aggressive "Azcan" cities declare their independence and begin to wage war on the Oltecs. According to modern Azcan histories, the hated former masters were overthrown and enslaved; in fact, the Oltecs and Azcans exist side by side for almost five centuries, alternating war and commerce, until outside forces literally destroy the world they know.

BC 3,000: Powerful technological devices in Blackmoor explode, shifting the axis of the Known World in an event later called (on the surface) the Great Rain of Fire. To the Azcans and Oltecs, it is understood as the vengeance of the Immortals, the end of the Fifth Sun.

As both civilizations were threatened, vast numbers of both tribes are whisked away magically to the Hollow World by the Immortals.

BC 2,800: Azcans and Oltecs on the outer world have practically vanished, dispersed

across the world and culturally transformed in every case. Some of the loose tribes are the ancestors of the Atruaghin Clans. They retain a dim memory, retold and altered into myth and folklore, of Azcan and Oltec glory and strife. They also remember the mysterious disappearance of many kin.

BC 1,700: An event occurs on the outer world which will profoundly affect the course of Azcan civilization. Elves in Glantri discover and accidentally detonate a Blackmoor device, resulting in a minor cataclysm. The survivors hide in the caves beneath Glantri and the Broken lands. Split into tribes, they travel widely; these are the ancestors of the Hollow World's Gentle Folk, Icevale Elves, and the Azcans' mortal Hollow World enemies, the Schattenalfen. A fourth group, led by an elf named Atziann, had no survivors save that king.

BC 1,650: Atziann, king and sole survivor of a clan of Glantrian elves who had been driven underground, emerges in the Hollow World near Chitlacan. Fascinated by the Azcans, he spends several years traveling unseen and disguised among them, before continuing his quest for Immortality.

BC 1,500: The elf, Atziann, achieves Immortality in the Sphere of Entropy, and takes the Azcan formulation of his name: Atzanteotl, "Atziann the Divine." He begins whispering to selected subterranean elves and Azcan rulers, tempting them away from their old faiths with promises of gain and glory. Atruatzin, the Azcan priest-king, resists.

BC 1,494: A terrible plague strikes Chitlacan, killing almost two thirds of its population. Atruatzin, himself a survivor of the disease, is driven from Chitlacan by his rivals, who are secretly supported by the Immortal Atzanteotl. Atruatzin and his loyal followers retire to the mountain fortress of Quauhnahuac.

BC 1,484: Driven by the whispers of Atzanteotl, and his own fears that Atruatzin may reclaim the throne, the treacherous new Azcan emperor leads a massive assault on Quauhnuhuac. Everyone found in the fortress is slain or sacrificed, but of Atruatzin there is no trace. The priests curse the land on which Quauhnuhuac is built, and sow salt among the ruins.

BC 1,470: The Chochomecs (an Azcan tribe) desert Atacalpa, migrating to Oltec lands of the east.

BC 1,468: Atruatzin and his followers find a resting-place, where they build a temple to the old gods. They name it Mictlan, after the legendary land of the dead.

BC 1,420: The underground elven wanderers stumble upon Mictlan, and overthrow the humans. Those elves who have been seduced by Atzanteotl declare that the temple is sacred to him, and he has given them victory over their enemies and a place to call home. These elves become the Schattentalfen. Most of the elves are uneasy about this alien Immortal, but they are weary, and so they settle and build the city of Aengmor. Atruatzin escapes alone.

BC 1,410: Atruatzin finds his way to the outer world, among the descendants of the Azcans and the ancestors of today's Atruaghin Clans.

BC 1,400: A group of Schattentalfen are driven out of Aengmor (by the will of their patron). They retrace an earlier expedition's path to the Hollow World. More will follow their path a century later when (apparently) Aengmor is destroyed. On the surface, Atruatzin has united the Atruaghin clans; changes his name to Atruaghin.

BC 1,395: After an unsuccessful bid to unseat the Kogolor dwarves, the Schattentalfen move on to settle near the Azcans, with whom they immediately make war. Atzanteotl delights in

and encourages the instant, uncompromising enmity among his followers.

BC 900: Atruaghin visits Quauhnuhuac.

BC 800: Atruaghin returns to surface world; leads revolt against the orcs.

BC 795: Atruaghin completes the Path of the Polymath and achieves Immortality; he joins the Sphere of Thought.

BC 322: A Schattentalfen attack annihilates the southern Azcan city of Axateotl for the seventh, and last, time.

AC 814: A massive Schattentalfen invasion is turned back at the Battle of Huixtla.

AC 815: The attempt to carry the war onto the Schattentalfen lands ends in ambush and disaster at the Battle of Wondyviel.

AC 940: A boatload of refugees from the Stonecarver culture, driven ashore by a titanic hurricane, found the town of Colima.

AC 942: The Azcans defeat the Schattentalfen at the Battle of Ploiec, and are consequently able to maintain the Tepetitlan gold mines.

AC 949: Birth of Moctitlapac, the current Tlatoani of the Azcan Empire.

AC 963: The Azcans discover the Stonecarvers at Colima, and send a small troop to wipe them out. The Colimans prevail, however, and maintain their way of life.

AC 972: Moctitlapac is installed as tlatoani—Emperor of the Azcans.

AC 1000: Today.

Since time immemorial, my people have looked to their calendars of stone, for theirs was a harsh life and the calendar might tell them if they could expect the Immortals' favor. Now, as I am an Immortal, I know how the calendar has changed—how once it was based on a sun and moon that crossed the sky, and the soothsayers looked to their calendars to find if it would rain. Now, in the land where the sun never sets, my people still look to their calendar—a calendar which has changed in shape but remained in spirit, guiding them through the cycles of life.

The calendar is of supreme importance to the Azcans, who are a fatalistic race, obsessed with astrology and divination. Tradition holds that the calendar was given to the Azcans as a gift from Atzanteotl after he transported them to the Hollow World.

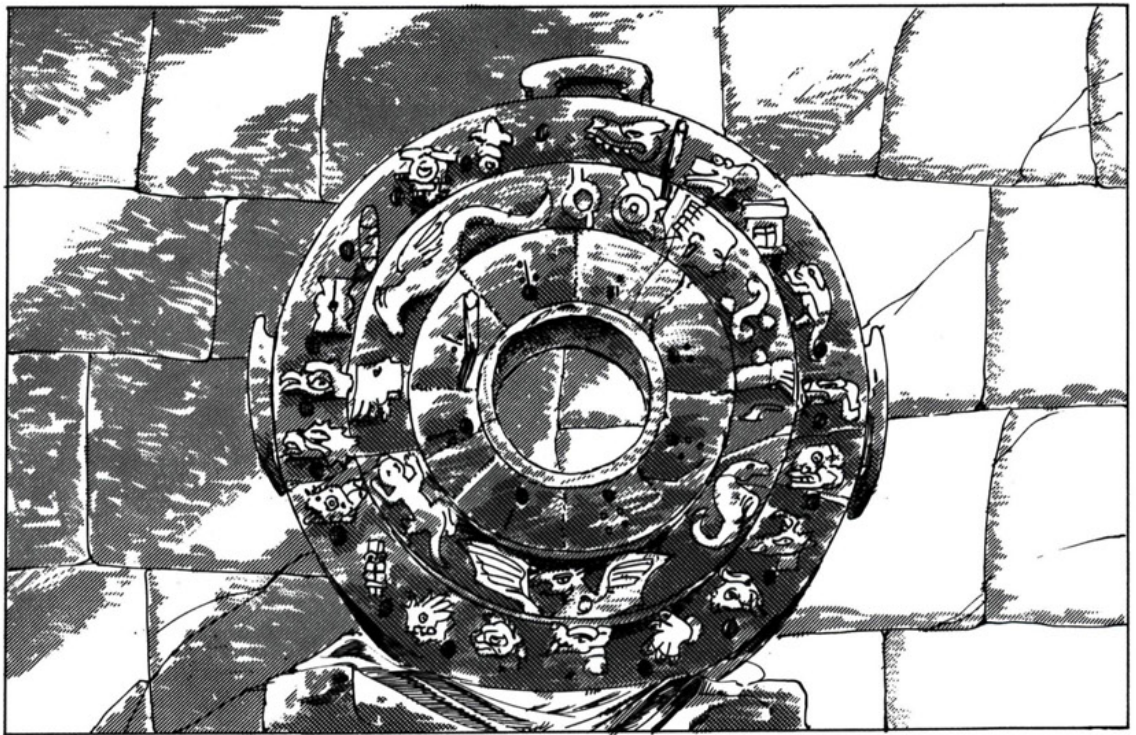
The DM realizes this cannot be true, of course, since Atzanteotl was not the one who

preserved the Azcan people. It seems more likely that the Azcans have used a number of calendars over the years. On the outer world, they had two sorts of calendar: solar and lunar, and the combination of the two mapped out the symbolic and astrological possibilities of the year. In the Hollow World, sun and moon vanished; now there is only the eternal red sun, and the floating continents faithfully marking time. The calendar had to be modified accordingly. Furthermore, the names and symbols associated with various elements of the calendar have changed over time, prey to the dictates of high priests and emperors.

Rains, "Weeks" & "Months" =

The combining of two dimensions of time to structure the calendar carried over to the Hollow World. Instead of the sun and moon, however, it is based on the motions of the floating continents near the sun.

Let's start small. Azcans mark divide their



days by rains instead of nights, since once per twenty-four hours precipitation falls on the Azcan lands. Like night on the outer world, the rain is the time that many animals settle in and rest; other creatures, like the nocturnal animals of the surface, come out only in the rain.

Like the calendar of the Thyatians on the outer world, the Azcan calendar is divided into what we might call “weeks” and “months” (the Azcans don’t). But don’t think they’re very similar!

The familiar Thyatian calendar (cf. GAZ 1, *The Grand Duchy of Karamaikos*) has a name for each day of the week—Lunadain, Grunadain, etc.—and a name for each month, but not a name for each week itself, and a number rather than a name for each day of the month. Hence, the Thyatians have the day “Gromdain, 2 Kaldmont.”

The Azcans reverse this. The days of the month, rather than the days of the week, each have their own name, while each day of the week has a number.

Eight rains mark the Azcan “week,” the first building block of their calendar. Each day is given a number. Though the number does not have a name as such, it is associated with a symbolic word, such as the Priest, or an Immortal’s name. This symbol is not used in conversation, but is important for soothsayers and astrologers who want to determine how auspicious a day would be for some or other activity.

Twenty-one rains mark a “month.” Each day of the month has its own name—just as each day of the outer world week does. There is also a glyph (the Azcan form of writing) for each name and day.

To generate the name of each day, the Azcans take the numbers (which run in order) and add the names (which also run in a set order). Combining eight days per week and twenty-one days per month, we find that a cycle of eight “months” results, in which each of the 168 days has a unique combination of number and glyph. This conveniently marks half a year.

The Azcans divide their year in two parts: the “dry season” and the “wet season.” The difference between these two “seasons” is minimal—about one hour of precipitation in the dry season, and two or three in the wet season, in the rainforests. In fact, in some parts of the empire (like the northern forests and the hills and mountains) it doesn’t exist. Nonetheless, dry and wet seasons are an integral part of the calendar, probably because of a stubborn cultural memory of the seasons on the outer world.

Putting all of this together, we can discover that the Thyatian day of “Gromdain, 2 Kaldmont” translates to the Azcan day of “6 Cozcaquauhtli Wet” (“cozcaquauhtli” means “vulture”).

Sound complicated? Alas, it gets even more so. However, there are ways to simplify it. One is to just think in terms of the Thyatian calendar (which is more similar to the one we all know in our real lives) and use the handy chart we’ve included to translate. (This is what the author does!)

The Stone Calendar

The actual physical calendar of the Azcans is traditionally a circular slab of stone, with two distinct rings sculpted upon it. In the center is a hole, making the stone like a wheel. The smaller inner ring, around the hole, has the eight numbers. The outer ring has the twenty-one glyphs for the name-days. Between the two rings is a decorative band, containing geometrical designs or relief sculptures of birds, animals, plants, and monsters familiar to the Azcans.

To mark the passage of time, the Azcans use two stones or pegs, which fit into the places of the name-days and number-days. At each awakening, after the rain, both pegs are moved forward one, producing the unique combination of the new day.

What Does It Mean? ---

By now you may well wonder: Why all the bother? Why do the Azcans need such unique names for 168 days? Why not have a lot more repetition, like the Thyatian calendar?

As far as the Azcans are concerned, the answer is simple: Knowledge. Like their favorite Immortal, Atzanteotl, the Azcans are extremely fatalistic. Consequently, they're always anxious to see what fate has in store for them. Their relatively complicated calendar is intended to help them do just that. Whether or not it actually works is of course up to you, the DM.

The Azcan calendar says a lot about their culture and attitudes toward time. Our familiar calendar, like that of the Thyatians, sees time as linear—each year has a number which follows the one before, and each year is broken down into neat little compartments of months, weeks, and days.

The Azcans, on the other hand, understand time as cyclical, and this is embodied by the very structure of their calendar. Rather than rigid compartmentalizations, they use two repeating cycles—the numbers and names—which interact to generate the unique days and the larger cycle of the year.

In the bigger picture, they believe that all of time is a great cycle, which undergoes birth, growth, decay and destruction on a cosmic scale higher even than the Immortals. The miniature cycle of the day, the week, and the seasons of the year, is mirrored outward unto the infinity of the multiverse.

Keep this in mind when you role-play Azcan NPCs. Although they are (literally) religiously aware of the passage of time, they are rarely hurried, since they have a deep-seated attitude that all things return in due time. So why not relax and appreciate the Immortals' gifts? (Unless, of course, you're at war. . .)

Okay, now you can skip on to "Dates of Importance" if this is too heavy. Now, on to the details!

The first thing that Azcan soothsayers learn

about are the words tied to the day-numbers. They learn that the days of the week are marked by four pairings, each of which is the nemesis of the other. They are as follows:

- 1 Atzanteotl
- 2 [Nameless, or "the twin"]
- 3 Emperor
- 4 Otzitiotl
- 5 Priest
- 6 Kalaktatla
- 7 Soldier
- 8 Death

Let's talk about each pair.

The nemesis of Atzanteotl is unnamed. Sometimes it is called "the twin," as Atzanteotl's pairing. Atzanteotl's followers hold that there is nothing to qualify as Atzanteotl's equal and foe, save the void itself—oblivion for all—which of course has no name.

Soothsayers who believe in the New Way (see the "Religions and Priesthood" chapter), on the other hand, believe the presently Nameless day to be the day of Quetzalcoatl (which sometimes translates as "precious twin"), the promised one who will return and free the Azcans from Atzanteotl's grip. Of course, the priests of Atzanteotl would tell nasty things about this day, when it is sacred to their Immortal's enemy!

The nemeses of Emperor and Priest are a comment on the betrayal of the Azcan people by their Immortals in the end of the previous age, according to the myths promulgated by Atzanteotl's clerics. The treacherous Immortals are the natural nemeses of earthly rulers. But the Priest and Emperor themselves are nemeses of the Immortals, symbols of vengeance and defiance, devoted to the eradication of those faiths.

Death as the nemesis of the soldier is obvious; the soldier as nemesis of Death, however, marks the belief that those who die in combat are promised paradise.

The last six days are interesting, and hold in common the fierceness of the Azcan spirit, in spite of their fatalism. When death and the myriad curses of the Immortals are inevitable, the Azcan still holds himself proud and defiant, and turns the Immortals' scorn into their own pride. By embracing their fates, the Azcans believe they can transcend them.

It is first of all held that the day of Atzanteotl is universally good, the Nameless day universally bad. (Soothsayers of the New Way invert this, since they believe Atzanteotl is an evil scourge upon the Azcan people). Because it is so unfortuitous, work is not done on the Nameless day; it is a day of rest.

For individuals, the number associated with his social class is good (nobles are grouped under the Emperor's day; commoners and traders under the Soldier's), and that day's nemesis is bad. Other days are basically neutral.

Beyond this basic good/bad judgement, soothsayers will take into account the symbol itself when judging the wisdom of an action on a particular date. The emperor, for instance, is routinely counseled to do important actions on "one" days, and battles are, whenever possible, waged on "sevens."

The numbered days are but half the story. The other half—the named days, shown on the chart—combine with the numbers to produce the entire day for the soothsayer to interpret.

Apart from the nameless day, which is believed by all except those of the New Way to be an ill omen (and hence it, like the nameless number-day, is a time of rest), there is no such value to the name-days. Instead, they have a meaning understood by sympathetic magic: Each day is believed to have a mystical connection with that which it depicts. The nature of this connection depends on the number with which it is combined, and the person whose fate is in question.

Let's get concrete with an example. A trader is looking for a good day to set out on a journey, so he consults the local soothsayer. Two options are 7 Ollin and 8 Tecpatl (the wet or

dry season doesn't matter for these things). The obvious choice is 7 Ollin: The number 7 is very favorable for the trader's social class, and Ollin is the glyph of movement. The merchant had best not delay, though! The next day could be very unfavorable—8 is Death, the Soldier's (and trader's) nemesis, and it falls on the day of the flint knife. Might the merchant be at risk of death by knife that day? To answer this question, the soothsayer may delve into further details, like the signs under which the trader was born. It can make for a very complicated (and possibly very expensive, depending on the soothsayer's rates!) business decision. . .

Using This Stuff

Needless to say, with so many important decisions to be made all the time, there are quite a lot of soothsayers in the Azcan Empire, busily employed. Most of them disagree with each other on nearly every point, and the whole matter is much less a science than their Public Relations people would admit.

Hoax or not, it can be a fun addition to your Azcan campaign. No self-respecting Azcan (adventurers included!) will do anything of importance without consulting the local soothsayer. Wealthier Azcans hire full-time soothsayers to serve themselves and their own family, hirelings and servants.

Who are soothsayers? Just about anybody, in fact. Most commonly their character class is cleric, magic-user or thief. Many of the thief class are charlatans, plain and simple, willing to augur anything if the customer has something valuable to barter. For protection, the customer can demand proof of the soothsayer's knowledge, if he doesn't have an established reputation. (If he does have such a reputation, to demand his credentials is a serious insult indeed. Soothsayers are very touchy about the respectability of their persons and profession.) Soothsayers who have been educated in the schools run by the priests of Atzanteotl are given diploma tablets inscribed with that fact.

(We talk more about the schools in the “Life in the Azcan Empire” chapter.) Soothsaying is then taken as a skill (based on Wisdom ability; see the Players’ Book for more information).

The soothsaying skill doesn’t necessarily measure in game terms the real predictive ability of someone’s prophecies. Rather, it shows their familiarity with the calendar and the intricacies of Azcan divination techniques.

The truth or falsehood of predictions is up to the roll of the dice . . . or the DM. You may decide, for drama, suspense, and other neat role-playing purposes, to have prophecies come true. Perhaps some few, extraordinary individuals do have a direct line to the mind of Fate, and can see the future.

They don’t necessarily realize it—picture the scene when a PC who assumes he’s just been making it up as he goes along finds *his prophecies have all been coming true!* Some of these could have been pretty outrageous (“Umm . . . 8 Malinalli, that’s grass . . . not good, you should avoid eating vegetables and

grains that day; you could choke to death on a tortilla”—and it happens!). Such a character could be forcibly picked up by the local prince, or the emperor himself, who has recently executed all his soothsayers for making incorrect prophecies.

Dates of Importance

1 Xochitl: Persons born on this day are said to grow up to become great musicians, physicians, and weavers.

3 Quauhtli (Dry): Emperor Moctitlapac’s birthday, an occasion for joyous celebration and special sacrifices.

1 Miquiztli (Dry): On this day each year the final game of the tlachtli tournament is played, and the last of the losing teams is sent to Atzanteotl (that is, sacrificed).

5 Ollin (Wet): Each year the middle-level priests of Atzanteotl are supposed to begin a pilgrimage on this day to Tehuacan.

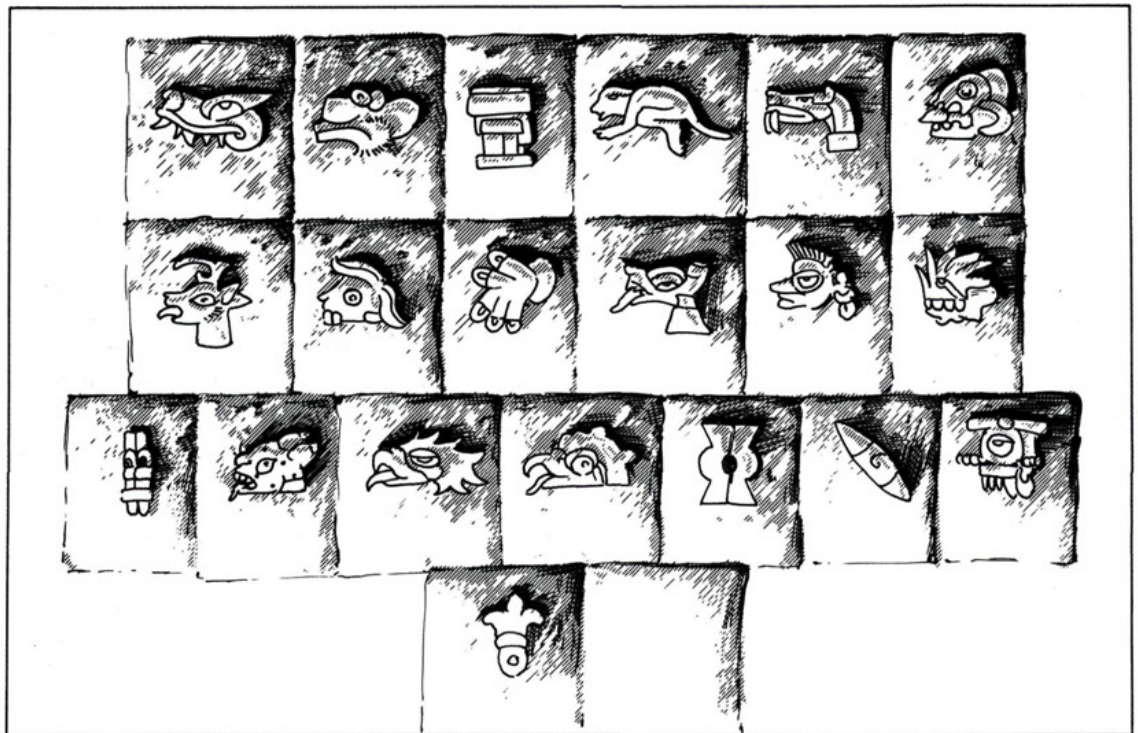


Chart: The Azcan Calendar

Azcan Day (Dry/Wet Season)	Thyatian Equivalent
1 Cipactli (Crocodile)	1 Nuwmont/Felmont
2 Eecatl (Wind)	2
3 Calli (House)	3
4 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	4
5 Coatl (Serpent)	5
6 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	6
7 Mazatl (Deer)	7
8 Tochtli (Rabbit)	8
1 Atl (Water)	9
2 Izcuintli (Dog)	10
3 Ozomatli (Monkey)	11
4 Malinalli (Grass)	12
5 Acatl (Reed)	13
6 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	14
7 Quauhtli (Eagle)	15
8 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	16
1 Ollin (Movement)	17
2 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	18
3 Quiauitl (Rain)	19
4 Xochitl (Flower)	20
5 [Nameless]	21
6 Cipactli (Crocodile)	22
7 Eecatl (Wind)	23
8 Calli (House)	24
1 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	25
2 Coatl (Serpent)	26
3 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	27
4 Mazatl (Deer)	28
5 Tochtli (Rabbit)	1 Vaternont/Fyrmont
6 Atl (Water)	2
7 Izcuintli (Dog)	3
8 Ozomatli (Monkey)	4
1 Malinalli (Grass)	5
2 Acatl (Reed)	6
3 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	7
4 Quauhtli (Eagle)	8
5 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	9
6 Ollin (Movement)	10
7 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	11
8 Quiauitl (Rain)	12
1 Xochitl (Flower)	13
2 [Nameless]	14
3 Cipactli (Crocodile)	15
4 Eecatl (Wind)	16
5 Calli (House)	17
6 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	18
7 Coatl (Serpent)	19
8 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	20
1 Mazatl (Deer)	21
2 Tochtli (Rabbit)	22
3 Atl (Water)	23
4 Izcuintli (Dog)	24
5 Ozomatli (Monkey)	25
6 Malinalli (Grass)	26
7 Acatl (Reed)	27
8 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	28
1 Quauhtli (Eagle)	1 Thaumont/Ambyrmont
2 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	2
3 Ollin (Movement)	3
4 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	4
5 Quiauitl (Rain)	5
6 Xochitl (Flower)	6
7 [Nameless]	7
8 Cipactli (Crocodile)	8
1 Eecatl (Wind)	9
2 Calli (House)	10
3 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	11
4 Coatl (Serpent)	12
5 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	13
6 Mazatl (Deer)	14
7 Tochtli (Rabbit)	15
8 Atl (Water)	16
1 Izcuintli (Dog)	17
2 Ozomatli (Monkey)	18
3 Malinalli (Grass)	19
4 Acatl (Reed)	20
5 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	21
6 Quauhtli (Eagle)	22
7 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	23
8 Ollin (Movement)	24
1 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	25

2 Quiauitl (Rain)	26
3 Xochitl (Flower)	27
4 [Nameless]	28

5 Cipactli (Crocodile)	1 Flaurmont/Sviftmont
6 Eecatl (Wind)	2
7 Calli (House)	3
8 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	4
1 Coatl (Serpent)	5
2 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	6
3 Mazatl (Deer)	7
4 Tochtli (Rabbit)	8
5 Atl (Water)	9
6 Izcuintli (Dog)	10
7 Ozomatli (Monkey)	11
8 Malinalli (Grass)	12
1 Acatl (Reed)	13
2 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	14
3 Quauhtli (Eagle)	15
4 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	16
5 Ollin (Movement)	17
6 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	18
7 Quiauitl (Rain)	19
8 Xochitl (Flower)	20
1 [Nameless]	21

2 Cipactli (Crocodile)	22
3 Eecatl (Wind)	23
4 Calli (House)	24
5 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	25
6 Coatl (Serpent)	26
7 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	27
8 Mazatl (Deer)	28
1 Tochtli (Rabbit)	1 Yarthmont/Eirmont
2 Atl (Water)	2
3 Izcuintli (Dog)	3
4 Ozomatli (Monkey)	4
5 Malinalli (Grass)	5
6 Acatl (Reed)	6
7 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	7
8 Quauhtli (Eagle)	8
1 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	9
2 Ollin (Movement)	10
3 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	11
4 Quiauitl (Rain)	12
5 Xochitl (Flower)	13
6 [Nameless]	14

7 Cipactli (Crocodile)	15
8 Eecatl (Wind)	16
1 Calli (House)	17
2 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	18
3 Coatl (Serpent)	19
4 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	20
5 Mazatl (Deer)	21
6 Tochtli (Rabbit)	22
7 Atl (Water)	23
8 Izcuintli (Dog)	24
1 Ozomatli (Monkey)	25
2 Malinalli (Grass)	26
3 Acatl (Reed)	27
4 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	28
5 Quauhtli (Eagle)	1 Klarmont/Kaldmont
6 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	2
7 Ollin (Movement)	3
8 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	4
1 Quiauitl (Rain)	5
2 Xochitl (Flower)	6
3 [Nameless]	7

4 Cipactli (Crocodile)	8
5 Eecatl (Wind)	9
6 Calli (House)	10
7 Cuetzpallin (Lizard)	11
8 Coatl (Serpent)	12
1 Miquiztli (Death's-Head)	13
2 Mazatl (Deer)	14
3 Tochtli (Rabbit)	15
4 Atl (Water)	16
5 Izcuintli (Dog)	17
6 Ozomatli (Monkey)	18
7 Malinalli (Grass)	19
8 Acatl (Reed)	20
1 Ocelotl (Ocelot)	21
2 Quauhtli (Eagle)	22
3 Cozcaquauhtli (Vulture)	23
4 Ollin (Movement)	24
5 Tecpatl (Flint Knife)	25
6 Quiauitl (Rain)	26
7 Xochitl (Flower)	27
8 [Nameless]	28

THE AZCAN CALENDAR

I am Atruatzin, and I am Immortal. I have beheld the raw substance of the universe, and see that it is made in many dimensions. First among these are time and space, enfolding and surrounding and permeating each other. As my people have flourished across time, so too they span great space, for theirs is the mightiest empire in the Land of the Red Sun. . .

The central and most populous of the Azcan lands are tropical rainforest. Beneath the thick, verdant canopies that stretch toward Atzanteotl's throne high in the sky, the land is remarkably flat. The vine-covered trees do not blot out the sun; plenty of reddish sunlight reaches the forest floor, which is overgrown with bushes, ferns, and creepers. This crescent-shaped forest stretches from the Gulf of Aztlan and the Schattennalfen borders, between the Malpheggi Swamps and the Aztlan Mountains, along the shores of Lake Chitlalo to the Bay of Uaxactun.

Along this crescent also is the majority of the Azcan populace. Well more than half of the Azcan People live in the towns and cities that surround Lake Chitlalo.

The air of the empire's heart is warm and humid, and Atzanteotl blesses the land with reliable rains, once per sleep. Although the soil of the rainforest land cleared by the Azcans is not rich, the regular rains help them coax maize and vegetables from it.

Outside of the empire's heartland, things are somewhat different. North of Lake Chitlalo the rainforest fades to temperate, deciduous woodlands, which meet the wastes of the Beastmen. Some towns, such as Izumal, thrive in the region, receiving generous harvests from the rich soil and trading with the Beastmen for resources from farther north.

The southwest portion of the empire is distinct because of the difficult Aztlan Mountains that surround the Bay of Colima. This range includes two active volcanoes: Mount

Kalaktatla and Mount Tipaltatl.

South of the Snake River is sparsely populated rainforest. The one city that used to be here was Axateotl; but now it is only ruins, a victim of the repeated wars with the Schattennalfen. Most Azcans have seen the south, however, since their time as soldiers inevitably includes a tour of duty, if not an actual campaign against the Schattennalfen, based in Ximac Fort.

The Southern Hills

The Azcans maintain a special interest in the southern district, because the foothills of the towering World Spine are rich with gold and other precious metals. Southeast of Ximac Fort are the two major Azcan mines: Chapultepec ("hill of the grasshoppers") and Tepetitlan ("beside the hill"). Tepetitlan seems to be the richer of the mines, but it is also the most dangerous, being in territory claimed by the Schattennalfen. To the southwest are the Schattennalfen forts of Ploiec and Myridas, near which the Azcans and Schattennalfen fought the bloody Battle of Ploiec, sixty years ago. Since then the Azcans have been able to use the Tepetitlan Mines without too much challenge. Attempts to settle the region, however, have invariably ended in disaster, since the tlatoani is unwilling to establish an entire garrison so near the Schattennalfen. The lesson of Axateotl has not been forgotten.

Thus the Chapultepec Mines, although poorer than Tepetitlan, have produced more gold over the years. They too are subject to occasional Schattennalfen harassment, but nothing like it was in the past: A massive Schattennalfen army overran the mines (and an adjacent town, now abandoned) and headed toward Tenpocatliotl. The Azcans met them at the Battle of Huixtla and, though outnumbered, turned them back with a combination of individual bravery and brilliant strategy. At the emperor's command (ignoring the advice of countless soothsayers), they attempted to

move the war to the Schattentalen doorstep. An army was assembled and marched along the east side of the Toltenco Mountains (the range of the World Spine which stretches to the Snake River). They picked up a host of Lizard Man mercenaries from the neighboring Malpoggi Swamps as they went. Their goal was to sack the Schattentalen town of Ranthryl; but the Schattentalen ambushed and virtually annihilated the army at the Battle of Wondyviel.

Soldiers and miners are the main residents of the southern region, then, and in fact the government is solely one of military command. A few traders out of Tenpocatlíotl ply the region, bringing the blessings of civilization to the troops, sometimes even daring to deal with the Schattentalen. (Many soldiers whisper that the disaster at Wondyviel was due to a merchant traitor who bargained knowledge of the Azccans' movement and composition for Schattentalen gold.)

Towns and Villages

Towns and villages are scattered across the empire, especially in the Lake Chitlalo region. Azccan life is predominantly urban; this was so even before the Preservation, when the nation was moved to the Hollow World. The dangers of the Hollow World wilderness (such as dinosaurs and the flying viper) have insured that very few Azccans live alone or in far-flung homesteads. At the smallest level, they have agricultural villages of only a few hundred residents, complete with walls and sharpened stakes to keep away the dinosaurs and other attackers. Each village also has a small shrine and a priest of Atzanteotl, who in effect outranks the *calpullec*, the elected village chief.

Outside each village, great tracts of forest have been cleared and plowed, and fields of maize, beans, peppers and other crops flourish. They are often surrounded by wooden fences and light stone walls, scarcely a deterrent for the types of dangers that wander the

forest. The destruction of these fences usually creates enough noise to rouse the villagers, however, who might be able to drive away the threat.

The villages are too numerous to have all but the largest listed and named on the fold-out map. Some of the towns (all of which have populations in the thousands and are noted on the boxed set map) are noted and described below.

Colima

Nestled between the Aztlan Mountains and the Bay of Colima, this is one of the Azccan Empire's most unusual communities.

Colima was founded sixty years ago by refugees from the primitive Stonecarver culture. These people alternate wandering and settled life. When they settle, they live in a place just long enough to carve one or more awe-inspiring stone statues; then they move on.

It was possible to settle here due to unique circumstances: The fact that the area belongs to the Azccan Empire (which keeps most people away), and the fact that the Azccans never really bothered to settle here (thanks to the forbidding Aztlan Mountains).

Survival was possible here for the same reasons—though life is far from easy for the Colimans. They would be prosperous enough, if it were only a matter of tending their flocks and harvesting the bounty of the sea. Unfortunately they suffer frequent attacks from the Merry Pirates. Still, this "pruning" (as the pirates call it) keeps the village small and poor enough for the Azccans to overlook its presence. Sometimes the attacks are terrible, such as the great Azccan assault almost forty tides ago (the Colimans do not know the Azccan calendar, and so count years according to the regular, annual tidal changes), but always the *Spell of Preservation* ensures that enough Colimans, their buildings, and possessions survive to carry on the culture.

The town is named after the bay, which itself is named after the Merry Pirate navigator

who claimed to discover it. (It used to have an Azcan name, in the days of Atruatzin, but it has been long forgotten, even as the Azcan town that was once here was destroyed in the wars, when Atzanteotl elevated a pretender to the Azcan throne.)

There are really two distinct parts of Colima: "the village," the coastal hamlet founded by the Stonecarvers, and the town proper, which is considerably larger and farther inland.

The figure which the Stonecarvers are currently sculpting is that of a great giant, curled up against the cliff wall beside the village.

Colima attracts a fair number of foreign merchantmen, especially in times of war; Azcan merchants meet them here. Ships would rather avoid the longer, more dangerous journey to Huitlaktima. They would also prefer to reduce their chances of being arbitrarily declared enemies and sacrificed to Atzanteotl.

(A more detailed description of the town in the present day, including a map and key for the village, is found in the module HWA2, *Nightrage*.)

Tehuacan

This town is notable because it contains a site sacred to Atzanteotl. Every year, mid-level priests make an annual pilgrimage of purification to the shrine. They arrive on various days, depending on the town from which they set out, but they all depart their towns and villages on the day of 5 Ollin (the number 5 being good for priests, and Ollin being the glyph of movement).

The tecuhtli of Tehuacan is a fat old warrior named Itzacoatzin. He was once a proud soldier, leading several remarkable raids against the Schattentalen. He has declined in his middle years, however. He gained the governorship of Tehuacan mainly because he is a cousin of Moctitlapac, the tlatoani, and staunchly loyal. He is also very malleable in the hands of the clergy, who have an understandable interest in keeping tight control on the holy town.

The chief priest of Tehuacan is an unremarkable man named Ximucolco. Like Itzacoatzin, he is valued as an administrator because he follows the directives of the Chitlacan hierarchy without question.

Forts

Being a warlike people, the Azcans of course have made many enemies; even as they send forays into neighboring lands, so too must they be ever vigilant for retributive strikes. A key part of the empire's defense is the network of great forts. Each serves two functions: It is a rallying point for defensive action, and the launching point for offensives. Each has a large contingent of warriors, who train, drill, and mount petty raids just to keep their skills honed, until the moment of a great attack.

Side by side with the military commanders, there is a military-religious hierarchy of Atzanteotl's priesthood, here to serve the spiritual needs of the soldiers (and their temples' need for a constant supply of sacrificial victims). Besides a commanding officer, each fort has a chief priest, who officially commands all other priests and often in practice has the ability to overrule the nominal commander.

We briefly discuss some major Azcan forts below, noting their purposes or strategic importance.

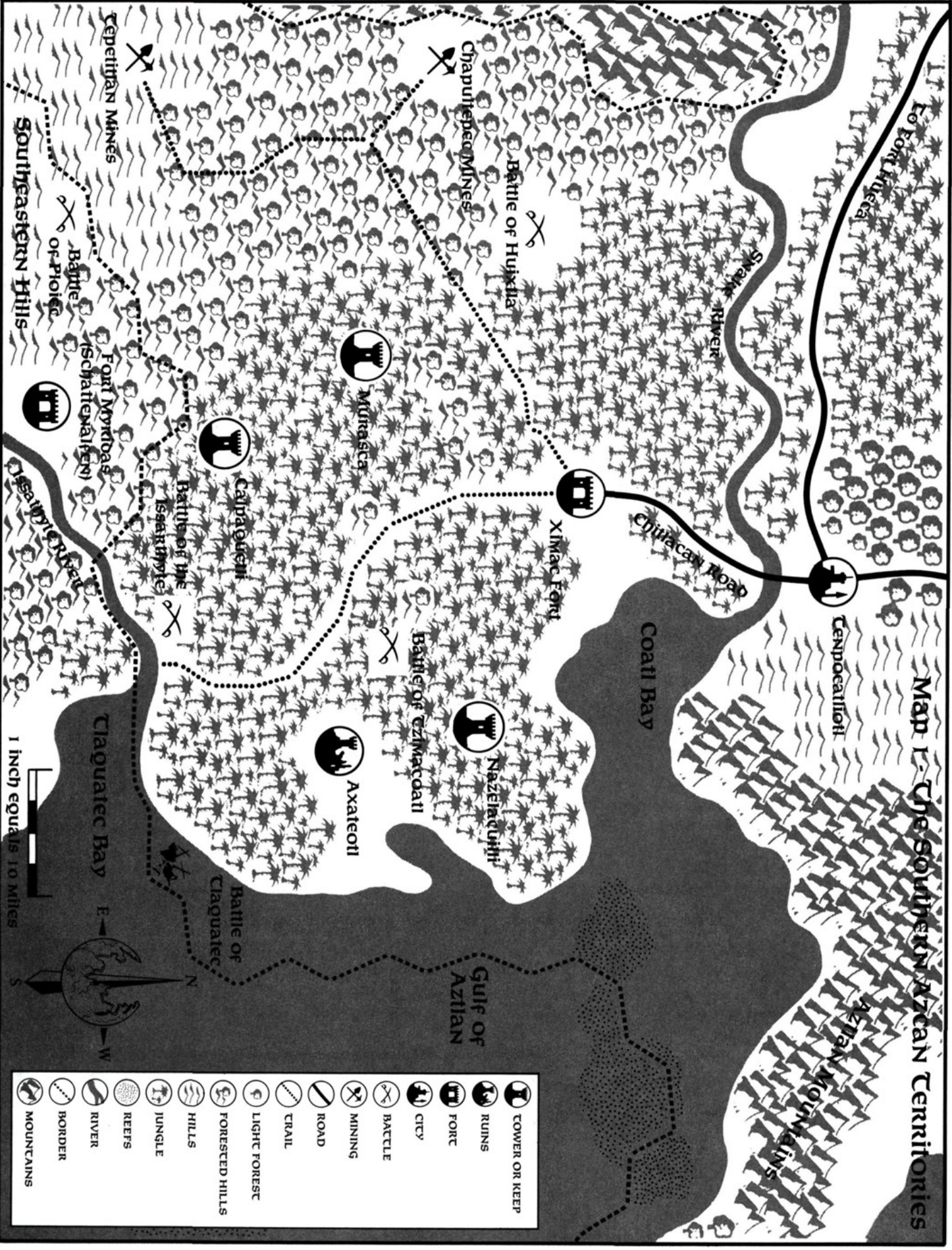
Fort Hueca

This stronghold not far from the Malpoggi Swamps is the center of recruitment of lizard man mercenary auxiliaries, with which the Azcans supplement their own armies for assaults against the Oltecs and Schattentalen. In a couple of incidents it went the other way: The Schattentalen hired the lizard men to attack Fort Hueca!

Fort Ixtlapac and Xichu Fort

Both of these northern forts include a naval detachment as well as a standing army. They ward off the northern Beastmen and Neathar,

Map 1 - The Southern Aztec Territories



TOWER OR KEEP

FORT

CITY

BATTLE

MINING

ROAD

TRAIL

LIGHT FOREST

FORESTED HILLS

HILLS

JUNGLE

REEFS

RIVER

BORDER

MOUNTAINS

1 inch equals 10 miles

Compass rose

Scale bar

Legend

Map 1 - The Southern Aztec Territories

and are also diligent hunters of the dinosaurs and other beasts of the Chitlaloac River that might be obstructions to travel and commerce.

Ximac Fort

Ximac Fort has immense strategic significance. As the southernmost end of the Chitlalan Road, it is the gateway to the fertile farms and rich cities of the empire's heartland. It is also the starting-point for expeditions to the mines of Chapultepec and Tepetitlan. Finally, it is the edge of the territory over which the Azcans and Schattentafen have fought for centuries.

It is not by chance that Ximac Fort has the largest garrison of any fort in the empire, the most competent officers, and the most powerful military priests.

The emperor always takes care not to let Ximac Fort be too powerful, however, lest it be the launching point for a mutiny.

Fort Zitapan

This is one of the smallest of the major forts. It appeared first as a wayside on the trail from Yuzihuapac to Atacoatli. It saw some service as a base for raids against the eastern Neathar, and as a recruitment center for Malpheggi lizard man mercenaries. Sometimes the Azcans attack the Gentle Folk of the forest east of Zitapan; were it not for the *Spell of Preservation*, and the interests of certain Immortals, that forest would long ago have been overrun by Azcan warriors.

Fort Zitapan is best known as a haven for less formidable warriors. New recruits, young officers, and proven incompetents who cannot be trusted with the strategically vital forts along the empire's perimeter often wind up here.

Zitapan has had its moments of glory, such as the infamous Battle of Tihuatepec. After learning that Zitapan was the "weak link" in the Azcan defensive chain, a horde of Balarai Neathar forded the Tolai River, marched through the rainforest between the Gentle Folks' forest and the Malpheggi Swamps, and

attempted to sack Yuzihuapac. The Azcans were outnumbered, outweaponed, and presumably far surpassed in skill and experience. Only the brilliant strategy of a young commander (and perhaps the helpful wink of an obscure Immortal) saved the day. The Neathar, more confused than actually cut down, retreated in disarray and swore never again to trust spies' advice about Azcan forts. (The commander's name, by the way, was Oztziltipac.)

Cities

Azcan cities are the cultural, commercial, religious and administrative centers of the empire. The major cities are listed here.

Atacoatli

This northeastern city is the main urban center bordering the lands of the Neathar. It is the principal site for the launching of expeditions against those people and bringing back Neathar prisoners for slavery and sacrifice.

The ruler of Atacoatli is Prince Oaxapotli, the second surviving son of Emperor Mochtlapac. Oaxapotli is a fat, gross individual who does no real work and makes few decisions. He is not likely to be the next emperor. The real power in Atacoatli is Oaxapotli's "subordinate," Moquizilpac, the city's high priest.

Chitlalan

The splendid capital of the Azcan empire is Chitlalan. It is built on an island near the western shore of Lake Chitlaloac, and onto the shore of the lake.

Chitlalan is a thriving metropolis of about 200,000 residents. Of this number, some 10,000 are nobles; the remainder are commoners.

For the map and description of Chitlalan, consult the *Dungeon Master's Sourcebook* of the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set.

Huitlaktima

This city of 45,000 is on the western shore. It is the empire's main connecting point with other civilizations. Traders from the Traldar Kingdoms, the Milenian Empire and even more distant lands come to trade goods, and Azcan traders depart from this port for their long ocean journeys.

Huitlaktima is charged with the defense of the empire from attacks from the west. Most threats consist of pirates from the Merry Pirate Seas. The military in Huitlaktima is well equipped to repel a "real" invasion, but the pirates' hit-and-run tactics baffle and frustrate them.

The ruler of Huitlaktima is Prince Tlachtatlatlan, the third surviving son of Moctitlapac. He is pretentious, stuffy, petty and incompetent. He could not govern the city were it not for the advice and assistance of Chupicuaro, the high priest of Atzanteotl.

As the center of foreign trade, Huitlaktima is naturally home to a great many powerful traders. They appreciate the Tlachtatlatlan's incompetence, since it gives their activities greater latitude. They suspect that the priest Chupicuaro is more influential than generally believed, and wonder what sinister plans he may have in store. Many of the merchants are secret converts to the New Way.

Huitlaktima is also known for the House of the Magician, a sort of academy for the prominent magic-users of the empire. It is a step pyramid, once a temple consecrated to Otzitiotl.

A map and key to Huitlaktima are provided in module HWA1, *Nightwail*.

Tenpocatliotl

This southern city is the second largest in the Empire. It is near Ximac Fort, the vital bastion for defense against the Schattennalfen (and a base for launching attacks). Tenpocatliotl itself contains numerous garrisons.

The nearby southeastern hills are rich with gold. Most notable are the great mines of Te-

petitlan and Chapultepec, but there are scattered small camps and temporary villages of miners as well. Most of the gold finds its way back to the emperor's coffers in Chitlacan, but quite a lot stays in Tenpocatliotl, making it second only to Chitlacan in wealth.

Tenpocatliotl is ruled by Prince Toziltipac, the oldest son of the emperor. Like his father, he is cruel and efficient; but he also burns with the rages and hatreds taught by Atzanteotl. It is generally expected that Toziltipac will be the next ruler of the Azcans.

Titlapoca

This northern city is far away from the tight-fisted dominance of the capital city. It is the northwestern garrison responsible for sending out northern expeditions against the Neathar; they are not particularly strong there and this is an easy border to defend. Here, there are actually temples and small pyramids still dedicated to Kalaktatla and Otzitiotl, and most of the population still follow these two Immortals—though they do of course perform the obligatory ceremonies to Atzanteotl.

The ruler of Titlapoca is, unusually, neither a son of the emperor nor a cleric of Atzanteotl. Since the emperor only had four sons who were clerics, he selected a military hero of distinguished lineage to assume the rulership of the most distant imperial city. Governor Otziltipac is not in his heart a follower of Atzanteotl, but must pretend to be to maintain his position.

In fact, Otziltipac is an adherent—the highest-placed one, although not the leader—of the New Way movement. His policy of turning official eyes away from "questionable" activities (questionable to Atzanteotl's followers, that is) have made Titlapoca a haven for the New Way and other religions, dissidents, and foreigners.

Yuzihuapac

This is a dreary Azcan city on the edge of the Malpoggi swamp. It is more humid than

other Azcan cities, and fights a constant battle with the encroachments of swamp vegetation. It is the southeastern bastion of the Empire, charged with keeping the Malpheggi lizard men out (and meeting with those of the lizard men who will work for the Azcans). Expeditions against the Oltecs and southwestern Schattentalen are launched from here.

Prince Azcotica, the youngest surviving son of the emperor, is the ruler of this city. He is an avid hunter and often goes out on dinosaur hunts. He received the rulership of this rotten community because he was the youngest; he is a good administrator, however, and could shape up into a competitor for Toziltipac for eventual rulership of the Empire. He got along well enough with his eldest brother until they were assigned distant cities to rule; now, with the throne of the Empire at stake, they have become competitors and enemies.

Lakes, Waterways, and Wetlands

When the Azcan people were transported to the Hollow World, they had not discovered the wheel. Now, thanks to the *Spell of Preservation*, even though they have encountered other cultures that use it, they disdain its use. For overland journeys, they use some pack animals, but human porters are the primary method to haul goods. Earthen roads and trails connect the towns and cities. The most popular means of transport, however, are waterways. (This is one of the reasons that so much of the Azcan population is centered on Lake Chitlloc and its tributary rivers.) Besides natural waterways, there are canals, built with the funds and manpower of the emperor, the military, and the trader class.

Acatlan Marshes

Placed in the triangle of the Tlapac River, the Chitlloc River and the Bay of Tlapac, the Acatlan Marshes are a vast and almost entirely

unexplored delta. The Azcans (apart from adventurers and fugitives) avoid its noisome expanse; and, unlike the Malpheggi Swamps, it lacks a population of intelligent lizard men. It is home to many dinosaurs, however, especially the large herbivores who require the shallow waters to support their bulk, and the ubiquitous reeds to fill their bellies. Rumors in Netzacoatl and Titlapoca speak of stranger and more dangerous denizens of the marshes, however. More than one party of bold youths has vanished there, chasing after a tale of hidden pirate gold. Even on the fringes, quicksand is a danger of which one must be wary. Legends speak of ancient, alien ruins, dating from before the Preservation, being hidden by the tall reeds and stagnant waters.

The inner regions of the Acatlan Marshes are noticeably warmer than the rivers, bay, and surrounding dry lands. Although no Azcans have explored the marshes enough to find out, the warmth is geothermal, caused by hot springs which well up from the depths of the earth. The sulfur in this water, added to the stagnant pools and decaying organic matter, gives the marshes their distinctive unpleasant odor.

The warmth of the marshes interacts with the cool local air, and the regular, cool rains, to generate a blanket of mist over the delta most of the time.

Chitlloc River

This important river is the main route for trade between the northern plains and deciduous forests and the heart of Azcan civilization. The Azcans are careful to keep it clear of dangers, since the rich farmlands in the triangle between Ocotepc, Izumal and Netzacoatl are the main source of maize for the capital; and transportation by water is vastly cheaper than land transportation along the Chitlacan Road. The river runs between Lake Chitlloc and the Bay of Tlapac.

What Everyone Knows about. . .

The Azcan Empire

From the private journals of Wastoure, an exiled Antalian wizard, on his first impressions of the Azcans:

The Azcans are a beautifully savage race. They are cruel, very cruel indeed, but this is not the mindless, barbaric cruelty one sees among my own Antalian people. Azcan cruelty is exquisite: Whether on the stone of sacrifice or in the tlachtli courts, they have elevated it to the status of art.

But I should say more of what I have learned of them. They are city-dwellers in the main, urban, cosmopolitan and refined in manners and customs. . .

It seems that the Azcans are an extremely ancient race, perhaps one of the oldest in our strange world. From whence they—or any others—came, who can say? In my dreams I find strange, unholy whispers of another world, from which we all were stolen by the malicious trickery of the Immortals. . .but that is the stuff of dreams.

Dreams are something to which most Azcans are not particularly predisposed, I might note. They are very practical and industrious, completely devoted to their vocations of war or trade—two pursuits which they equate in an abstract way, as both are understood as the conquest of non-Azcans. Their competitive nature is almost frightening in its intensity.

If there is an Azcan dream, it must be this: to rule the world. They believe quite ardently that they are destined to rule the world, that their patron Atzanteotl has foreordained this. It is ironic, then, that their most implacable enemies, the Schattenalfen, also follow Atzanteotl. Were it not for the equal ferocity of the Schattenalfen, the Azcans perhaps could well realize their dreams.

If this Immortal, Atzanteotl, exists, his ways

are incomprehensible to me. All I can guess is that his malice and cruelty are such that even that of the Azcans looks paler than Schattenalfen skin in comparison.

History as the Azcans Know It

As told by Atzoquilpac, Chief Historian of the Temple of Atzanteotl in Tenpocatliotl:

Once the Azcan people lived on in the world of the moving sun. To feed the sun and keep it returning, the priests offered humans in sacrifice.

But then, seduced by the softness of the Oltecs and their women, many Azcans turned to evil, selfish, weak ways. They inverted the proper order of things, and said that to be killed for the gods was not noble, proper, and the highest honor, but a waste, an evil thing itself! As this heresy spread, the gods were denied the holy blood of sacrifice, and their thirst went unquenched.

Without nourishment, the sun weakened and perished. This unleashed evil spirits upon the world: the *tzitzimime*, nightmare creatures from the dimensions of perpetual twilight, which devoured and destroyed all in their path. The immortals cursed and forsook the faithless people, letting the *tzitzimitl* destroy as they pleased. They sent evil spirits of drought, plague, earthquakes, and famine across the land. In this manner the wicked were obliterated from the face of the Known World.

Some, a very small few, had remained faithful; and although most of the Immortals paid them no mind as they unleashed the carnage, one Immortal, the great Atzanteotl, smiled upon them. He brought them to a new place, where the fiery red sun, his throne and palace in the sky, never set.

To show his people where to build Chitlacan, Atzanteotl sent them a sign: On an island there grew a cactus, reminding the people of Azcans of their ancient, desert homeland; and upon this cactus there perched a mighty eagle,

devouring a serpent. “Here,” said the warrior-priests, “will we build our city, and our empire.” And so they did.

Atzanteotl instructed his people to offer sacrifice before him and his celestial temple. He gave the people a calendar so that, in a place where there is no night, they could mark the passage of time and offer their lord his proper sacrifices.

As long as they have continued to serve him, following the holy calendar and offering him human sacrifices as it prescribes, Atzanteotl has guarded his people and provided for their needs. So long as they continue to do so, they rest well, knowing that they need not fear another cataclysm at the hands of a pantheon of vengeful deities. But if the people fall away, if the blood on the great sacrificial stone on the temple of Chitlacan ceases to flow, terrible indeed will be Atzanteotl’s wrath.

The Azcan People

From the journals of Wastoure:

I have not yet made up my mind as to whether or not the Azcans have a rigid society. On the one hand, they are terribly fond of structure, order, and centralization; and tradition strictly dictates the dress and behavior of each social class. And yet, my studies of their folklore and actual life stories indicates that it is possible—even likely—that talented individuals will rise to levels from which they would be excluded by birth in other cultures.

At the bottom of the social ladder are the slaves, or *tlacotin*. Most of these persons are foreigners, captured in war or acquired by trade with pirates. A *tlacoti* has little to expect from life; indeed, he always runs the risk of being offered as a sacrifice to their patron evil spirit, Atzanteotl.

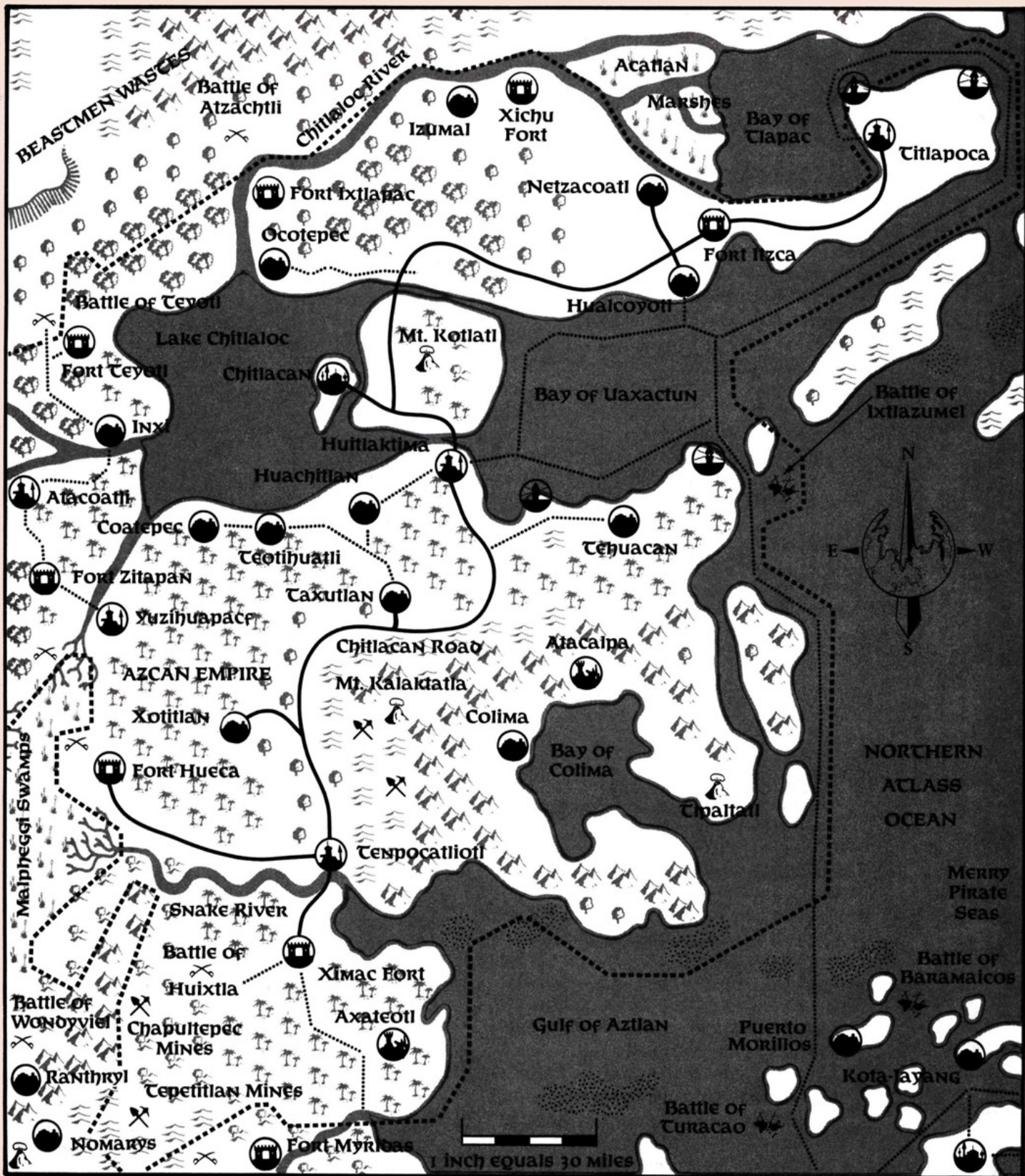
Slightly better off is the *maceualli*, or commoner. There is quite a bit of variety among the *maceuallin*, including tenant farmers, relatively wealthy peasant landowners, and urban craftsmen.

The tenant farmers, called “hands of the earth,” are supposedly free, unlike the slaves, but own no property. They work other mens’ land, and are bound to the soil as serfs. They do not have the rights of a citizen (which means their landlord can treat them with extreme cruelty); but on the other hand, they don’t seem to pay any taxes, nor are they required to work imperial lands. Their ruler is whosoever should own the land on which they work. As free men, however, they may be required to serve in the emperor’s armies, and they must answer to the courts of temple and state.

Tenant farmers, as well as slaves, may be required to play *tlachtli*, a perfectly barbaric game in which two teams use whatever means necessary to put a rubber ball through the other team’s hoop. It is played on a stone court, found in most towns and every city. Every year they have a great tournament, where each town puts together a team of players. The best of these teams are gathered in Chitlacan for the climax of the season. After “elimination rounds” (in which each losing team is sacrificed on the Great Pyramid of Atzanteotl—something the Azcans consider a great honor), a final winning team is declared. Its members are showered with gifts and treasures, and are elevated to the class of citizen.

Higher than the tenant farmers are common landowners and craftsmen. Landowning commoners gather together in groups, called *calpulli*. Perhaps in the past they were family or tribal distinctions, but now they seem to be a simpler matter of geography. A *calpulli* has an elected leader, the *calpullec*. It seems to me that this position has been gradually growing obsolete, as the priests and nobles consolidate their power.

A craftsman belongs to his local *calpulli*, but also may have membership in a guild. In the large cities these groups of craftsman may hold considerable influence, thanks to their pooled resources.



	CITY		FORT		NAVAL BATTLE		BORDER		JUNGLE		SWAMP
	RUINS		LIGHT HOUSE		VOLCANO		REEFS		MOUNTAINS		PLATEAU
	TOWN		BATTLE		ROAD		LIGHT FOREST		HILLS		RIVER
	CAPITAL		MINING		TRAIL OR SHIPPING LANE		HEAVY FOREST		FORESTED HILLS		

All of the lower classes wear simple, sparse clothing, for the climate requires nothing more. Breechclouts are favored by men, while women wear a short, tunic-like dress. A dingy off-white cloth is uniform. Some people wear sandals (especially those who live in rockier regions), but most are found barefoot.

The best way for a commoner to improve his lot is through the army or, if he has the talent, the priesthood. Citizen commoners may enter the schools run by the military and theocracy. Many an extraordinary commoner has acquired an elevated position as a soldier or priest. Indeed, the ruler of one of the cities today was born a commoner, rose as an extraordinary soldier, then commander, and then wooed and won the hand of one of the emperor's daughters.

Nobles are easily distinguished by their bright clothing; their favorite colors are red and turquoise. They also like to wear furs, including such jungle cats as the ocelot and jaguar, plus exotic feathers, gold, silver, and jewels.

It is probable that the priests are more powerful than the nobles. Atzanteotl's priesthood keeps a hand in all affairs of the land. Other beliefs are tolerated, and considered among the "Four Hundred Rabbits," the traditional name of the countless local semi-divinities. Almost every spring or grove is believed to have its guardian spirits, whom the simple folk are eager to please. Some of the Four Hundred Rabbits even have priests—closely monitored by Atzanteotl's agents, of course. I've even noticed two deities of the Oltecs—Otzitiotl and Kalaktatla—among the Azcans. Perhaps these Immortals had considerable followings before the rise of Atzanteotl.

Crowning nobility and priesthood alike is the emperor, whom the Azcans title tlatoni. He is by tradition a spellcasting priest of Atzanteotl, and must have been a son or other close relative of the previous tlatoni. When one emperor dies, the chief priests and highest nobles of the land gather to elect the new

emperor from amongst those eligible (usually a small pool, owing to the remarkably high incidence of fatal "accidents" amongst their number). To give their eligible sons governing experience, the emperor typically appoints them as princes to rule the various cities of the empire.

Almost outside of the regular social hierarchy are traders. These wily fellows are indispensable to the empire, both for their economic contributions and as spies keeping the tlatoni and priesthood abreast of developments across the world. The traders flatter themselves as being the best soldiers among the Azcans—but not without good reason. Their trade routes are perilous, and it is true that Azcan military conquests are normally preceded by a mercantile colonization by the traders. For forgotten reasons, the traders are independent of the rest of the empire's legal systems; they even have their own priesthood, to tend to the spiritual and corporal needs of their far-flung caravans and sea vessels. These priests publicly profess to serve Atzanteotl, but many avow that there lurk heretics in their midst.

Religion

As told by Telyveir, sergeant of the Schatnalfen army:

We once captured an Azcan on a raid—which is no easy task, since they prefer to die in battle. This one was knocked senseless by a blow, but survived.

We'd heard blasphemous rumors about the Azcans following our sacred Atzanteotl, so we thought we'd query this prisoner on the matter.

He withstood torture surprisingly well—and this was cultured, expert torture, I should tell you. Nonetheless, the pain got to him eventually, and he broke his silence to cry out for the mercy of Atzanteotl.

We were all very offended that he would claim our Immortal as his own. Didn't he

realize that Atzanteotl was Schattentalfen, and would never stoop to intercourse with mere humans?

By this point the poor fool was blubbing and babbling incoherently, and couldn't seem even to make sense of our questions. Not that he'd have likely answered them, anyway.

The one strange thing we could seem to make out from his simperings was that—of all absurdity!—he wanted to be sacrificed to Atzanteotl! Apparently it would guarantee him some sort of paradise, just like death in battle. Since he seemed past any value or use to us, we decided to fulfill his wish.

Azcan Law

A report from Drineuvel, a Schattentalfen field commander, to certain priests of Atzanteotl who desired information on the legal system of the Azcan enemies:

Honored Lords:

It is my pleasure to respond to your query regarding Azcan laws. Our spies and informers, I must confess, have done little study of this question; but it is easy enough to infer the truth from the intelligence we have gathered for other purposes.

The fact is simply this: The Azcans have no laws; they are illiterate barbarians, relying on the supposed decrees of their false gods, which really amount to the whims of their princes and high priests.

You may have heard of Azcan writing—but it clearly is a myth. The “glyphs,” declared by Azcan sympathizers to be writing, are nothing more than conventionalized decorative art-work. It is likely that these small-minded savages endow their glyphs with a rude sense of symbolism, or superstitiously believe them to contain potent protective magic. They are obviously deluded.

You may also have heard of the Azcan Immortals; in particular, the lunacy of Azcans following His Eternal Splendor, Atzanteotl.

Nothing could be further from the truth! A very reliable informant reports that many Azcans serve “the Four Hundred Rabbits,” which can be nothing more than primitive tribal totems or fetishes.

Given that they serve such a patently false pantheon of “divinities,” it is logical to conclude that the notion that laws are derived from divine commands is a ruse. Countless reports over the years have found that “law,” inasmuch as that term can be used, is nothing more than the whims of the high priests and males of the royal family. Trappings of divine command, interpretation of glyphs, and the like are a smokescreen to delude and pacify the populace.

Everything confirms what we Schattentalfen have long recognized: The Azcans are a crude, heretical, tyrannical, and lawless culture.

If your Eminences should desire further data, such as original intelligence reports and interrogation transcripts, I would be honored to furnish them.

Respectfully,
Field Commander Drineuvel



Creating Azcan Player Characters

If it's acceptable to your Dungeon Master, you may create Azcan player characters for use in your DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game campaign.

If you've already been playing with the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, you may have active Azcan characters already. The information that follows is not meant to contradict or replace the information on Azcan characters presented in the HOLLOW WORLD™ Players' Guide. Rather, it clarifies, expands and elaborates upon those rules, giving you more diverse opportunities for your Azcan characters. If ever you encounter a difference between the two, however, you'll probably want to go with what this book says.

Azcans are humans; they therefore are able to be fighters, clerics, magic-users or thieves, and in fact all of these classes occur in abundance in Azcan society.

But before we talk about the character classes, let's consider some things that apply to all Azcan characters.

Azcan Benefits

Like most peoples of the Hollow World, the Azcans have special benefits and limitations due to their cultural and racial heritage. Because they are very tough, Azcan characters get an extra hit die at first level, and +1 hp per experience level above 1st, up to 10th level. This bonus is combined with any bonuses or penalties the character receives on account of his constitution score.

Example: Let us suppose we have a first level cleric of Atzanteotl with a constitution of 13. He would have 2d6 hit points, rather than the usual 1d6, because he is Azcan; an additional hit point would be added because of his high constitution. At second level, he would gain 1d6 + 2 hp more (for 3d6 + 3 hp total), which includes +1 hp for his Azcan heritage and +1 hp for Constitution. Each level the

cleric advances where he gains a new hit die and his constitution bonus, he will gain the Azcan hit point bonus as well.

Azcan Limitations

Balancing their toughness, Azcans are limited in what sort of weapons and armor their culture allows. Specifically, they may use the following:

Melee Weapons: Club, dagger, hand axe, javelin, mace, pole arm (pike only), shortsword, spear, staff.

Missile Weapons: Atlatl, blowgun, bola, Short bow, sling.

Armor: Leather, shield (horned shield, knife shield, sword shield, and tusked shield are not allowed).

The above apply to fighters and normal humans. Except in the most curious circumstances, other sorts of weapons will not be found in the Azcan Empire.

Azcan clerics, magic-users and thieves have additional limitations on their armor and weaponry, as follows:

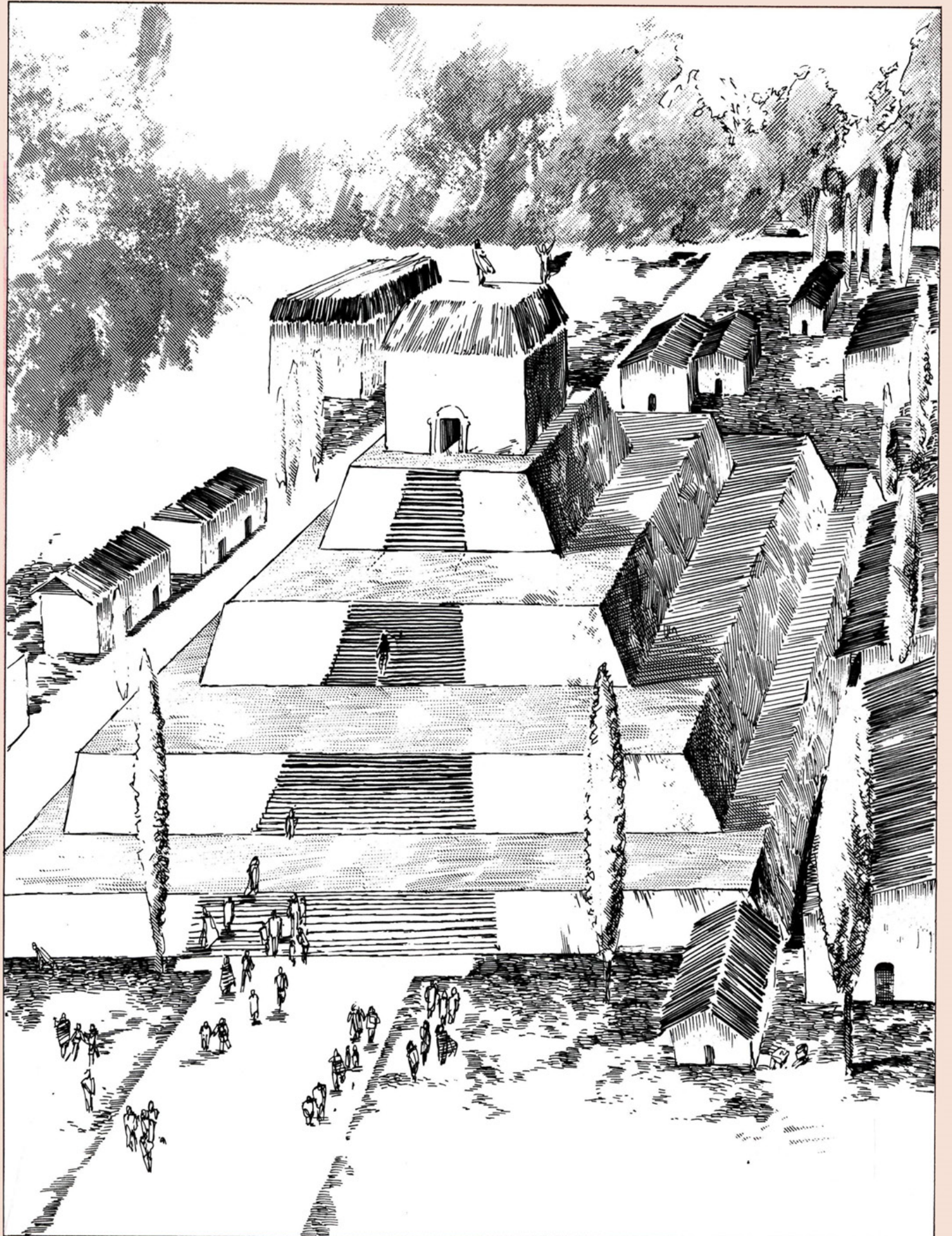
Clerics: Weapons—bola, club, mace, sling, staff; armor—leather armor and shield.

Magic-users: Weapons—Bola, dagger, staff; magic-users are not permitted to wear armor.

Thieves, with regard to usable weapons, are the same as fighters, except they are not permitted the use of the pike.

Note that the Azcans do not forge weapons of bronze, iron, or steel. They may occasionally hammer a knife or axe out of copper, but for the most part they sculpt their blades and arrowheads from stone, such as flint or obsidian. For simplicity, however, we recommend that these "stone age" weapons be treated no differently from their metal counterparts.

There are arcane, ancient reasons for Azcan characters' rigid cultural preferences. Your DM may have shared them with you, or you may come to a better understanding of the peculiar nature of the Hollow World in the course of your adventures.



Cultural Bias

The preference for certain weapons among the Azcans is an aspect of what's called *cultural bias*, and it's something that appears in most Hollow World cultures. In brief, characters prefer their own weapons, armor, and clothes over all others. This preference must be foremost in mind; most Azcans will violate it only in the most extreme circumstances.

An Azcan character will refuse to regularly carry and use a weapon not on his list on page 30. Moreover, the Azcans are attached to their particular styles of decoration. Even if an Azcan were to pick up a new piece of armor or weapon which fits on the list above but originates from another cultural milieu (say, a Schattenalfen shortsword), he would be anxious to decorate it in the style of his people, so that he would be more comfortable using it.

It is usually most honorable for a character to remain faithful to his native Azcan culture. Sometimes this may make the character look foolish, but fear not! It's the foreigners' fault they do not recognize the superiority of Azcan ways!

When it's not merely embarrassment, but actual mortal danger at hand, it's all right to bend the rules a little. For instance, a group of Azcan characters may be fighting an undead creature, which they know can only be harmed by magical weapons. The only magical weapon available is a *sword +1*—a weapon prohibited to Azcan characters! In this unusual situation, where the life of the Azcan character or someone (or some goal) dear to him is obviously at stake, and there is no other apparent way of doing the job, the Azcan will stoop to use a non-Azcan weapon. As soon as the danger is past, however, he will revert to familiar materials. Never will he become proficient in a weapon of another culture.

Violating Cultural Bias

We do not mean to inhibit the choices of players with this cultural bias. Player characters have free will, of course, and may well decide

that they darn well feel like wearing plate mail, Azcan or not! This free-spiritedness is well and good—and perfectly possible—but not without consequences. As the theocracy would say: "You may forsake Atzanteotl, but he will not forget you; you will feel his wrath. . ." Indeed, strong-minded persons who defy the cultural norms of Azcan society find life more difficult than it used to be.

Specifically, a character who ignores his cultural bias will in consequence suffer penalties as follows:

Experience points are acquired more slowly. For three full experience levels, the character divides experience received by half. For instance, a second level character who begins to ignore his cultural bias earns one-half experience points up to third level, through fourth, fifth, and sixth levels. Once he reaches sixth level, the character resumes earning full experience. If at any time the Azcan resumes his customs, he returns to earning experience at the normal rate. However, if he subsequently abandons the customs again, he starts over from the beginning on the path of three full levels of reduced experience.

The DM will find this penalty easy to assess, even when the breaking of customs is necessary. In the example discussed earlier, the Dungeon Master could decide that the Azcans who used the magical sword will receive only half the usual experience for that encounter (but at least they're alive!).

A second penalty is the loss of the special Azcan hit point bonus. If an Azcan has forsaken his people's customs, he ceases to gain an extra hit point per die on subsequent experience levels. However, previous gains cannot be lost. The Azcan discussed above would not lose any of his $3d8 + 2$ hit points at second level; but at third, fourth, fifth and sixth he would gain just $1d8$ rather than $1d8 + 1$ hit points. If an Azcan reverts to his customs, he regains the hit point bonus after he has earned one full experience level while behaving in the manner of his culture.

Finally, characters who forsake their customs will have to take into account how other Azcans will treat them. Any Azcan seen behaving with the customs of an outsider will be regarded unfavorably. Other Azcans will see him as something odd and negative—from eccentric to deranged, perverted, or evil. They might also assume him to be an exile or traitor, and probably criminal.

If the character resumes the manners of his culture, he will be accepted again. However, after three levels of behaving other than Azcan, he will permanently be regarded as an outcast. Even if he briefly resumes Azcan customs, other Azcans will feel uneasy around him, intuiting that there is something different about him.

Fighters

Warriors are among the most respected subjects of the empire; from birth, Azcan boys are taught that the most honorable death is in battle—or, failing that, on Atzanteotl's stone of sacrifice. Every free adult who is fit, save those who are inducted into the priesthood, are required to serve several years as soldiers. Almost every one will see combat duty against one of the Azcans' many enemies.

Thieves

A fair number of members of the thief class are found in Azcan culture. Larceny is not always their chief activity, though; a greater number acquired their skills of stealth by working as scouts, either in the Azcan army or for pochteca (merchant) caravans.

Thievery as such makes little sense among the Azcans. They do not measure wealth in material terms, but more as a function of honor and social position—which cannot well be stolen, and must rather be earned.

A very small number of Azcans do make their living by stealing the fruits of others' labor. Many of these hail from the merchant families, where perhaps they were less than successful in normal commerce. Theft is dan-

gerous work, though, as the favored punishments are slavery and death.

Clerics

Priests are among the most powerful people in Azcan society. Most priests serve Atzanteotl, the bloodthirsty patron Immortal of the empire. These clerics may rise to the heights of power and social status, but they are also restricted by their place and duties in the hierarchy.

Other Immortals' clerics do exist in Azca. While they have somewhat more freedom than Atzanteotl's, they are constantly watched, as Atzanteotl's hierarchy obsessively guards its powerful role over society.

Hollow World clerics must have a natural wisdom score of at least 16. This high score still earns the usual +10% experience point bonus.

As explained in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, many clerical spells are useless or unknown in the Hollow World. For your convenience in generating characters, we provide the following list of spells which are readily available to spellcasting Azcan clerics. The list includes new spells (indicated by asterisks), which are described thereafter. Your DM may introduce other usable spells in the course of play as he deems appropriate. Unless you have received instructions otherwise, assume you may only take spells from this list.

Note that an asterisk indicates a reversible spell (e.g., *cure light wounds* could be reversed to *cause light wounds*). Chaotic clerics, especially those of Atzanteotl, will favor reversed forms of spells.

First Level

Cure Light Wounds*
 Detect Evil*
 Detect Magic
 Light*
 Protection from Evil
 Purify Food and Water
 Remove Fear*
 Resist Cold



Second Level

Bless*
Find Traps
Resist Fire
Silence 15' Radius
Speak With Animals

Third Level

Continual Light*
Cure Blindness
Cure Disease*
Growth of Animal
Locate Objects
Remove Curse*
Striking

Fourth Level

Animate Dead
Atzanteotl's Hand
Create Water
Cure Serious Wounds*
Dispel Magic

Neutralize Poison*

Protection from Evil 10' Radius
Speak with Plants
Sticks to Snakes

Fifth Level

Create Food
Cure Critical Wounds*
Dispel Evil
Sticks to Flying Vipers

Sixth Level

Animate Objects
Barrier
Cureall
Find the Path
Speak with Monsters*

Seventh Level

Earthquake
Holy Word
Restore*
Survival
Wizardry

New Azcan Clerical Spell

Descriptions

Atzanteotl's Hand

Level: 4

Range: Touch

Duration: See below

Effect: Paralysis

This is a special variant on the reversed spell *cause serious wounds*, available only to clerics of Atzanteotl. The spell does not kill; rather, when a character has been reduced to 0 hp or less by *Atzanteotl's hand* (which, like *cause serious wounds*, inflicts 2d6 + 2 hit points of "damage" per touch), he enters a deep state of paralysis. Any healing magic dispels this enchantment and restores lost hit points; otherwise the paralysis is of indefinite duration.

Priests of Atzanteotl use this spell to incapacitate reluctant sacrificial victims. Note that it is particularly valuable in the Hollow World, where the regular *hold person* spell does not work.

Sticks to Flying Vipers

Level: 5

Range: 120'

Duration: 6 turns

Effect: Up to 16 sticks

This is a higher-level variant on the common *sticks to snakes* that produces bat-winged flying vipers who obey the cleric's commands. This spell is only available to Atzanteotl's clerics (although it is thought by some that this spell is itself an adaptation of a spell known to Kalaktatla's clerics, millennia ago).

Flying Vipers: Armor Class 6; Hit Dice 2**;
Move 60' (20'), fly 300' (100'); Attacks 1 bite or spit; Damage 1d6 or 1d4, save vs. poison for half damage; Save As: Fighter 1; Alignment Chaotic.

Magic-Users

Like clerics, magic-users of the Hollow World are very rare. In fact, they're even rarer among the Azcans than clerics, because, unlike a cler-

ic who may serve an administrative function in spite of a lack of spells, a magic-user without magical ability is pretty useless!

The social setting makes magic use even rarer. Clerics and fighters are trained from early childhood, and most male children are therefore inducted into one of those two professions. Magic-users have neither widespread acceptance, nor formalized channels for training new members of their profession.

There exists one "college" of magicians in the empire: the House of the Magician, in the city of Huitlaktima. It is a step pyramid, formerly consecrated to Otzitiotl. The priests of Otzitiotl would have torn it down, but it proved indestructible, so they handed it over to a brotherhood of sorcerers who were looking for a place to base their community. The House of the Magician is not a training school, however. It is rather a sort of elite academy or *fraternity*, which the greatest magic-users of the land are invited to join. The magic-users keep a low profile, tending to their obscure researches. They pay attention to politics only inasmuch as it maintains their stable position on the fringes of society. Rumors whisper of ancient, heretical rituals practiced deep in the ancient House of the Magician—but there is always idle gossip about that which happens behind closed doors.

So how do new magic-users arise? Apprenticeship, of course. An experienced magic-user will search the cities, towns and villages for a youngster who shows promise of magical talent (i.e., high intelligence—see below). He will offer the parents valuables in exchange for their child; regardless of the actual size of the offer, few Azcans would dare to refuse a sorcerer, for the magicians are highly feared.

The apprentice spends the next ten to fifteen years of his life serving his master; his social status is officially that of slave (which exempts him from military service), and he must fulfill his master's every request. In turn, the master teaches him the rudiments of magic, and passes on individual spells. When the

master decides that the apprenticeship is complete (and the character is established as a 1st level magic-user), he sets the young magician free. Many masters and their former apprentices maintain cordial relations long after the apprenticeship ends, sharing spells and other arcane discoveries; others have legendary rivalries. (For role-playing pleasure, you may, with your Dungeon Master, create information about your player character magician's master.)

The magicians' regard for gender is unique among the Azcan social spheres. In sum, they give it no regard. A magician accepts a promising girl-child as readily as a boy-child when he seeks an apprentice; similarly, about half the members of the House of the Magician are women. The rest of society is not quite so liberally-minded, however—the old prejudice against “witches,” perhaps rooted in resentment of the magicians' social autonomy, persists.

To become an Azcan magic-user, a character must begin with a natural score of at least 16 in Intelligence. Even though this is required, the character still receives a 10% bonus to experience points earned.

As explained in the *HOLLOW WORLD™* boxed set, certain spells are useless or unknown in the hollow world. For your convenience in generating characters, we provide the following list of spells which are readily available to Azcan magic-users. Your DM may introduce other usable spells in the course of play as he deems appropriate. Unless you have received the go-ahead from him, assume you may only take spells from this list.

First Level

Detect Magic
Hold Portal
Light
Protection from Evil
Read Magic

Second Level

Continual Light
Detect Evil

Knock
Levitate
Locate Object
Phantasmal Force
Web
Wizard Lock

Third Level

Dispel Magic
Fly
Haste*
Infravision
Protection from Evil 10' Radius
Protection from Normal Missiles

Fourth Level

Growth of Plants
Hallucinatory Terrain
Remove Curse*
Wall of Fire
Wizard Eye

Fifth Level

Dissolve*
Pass-Wall
Wall of Stone

Sixth Level

Anti-Magic Shell
Lower Water
Move Earth
Projected Image
Stone to Flesh*

Seventh Level

Magic Door*
Statue

Eighth Level

Clone
Dance
Permanence
Symbol

Ninth Level

Contingency
Heal
Immunity
Shapechange

General Skills

Since the optional rules for General Skills are covered fully in the *HOLLOW WORLD™* boxed set, we will not repeat that information here. We do include a list of skills appropriate to Azcan characters, grouped by pertinent ability. Skills which are listed in italics are discussed afterward: They are new, or have particular modifications. All other skills are as described in the *HOLLOW WORLD* boxed set *Players' Guide*.

Note that not all of the skills described in the boxed set are listed here. "Treewalking," for instance, is not appropriate to Azcan culture.

Two more conspicuous absences on the following list are Riding (D) and Drinking (Co). The Azcans do not use horses as mounts or draft animals (they have people to work as porters!). Riding therefore cannot be a beginning skill for an Azcan character.

Drinking is also outside the normal Azcan cultural experience (although, at the DM's

option, it might be a skill gained by characters above first level). Alcohol is usually taboo among the Azcans, except on the most special occasions or in the most illustrious company. Recognizing its deleterious effects on people's lives and society as a whole (especially since the Azcans have unfortunate genetic predisposition to the disease of alcoholism), the Azcans long ago decided that drunkenness was punishable by death (by sacrifice, of course). Alcohol shows up only on the tables of powerful nobles, or old people who are permitted their vices in the autumn of their lives. Azcan characters, even of noble lineage, will never have had the chance to have the Drinking skill at the outset.

Such skills as these may present themselves to characters as they gain levels of experience. Adopting skills from outside of Azcan culture is risky business, however. It's up to your DM, but an Azcan who learns and practices skill like Riding may be considered to be violating his cultural bias.



Azcan General Skills

Strength Skills

Intimidate
Muscle
Wrestling

Intelligence Skills

Craftsman
Disguise
Fire-building
Healing
Hiding
Hunting
Knowledge
Labor
Lip-reading
Mapping (Cartography)
Military Tactics
Mimicry
Nature Lore
Profession
Navigation
Signalling
Snares
Survival
Tracking

Wisdom Skills

Animal (or Monster) Empathy
Animal Trainer
Bravery
Cooking (Military)
Danger Sense
Detect Deception
Gambling
Honor (specific Immortal)
Mysticism
Soothsaying

Dexterity Skills

Acrobatics
Alertness
Blind Shooting
Cheating
Escape Artist
Find Traps

Hear Noise
Quick Draw
Stealth

Constitution Skills

Endurance

Charisma Skills

Acting
Bargaining
Deceive (Fast-Talk)
Leadership
Music
Persuasion
Singing
Storytelling

Azcan Skill Descriptions

Honor (Specific Immortal) (Wis)

Among Azcan characters, this skill entails knowledge of the calendar and glyphs, for purposes of ritual and sacrifices. It does not enable a character to use the calendar for astrological purposes, however; that requires the separate Wisdom skill, *soothsaying* (below).

Soothsaying (Wis)

Astrology and fortune telling are a vital part of the superstitious Azcan culture. All soothsayers are trained to be intimately familiar with the Azcan calendar, and are consequently also aware of the passage of time as marked by the Hollow World's floating continents. The calendar is the central tool for predicting the wisdom of performing an important action on a particular day, but there are other methods as well—e.g., casting lots, or examining the entrails of sacrificial animals.

Depending on your DM's choice (which he may or may not disclose to you), this skill may constitute merely an understanding of the formalities of Azcan divination, or it may actually have some predictive power.



Glossary of Azcan Terms

This book is filled with a confusing array of new words and names. Their foreign character, based on or taken verbatim from ancient Mesoamerican languages, doesn't make them any easier to keep straight. For your convenience, therefore, we have compiled this glossary to remind you of meanings. You may want to read it anyway, before role-playing in the Azcan Empire; it serves as a good summary of a lot of aspects of Azcan culture, and even contains a few factual tidbits found nowhere else in the book.

Pronunciation: A few notes (abstracted from Soustelle's *The Daily Life of the Aztecs*) will help you pronounce Azcan names, which in turn will make it easier to distinguish and remember the many new Azcan words we use in this book.

First of all, the vowels are just as they would sound in Spanish. (This makes sense, of

course: It was Spanish missionaries who did most of the writing-down of the Mesoamerican names and words on which these Azcan words are based.) The letter E is always pronounced, even when it comes at the end of a word; it has the sound of "ay."

The letters U and Y are "semi-vowels"—in some cases they seem to sound like vowels, and in others they are like consonants: the U is normally pronounced like "w", and the Y as it is in the English word "yet." A special case of the letter "u" is in the "qu" combination: This is pronounced as "k" if it precedes an E or an I; like "kw" if it precedes an A.

Consonants are mostly pronounced just like English. The exceptions besides Q are X and Z. X sounds like "sh"; Z like "s." The letter H is breathed.

Accent is normally put on the second-to-last syllable.

Some Azcan examples: *calpixque*, "cal-PISH-kay"; *quacuilli*, "kwa-KWIL-li"; *naualoztomeca*, "na-wa-los-to-MAY-ca."

DICTIONARY OF Mesoamerican Mythology

Calmecac:	Monastic school for priests and elite Azcans.	
Calpixqui (pl. calpixque):	A generic name for Azcan bureaucrats, especially tax collectors. Literally: "house-attendants."	Quauhtemalcatl:
Calpullec:	The elected leader of a calpulli; a chief.	
Calpulli:	Territory held in common by a group of families; the smallest Azcan political unit.	Quetzalcoatl:
Chalchiuatl:	"The precious water," the blood of human sacrifice.	
Chinancalli:	The mansion of a noble family.	Stonecarvers:
Chochomecs:	A mountain tribe who lived in the city of Atacalpa centuries ago.	
Ciuatlamacazqui:	Priestess, female Azcan cleric.	Tealtianime:
Coatl Atzanteotl	"Serpent priest of Azanteotl," the highest cleric in the empire after the tlatoani himself.	
Tlamacazqui:	"Minor" Azcan deities (everyone except Atzanteotl).	Tecalli:
Four Hundred Rabbits:	The Azcan imperial throne.	Tecuhnenenque:
Icpalli:	A warrior who has killed or taken a prisoner on the battlefield.	
Iyac:	Azcan commoner.	Tecuhtli (pl. tecuhtlin):
Maceualli:	The place of the dead; also, a legendary subterranean city.	
Mictlan:	"Disguised traders," a rank of pochteca.	Telpochcalli:
Naualoztomeca:	"Four-water," the fourth age (or "sun") of Azcan mythology, a world which was ended by a cataclysmic deluge.	
Nauatl:	The fifth sun, or era, of Azcan mythology/history. Azcans believe this era, and the world in which it occurred, was destroyed absolutely; the only survivors were the Azcans who Atzanteotl, in his mercy, transported to the Hollow World, where the sun never sets. (In fact, the old world survived the Blackmoor cataclysm, and evolved into the <i>Known World</i> described by the <i>Gazetteers</i> .)	Temalcatl:
Nauatl olin:	"Venerable two-rabbit," administrator over the cults of the Four Hundred Rabbits.	
Ometochtzin:	The son of a noble.	Teohuatzin:
Pilli:	A lock of hair worn by a young man until he kills or captures his first enemy.	Teopan teohuatzin:
Piochtli:	Merchant. Among the Azca, this is not merely a profession, but the most rigid social class, with its own ranks and customs, and even its own system of justice.	
Pochteca (pl. pochtecatl):	Merchant Lord, the head of a merchant family.	Tequanime:
Pochtecatloqui (pl. -que):	A district priest, in charge of the temple of a calpulli.	Tequiua:
Quacuilli:	"Companions of the eagle" (that is, the sun), the souls of a warriors slain in battle or victims of human sacrifice, who live in blessedness with the sun.	
Quauhtecatl:		Teyaulouanime:
		Tlacatecatl:
		Tlachocalcatl:
		Tlachtl:
		Tlamacatzequiuaque:
		Tlamacazqui:
		Tlatoani:
		Tlenemacac:
		Tonalpouqui:
		Ueuetque:
		Uey Calpixqui:
		Uitzinauac teohuatzin:
		Xochiquetzal:

Malpheggi Swamps

These vast wetlands are home to the lizard men and are actually outside the Azcan Empire. Azcans and lizard men coexist surprisingly well. The Azcans trade manufactured goods for rare items (including exotic and medicinal herbs) from the inner swamps, and mercenary services against the Oltecs and Schattentalen. The lizard men also have some trade goods to offer in return, typically taken or traded from the Neathar and Oltecs to their east and south.

Azcans avoid the swamps most of the time, although brave adventurers and desperate fugitives will sometimes penetrate the mists.

Tlapac River

The Tlapac is a branch of the Chitlaloac River. In the triangle between it, the Chitlaloac River, and the Bay of Tlapac lie the Acatlan Marshes. Although both the Tlapac and the main branch of the Chitlaloac are slow and easily navigable, traders and travelers prefer the Tlapac River between Xichu Fort and Netzacoatl on the journey to Titlapoca and the sea. On this route they are better protected from the hostile Beastmen, dinosaurs, and other unknown dangers that roam the marshes and the lands north of the Chitlaloac.

Toltenco River

The Toltenco is the main artery of trade from the lizard men. This river, originating in the Malpheggi Swamp, carries traders from Yuzihuapac to Chitlacan and the towns around Lake Chitlaloac. Its name means “at the edge of the rushes.”

Bay of Uaxactun

This is a rich place for fishing, although the Azcans must sometimes compete with voracious ichthyosaurs and other prehistoric sea-creatures. Foreign merchantmen (especially Milenians and Traldar) are frequently found here, bearing their wares to Huitlaktima and

carrying away the empire's bounty in exchange.

Aztlan Mountains

The peaks of this range, steep and marked by knife-sharp summit ridges, reach 12,000 feet into the sky. Enormous forests of stunted trees blanket the mountains' windswept sides. Every tree's branch is laden with epiphytes, or air plants (Spanish moss, orchids, and so forth). These form what is called *montaine rain forest*, or cloud forest. Slender brown-white vicuñas (herd animals) roam the mountainsides.

Despite their height, the mountains do not have an appreciably thinner atmosphere than sea level—unlike what one would find on the outer world. This anomaly is due to the unique construction of the Hollow World.

Numerous fell beasts wander the mountains. The Azcans avoid the heights as much as possible. Since time immemorial, they have been people of the lowlands, and this predisposition is reinforced by the *Spell of Preservation*. Azcans—traders and soldiers—will normally be found only on the trail from Colima to Huitlaktima.

Of course, the desolation of the rest of the mountains makes them a haven for misfits, outcasts, and criminals, as well as monsters which would be hunted down in more populous regions. Furthermore, there are numerous ruins scattered throughout the highlands. Some, like Atacalpa, are the relics of Azcan days of glory; others are of origin deeper in the mysterious, forgotten past.

Adventure possibilities abound in the mountains.

Wilderness: Dangers & Mysteries

Past the barricades of humankind, the land is rife with the common monsters of the Hollow World, the dinosaurs, which prowl the

forest. The herbivores usually content themselves with eating leaves, bark and underbrush, stomping the occasional human who gets too close. However, they sometimes wander into the cultivated fields of the Azcans, grazing through the farmlands, often ignoring the efforts of the farmers to chase them back out. The carnivores hunt both the herbivores and one another. They sometimes wander out of the deep forest and into the outskirts of the human communities, looking for a quick snack.

Azcans are wary of the wilderness. Solitary travel, even along the Chitlacan Road, is unknown. People will typically arrange to travel in the company of a trading expedition or corps of soldiers that shares their destination.

In the Campaign Book we discuss the monsters to be found in various parts of the Azcan wilderness. Below, we roughly describe each of the major ruins shown on the boxed set map of the empire.

Atacalpa

These ruins date from before the days of Atruatzin's rule. The northwestern mountains were the domain of the Chochomecs, an Azcan tribe which was particularly devout in service to Oztzitiotl. When Atzanteotl's philosophy became ascendant across the land, the Chochomecs suffered prejudice, persecution, and finally outright military assault. At last they abandoned their city and migrated eastward, to resettle in Oltec lands.

At the center of Atacalpa is a great, bowl-shaped monolith, on which is sculpted a relief of the Hollow World's continents visible (when the air is clear enough) from the highest peaks of the Aztlan Mountains.

For more details about Atacalpa, consult module HWA1, *Nightwail*.

Axateotl

Once a thriving metropolis, these ruins near the Gulf of Aztlan are chilling testimony to the fact that, tradition and romantic notions

aside, endless wars aren't necessarily wealth and prosperity for the Azcan people.

Over the course of the first thousand years after the Schattentalfen arrived in the Hollow World, the city of Axateotl was completely razed, and subsequently rebuilt, no less than six times. In addition, there were countless less-successful attacks from the pale elves, each of which did incalculable damage.

After the last attack, in BC 322, the Azcans did not attempt to rebuild the city. A few brave stragglers stayed on amidst the ruins, but they could not survive long as modern Azcans. Instead, they devolved to an earlier stage of Azcan history (this is possible under the *Spell of Preservation*, since it does not involve the introduction of any new elements to Azcan culture).

The descendants of these tenacious Azcans now compose several small tribes, most near Axateotl, others elsewhere in the rainforest between Ximac Fort and the Schattentalfen lands. They live primarily as hunters and gatherers, blending in with the rainforest. Occasionally they prey on the Azcan expeditions to the mines of Chapultepec and Tepetitlan, or ambush Schattentalfen who stray into their territory.

These southern tribes honor Kalaktatla above all other Immortals, out of fear and respect for the mighty dinosaurs who roam their lands and in whose image they conceive him. Sometimes they sacrifice prisoners with hopes of gaining Kalaktatla's favor.

The empire does not recognize the existence of these tribes. They are regarded as something of a myth, or perhaps cleverly-disguised Oltec or Schattentalfen scouts and spies. Otherwise, the Azcan armies would surely have attempted to eradicate the tribes, and bring their members home to the Azcan heartland as slaves and sacrificial victims. (One might debate whether the campaign would work. The tribes have rediscovered the ancient, outer world-Azcan arts of stealth and concealment.)

All of the tribes regard the ruins of Axateotl

as sacred ground. While most of the seven cities (remember, seven were built on exactly the same site) are overgrown or buried from centuries of erosion and neglect, the small pyramid-temple of Kalaktatla is tended dutifully by a group of primitive tribal priests (they are more like shamans, really).

Quauhnahuac

The ruins of Quauhnahuac lie 90 miles northeast of the old lighthouse at Titlapoca. These ruins are all but forgotten by the Azccans. They were the last Hollow World home of the ancient king, Atruatzin, before he was driven into the world's crust by the pretender elevated to the throne by Atzanteotl.

Near to the ruins dwells a tribe of Azccans who, like those of the Axateotl region, have devolved to an earlier cultural stage. They call themselves the Atruatolco, and claim to be the descendents of the few survivors of Atruatzin's last stand. Indeed, they are a small tribe, and their epidemic genetic defects speak of untold

generations of inbreeding. Their oral tradition (all forms of writing have been forgotten) speaks of Atruatzin's humble descent into Mictlan, the place of the dead, from which it is promised he will one day arise.

The Atruatolco are consummate hunters and foresters, and have a strong taboo against contact with outsiders. Only on the advice of their witch-doctor (who combines the roles of doctor, priest, and soothsayer) would they dare break it.

Besides being rich with myth, Quauhnahuac is home to a powerful artifact of Immortal manufacture, connecting this place with the outer world. This "elevator," installed by Atruatzin, may be a point of entry for out-world player characters (see GAZ14, *The Atruaghin Clans*, for additional information).



The land that I, Atruatzin, once ruled has flourished for millennia. Long ago it found beauty in diversity, and has kept that beauty, in spite of the dark one's cruel reign, just as flowers may bloom in spite of the desert. Many are the paths my children follow on their journeys through this life. I know them well, for as I sought Immortality, I followed them all and many more besides.

The Military

From the day of his birth, an Azcan male is dedicated to war: His umbilical cord is buried with a miniature shield and arrows, and the crying babe is exhorted, in a ritual speech, to fight and die bravely. This is his purpose in this world as an Azcan.

At the age of six or seven, a boy enters the *telpochcalli*, "house of the young men," something resembling a military academy. There he receives a warrior's training for three or four years. After that time his hair is shaved, except for one lock on the nape of his neck. This is called the *piochtli*, and the Azcan must not cut it until he has killed or (better yet, for the bloodthirsty priests of Atzanteotl) captured an enemy in battle. (He doesn't have to accomplish the deed alone.) He then cuts his *piochtli*, and is recognized as *iyac*: a warrior, an adult.

Many Azcans leave the army after attaining the title of *iyac*. (To leave earlier would mean lifelong disgrace.) Usually this is not a matter of choice: An *iyac* is forced to retire if he has not continued to succeed, capturing and killing more enemies over the course of several campaigns. Leaving the military, he is forced to return to his family, settle, and work the land as a farmer or in the cities as a craftsman. He is then a *maceualli*—a commoner—and will never be privileged to wear the jewelry and rich, embroidered clothes that adorn the nobles.

A warrior who has captured or killed four foes on the battlefield, on the other hand, becomes a *tequiua*, and may remain in the

army. This title means "one who has tribute"; that is, the *tequiuaque* are among the elite soldiers who receive shares of slaves and booty captured in a campaign. The *tequiua* is like an officer: He commands other soldiers, and confers with the higher ranks on strategy decisions. The *tequiua* is also a noble, permitted to wear the feather headdress and leather bracelets that indicate his rank.

A soldier who continues to fight well, or a commander with proven talent for leadership, may continue to rise in the military hierarchy.

At the summit of his career, a successful Azcan may be invited to join one of the empire's military orders: The Jaguar Knights, the Eagle Knights, and the Knights of the Winged Viper. These are the greatest warriors of the empire (no knight is less than 5th level). They also wield considerable political influence, as the soldiers and many commoners look to them for leadership. The priests of Atzanteotl of course are wary of the fighting orders' power and loyalties, and have infiltrated all three orders with many spies and informants.

At the head of the army (after the emperor, of course) are two persons: the *tlacatecatl*, who is the top field commander of the warriors; and the *tlacocheatl*, "the man of the javelin-house," who coordinates logistics for expeditions and oversees the maintaining of Azcan forts. The men who fill these sandals are among the most powerful in the empire.

Azcan Nobility

The Azcan nobility, unlike that of many other lands, is not a hereditary class. Any male commoner can become a noble, if he can prove himself on the field of war as a powerful warrior and thereby win the title of *tequiua*. Besides the *tequiuaque* and higher military ranks, the nobility includes the *tecuhtlin*, high-ranking appointed administrators, such as the rulers of towns and cities.

There is an exception to the merit basis of the nobility: Since Atzanteotl's ascension, there has been an increased emphasis on heredity. While the children of the tecuhtlin are not formally nobles, they don't sink to the level of commoners either. A tecuhtlin's son is called *pilli*. This word simply means "son," but its implication is "son of a tecuhtlin." The pilli have no formal privileges, and in theory have to work as hard as any commoner's son to attain status in the military, priesthood, or government.

In practice, the pilli have numerous advantages. The emperor and tecuhtlin almost always select their appointees from among the pilli. This isn't just a class bias, though; the pilli have access to better training and education (they attend the *calmecac*, a school run by the priests, rather than the local *telpochcalli*), thanks to their fathers' status. They often are in fact better suited than the typical commoner's son for such jobs as *calpixque* (tax-collector), administrator, judge, or ambassador.

Politics and Government

The vast Azcan empire is a complicated political structure. In theory the tlatoani is the absolute ruler, the interpreter of Atzanteotl's signs, the giver of laws. Of course, there's simply too much for one man to do in the way of administration. For this reason, the Azcans maintain a byzantine structure of nobles, administrators, and even, at the lowest level, elected officials (a holdover from the earliest days, when even the Azcan monarch was elected).

The Calpulli

The smallest political unit of the Azcan Empire is the *calpulli*: The word literally means "group of houses." It is a territory that is held as the common property of a group of families.

Each calpulli has its own small temple, nominally devoted to Atzanteotl, although in practice (especially in the outlying districts) a variety of divinities, the "four hundred rabbits" as they are collectively labeled, are honored. Very rarely will human sacrifice occur in the temple of a calpulli—on this social scale, there just aren't lives to spend in this manner. Even foreigners would be better put to work as slaves, at least as long as possible, rather than sacrifices to Atzanteotl.

Besides a temple, each calpulli has a *telpochcalli*, a sort of college for training youths for the military and educating them in the basics of the state religion of Atzanteotl.

The families of a calpulli elect a leader, called a *calpullec*, who oversees the apportionment of the land according to Azcan law, so that it will yield the best results. The calpullec is also responsible for leading members of the group trained in weapons, for driving away human and monstrous (especially dinosaurs) threats to their land. A body of elders, the heads of the most distinguished families, form a council called the *ueuetque*, which has the duty of advising the calpullec.

Although the calpullec is by tradition elected, he maintains his authority only by the consent of the emperor. Should the sovereign desire, he may remove any calpullec he wishes from his position. Lesser imperial officials lack this power—even if they dislike a calpullec, they must deal with him, unless they can convince the emperor that he should be removed from his post.

Theoretically the calpullec is in charge of all local activities. This is not so in practice, however. Even before the cataclysm, the district priest, or *quacuilli*, had exclusive authority over the calpulli's temple. Since the ascendance of Atzanteotl over all other Azcan divinities, the clergy have extended their influence to include a mandatory "advisory" role in all local activities. In practice, it is no secret that most calpullecs are pawns of the priests of Atzanteotl.

The *telpochcalli* is also outside the jurisdiction of the *calpullec*. It is the province of military instructors, veterans of many campaigns against the foes of the Azcans, who are appointed to their post by persons higher in the military command, or the emperor himself. After serving a long and successful active career, a respectful retirement for an Azcan warrior is to be appointed an instructor in a *telpochcalli*. The military officials of the *telpochcalli* have, with the emperors' blessings, increasingly taken over the military duties that were once the province of the elected *calpullecs*.

The Tecuhtlin

Considerably more powerful than a *calpullec* is a *tecuhtli*, an Azcan administrator or noble. His area of jurisdiction is a village, town, or city, and it encompasses numerous *calpulli*. Governor Oztzilipac of Titlapoca, for instance, is one of the *tecuhtlin*.

The *tecuhtli* is a man of importance and distinction. Because of his high station, he is permitted to wear elaborate clothing and jewelry, the public display of which is forbidden to the common folk. He lives in a building called a *tecalli*. The opulence of this palace will of course depend on exactly what place the *tecuhtli* governs; it could vary from a relatively simple wooden house in an outlying village, to the splendid, multi-storied palaces of Governor Oztzilipac and the princely sons of the emperor who are *tecuhtlin* of the other major cities.

The functions of the *tecuhtli* are fourfold: (1) to represent the people of his district before the emperor and other chief imperial officials (this includes protesting unfair taxation or conscription, and the like); (2) to judge legal suits, criminal and civil; (3) in time of war, to lead the army divisions raised from his district; and finally, (4) to be an administrator in general, maintaining order and seeing that the land was put to proper use. In this last role, he pays especial attention to the land

which was set aside to produce the imperial taxes.

In order to accomplish all of these duties, a *tecuhtli* has the right to appoint officials and functionaries beneath him. The emperor of course has the power to strip any functionary (or, for that matter, any *tecuhtli*) of his office and power.

Tecuhtlin are selected by the emperor. Along with his administrative position, he receives an allotment of land in his districts, farmed by the common people. Proceeds from this land constitute the income of the *tecuhtli*; they must also be used to pay any officials the *tecuhtli* has decided to appoint. The *tecuhtlin* and their families are exempt from imperial taxes. Finally, the emperor periodically makes gifts of provisions, clothes, and luxuries to his favored (or needy) *tecuhtlin*.

The *tecuhtli*'s power derives from the *icpalli* (the imperial throne), for it is the emperor who appoints him. In the olden days, the *tecuhtli* was elected, like the *calpullec*; but as the priesthood of Atzanteotl and the office of the emperor grew in power, the emperor's role shifted from judging *tecuhtlin* who outstepped the boundaries of their offices, to approving which *tecuhtlin* might be elected, to, now, outright controlling who gets what position and how long their political career will last.

In a sense the *tecuhtlin* form a hereditary nobility, since by tradition only a close relative (son, nephew, or relative) of a retired or deceased *tecuhtli* will ascend to the post. However, the emperor is known to make exceptions. For instance, Moctitlipac did not hesitate to appoint his own sons as *tecuhtlin* of the major Azcan cities; and the *tecuhtli* of Titlapoca, Oztzilipac, was a commoner who had risen through the ranks of the army, and ultimately married one of the emperor's daughters.

The Tlatoani (Emperor)

The *tlatoani* is the apex of the Azcan empire, the head of the military, the secular government, and the religious hierarchy.

Azcans regard the *tlatoani* as something like an incarnation of Atzanteotl; at the very least, as the highest priest, he is understood to have direct access to the Immortal's will. This means, of course, that the emperor is always correct, and everything that he commands must be obeyed. Contradicting the emperor is both a religious and legal offense. In practical terms this is just about the same as suicide. For almost two and a half millennia, emperors have had the privilege of commanding the summary sacrifice of anyone they wish.

In short: The *tlatoani* holds absolute power, and is almost invariably absolutely corrupt.

The *tlatoani* achieves his position by a unique combination of birth, talent, and cunning. To become emperor, one by tradition must be the son of the previous emperor (or, if there are no surviving qualified sons, the brothers and nephews of the previous emperor would be eligible). The second, and even more rigidly enforced, requirement is that one must be a spellcasting cleric of Atzanteotl (which means, in the Hollow World, that the character must have been endowed with an extraordinary Wisdom score). Third, one must be elected by a body of the chief priests, highest *tecuhtlin*, and top military leaders, who decide who is Atzanteotl's chosen from among the eligible candidates. Clever and resourceful would-be emperors (such as the present one, Moctitlapac) try to reduce the competition, so that they are the sole candidate in existence. Atzanteotl encourages this: He admires a fratricidal streak in his *tlatoani*.

For a crown, the *tlatoani* wears an elaborate feather headdress, made from the plumes of winged vipers and the most exotic jungle birds (including the archaeopteryx). When presiding over official functions, he sits on the *icpalli*, a chair with a back that serves as the Azcan throne.

The Imperial Bureaucracy

Of course, the Azcan empire is so vast and so complex that a single man, even one endowed with absolute authority, could not possibly govern it all himself. Consequently there are the legions of bureaucrats, from palace functionaries and chief priests all the way down to the local nobles and village priests. Each is given a tiny fraction of the emperor's authority (which is synonymous with Atzanteotl's authority) to carry out his assigned task.

Such perfectly powerful and corrupt emperors aren't often conducive to smoothly functioning administration. For this reason, it is tacitly understood by those in the know that the emperor is, in practice, much more of a figurehead than anyone could imagine. He could in fact command just about anything he wished—but most of his time is occupied by debauched diversions and sadistic pastimes, plus the occasional ritual function (such as performing sacrifices on important festival days).

The myriad bureaucrats and functionaries from the imperial treasurer to the *Uey Calpixqui* (in charge of sanitation in the capital, Chitlacan) are too many to be listed or described in detail here.

The generic name for an administrator (especially a tax collector) is *calpixqui* (plural: *calpixque*). The most important of them will carry the title "tecuhtli," and may attach the honorific suffix *-tzin* to their name (e.g., a man named Quahuapac might change his name to Quahuapatzin upon appointment to an important position), to indicate the respect due the name's bearer.

Law & Enforcement

The emperor nominates judges, theoretically from among nobles and commoners, to adjudicate disputes amongst the majority of the population (traders and priests have their separate systems of justice). In practice, most judges either are *pilli* (the sons of *tecuhtlin*),

experienced calpixque, or retired warriors who showed themselves to be intelligent and loyal to the state. The emperor does little but approve the nominations of his staff, in most cases. The staff, however, is meticulous in researching candidates. They scrutinize possible judges for incorruptible character, since the judges have considerable power. People who are prone to drunkenness or bribe acceptance will not be nominated. Most judges are, at least at the time of their appointment, of Neutral alignment.

Judges are accorded profound respect, and granted wide powers. They have a small police force at their disposal consisting of fighters of not less than 3rd level. These police may be authorized to arrest any person in the empire, except the emperor and his immediate family—who, as purported avatars of Atzanteotl, are above criminality. The decision of a judge is binding unless countermanded by the tlatoani himself.

With so much power, it is of course dangerous that some judges may be corrupt. Charges of corruption, leveled officially by another judge, will bring a judge's career to a quick close. With one such charge, even if not completely proven, a judge receives public censure and his reputation is seriously tarnished. A second charge brings dismissal at the least; if three other, unbiased judges (as appointed by the tlatoani) find the accused to be guilty of corruption, he may be sentenced to death by sacrifice.

Azcan justice is swift and brutal. Many crimes warrant death by sacrifice; others earn slavery, public humiliation, and/or corporal punishment (whippings or mutilation). The Azcans have no prisons; the closest thing are the giant wooden cages that hold criminals awaiting punishment.

A final note: Every citizen has the formal right to appeal to the emperor if he feels judgement has been unfair. Few bother, however, since such rulers as Moctitlapac have a habit of summarily commanding the sacrifice

of all parties involved without even hearing the case.

Azcan Wealth

The Azcans have an ancient proverb: "It is not wealth that brings honor, but honor that brings wealth." This folk wisdom explains a lot about Azcan attitudes, and the way that Azcan traders differ from the rest of their society.

Compared to people of many cultures, the typical Azcan is impoverished. Private property is hardly a concept among these people. Peasant families hold land in common, if they are not mere tenant farmers, and divide it for labor according to the decisions of their calpullec. They operate on a subsistence level, growing enough food to feed themselves and their families, and either working the lands of the local governor or providing goods or services as taxes.

The fruits of this tax-labor flow to Chitlacan, the capital, to the coffers of the emperor. But despite his famous greed, the tlatoani is not a miser. He must ration out most of the income to his servants, from the highest officials down to the soldiers in Ximac Fort.

Wealth, to the Azcan mind, is what these people who serve the emperor have. It is not something in itself. After all, what need has a person, beyond his food, clothing, and shelter? (And remember: this is an economy based on barter, not money.) The people who have great wealth are those who must give it away.

For instance, a tecuhtli is given an allowance by the emperor. With this allowance he is supposed to support his staff of soldiers, servants, administrators, and so forth. He is also expected to provide for the needs of his subjects if famine or other disasters should strike. A rich man is one who receives much because of his honor, and

gives it all away. After all, what point would there be in hoarding away bales of textiles and bushels of grain? They would simply rot, and these are the chief currencies of the realm.

Some forms of wealth are non-perishable—gold, for instance, and jewelry. These are the treasures wealthy men will keep, and display as symbols of their status. Their value is not one of commercial convertibility, however, because only nobles are permitted to wear them!

A person's wealth is commensurate with his position, reputation, and honor. Those of high repute will have many followers and numerous officials, and will thus need a great allowance to support them all.

The connection with honor also explains why only the nobles are permitted expensive clothing: It not merely symbolizes their wealth/honor/reputation, it is those things in tangible fact.

As you may well imagine, this concept of wealth and property is attractive to great warriors and statesmen, who thrive on honor and social status, but does not appeal to businessmen. This is one reason why the merchants are almost like a separate society, one in which private property has greater meaning.

Trade and Commerce

Azcan merchants, known as *pochtecatl* in their native tongue, are a special class unto themselves. They are divided from the rest of Azcan society by activities, customs, and even a distinct and autonomous system of justice. They are almost like a separate nation, marrying among themselves, passing on the business from father to son, and even worshipping in their own manner.

Several families of *pochtecatl*—similar to the guilds of other cultures—exist in the Azcan empire. Each is based in a particular city,

and has a monopoly on the commerce of that city and the nearby land. They organize and lead massive caravans of porters for overland journeys, travel the waterways with their barges and boats, and deal with those foreign merchants who call at their home ports.

Despite their wealth, the *pochtecatl* affect simple, humble ways. This has a lot to do with the way Azcans view wealth (see the boxed insert); traders who flaunt their possessions would be challenging the honor and respect of the nobility and might be put to death. Hence they carefully affect meekness and poverty. This often goes so far that a merchant will deny that he owns his caravan, and will claim to be merely an intermediary—a very poor, humble go-between—for someone else.

A *pochteca* has great pride in his position, however. He considers himself a soldier of a special sort. Indeed, the trade routes are often perilous, and many a trader must of necessity be a stalwart fighter. The *pochteca* also sees himself as a conqueror, bringing back the spoils of his foreign exploits to the homeland. The *pochtecatl*'s view of themselves as soldiers or conquerors goes so far that a trader killed on an expedition will be cremated, and declared to have joined the paradise of the sun—just as one would say of soldiers slain in battle or victims on the sacred stone of sacrifice. Also, like warriors, the traders offer sacrifices to *Atzanteotl* on festival days; but while the soldiers offer prisoners of war, the traders hand over slaves to the priests. Of course the warriors' prisoners are sacrificed first, since they are of the greatest honor.

The traders do have various contacts with the mainstream society, besides the commercial. Their children are permitted to go to the *calmecac*, the priests' school, where they can learn to read and write both the Azcan and Neathar languages. Some very few might even leave the merchant class to become officials or priests.

Each trader family has a chief or leader, known as the *pochtecatlatohqui*, "merchant



lord,” whose name ends in the honorific *-tzin*. The *pochtecatlahoque* are too old to actually travel, but they supervise the younger *pochtecatl*’s caravan arrangements and preside over ceremonies of arrival and departure. The merchant lords have further responsibilities: They are the legal authority over their *pochtecatl*, answerable solely to the *tlaotani*; and their legal authority covers all areas, not just matters of trade. They may even assign the death sentence for capital crimes. The *pochtecatlahoque* represent their families to the emperor.

Beneath the merchant lord, the *pochtecatl* have several ranks or positions, such as:

Tecuhnenenque, “Traveling Lords.” These individuals are respected for their experience in leading long, dangerous, and successful expeditions.

Naualoztomeca, “disguised traders.” These sly Azcans have the job of infiltrating hostile tribes and nations, wearing their clothes and speaking their languages, to scout trade opportunities. Most are of the thief class. The *poch-*

tecatl often share intelligence gathered by the *naualoztomeca* with the Azcan army.

Tealtianime, “Who had offered slaves in sacrifice,” an honorary title for a clever, notable merchant who has had much success, and thus has made many offerings of thanksgiving to *Atzanteotl*.

Teyauualouanime, “those who surround the enemy,” are an invaluable part of any overland journey. They are often of the thief class. They use stealth to scout out ahead of the caravan and warn of ambushes or possible danger.

Tequanime, “wild beasts,” are the brawny fighters who guard a caravan.

Apart from their public festival sacrifices, the *pochtecatl* do not participate in Azcan religion. They explain that they have their own way of honoring, adapted to the needs of traders far from home and lacking trained priests. Some of *Atzanteotl*’s priests worry that the *pochtecatl* may actually serve the old Immortals, but as long as they don’t corrupt the rest of society—and continue to pay their gi-

gantic taxes—the theocracy doesn't protest loudly.

In fact, many traders do serve the old Immortals, Otzitiotl and Kalaktatla, and have secretly done so for centuries. They even have some clerics—secretly, of course—and sometimes take non-pochteca clerics under their wing for protection. Similar protection may be extended to foreigners in the empire, otherwise destined for slavery or sacrifice, who could be of value to the pochtecatl. Some traders—even some of the pochtecatlahoque—are fervent adherents of the New Way.

Naturally, the merchant families would be an excellent place for native player characters to begin their career, or for foreign characters to find refuge.

Articles of Trade

The following are some examples of the pochtecatl's wares:

Imports (brought into Chitlacan and the cities): cocoa (the preferred drink of the elite), jade, emeralds, seashells, tortoise shells (out of which cocoa spoons are made), animal skins (jaguar, puma, deer, fox, etc.), amber, parrots, exotic birds' plumes, slaves, cotton, aloe, maize, beans, oil-bearing seeds, peppers, onions, herbs, turkeys, rabbits, venison, ducks, dogs (a culinary delicacy), fruit, sweet potatoes, honey, salt, seafood, tobacco, bamboo, flint, obsidian, lumber.

Exports (manufactured in the cities and brought to the outlying places): embroidered clothes, cotton cloth, rabbits'-hair blankets, copper and golden jewelry, flint and obsidian knives, cochineal and indigo dyes, scented or medicinal herbs, cloaks, loincloths, charged pipes (cylinders of bamboo filled with tobacco, ready to be smoked), skirts, cloth made of aloe fibers, shoes, ropes, cloaks, syrup (made from

maize or agave juice), earthenware, wooden dishes, copper axes, paper (manufactured from bark or aloes), charcoal, resinous torches, medicines and ointments.

Religion and Priesthood

Azcan cosmology is based on a conception of cycles, or "suns," of the universe, successive worlds that existed before the present one (and will exist after), and were destroyed by cataclysm. On the outer world, the Azcans were taught that the previous era was *nauí atl*, the fourth sun, which ended in a cataclysmic deluge.

They believed that they themselves lived in the fifth sun. That era was known as *nauí ollin*. "Ollin" is the name of a cross-shaped glyph in the Azcan written language of pictograms. It means both "movement" and "earthquake," and was understood to mean that the world would end in a cataclysm of earthquakes.

"Movement" was understood as the beginning of the age, when the Immortals set the sun and the rest of the heavenly bodies, which controlled the destinies of all beings, in motion. At the beginning of Time—or, more properly speaking, *before* Time—the Immortals gathered in the twilight, for there was no sun, no motion, no time.

One of them, Otzitiotl, a small and ugly Immortal, covered with boils, perceived the hollowness of the universe. He therefore sacrificed himself, casting himself into a great brazier filled with burning coals. By the flames he was raised up to heaven, burning as the sun, lighting the world. But he was motionless, and so the other gods immolated themselves, too. Out of the life-energies released by their deaths, the sun drew the energy to move, setting time and history into motion.

Out of this creation myth, the Azcans came to believe that sacrificial blood—*chalchivuatl*, "the precious water," they called it—had to be

periodically offered to Otzitiotl, to keep the sun healthy and in motion. A foundation of all Azcan thought was that nothing could come to be or endure without dire sacrifice. Long ago, according to the priests of Atzanteotl, weak and cowardly people resisted the practice, and tried to eliminate human sacrifice. This weakened the sun, and brought the fifth age crashing to an end.

When the fifth sun came to an end, the few Azcan survivors found another meaning for the *ollin* glyph's sense of "movement," however: The evil spirits of twilight, the *tzitzimime*, descended from the western sky, swarming across and devouring the land, and the world trembled and shook. As the Immortals sent myriad omens of destruction, the Azcan people prayed feverishly and offered sacrifices, and their prayers were answered. They were whisked away from the collapsing universe to a new world, the Hollow World.

The orthodox mythology of Atzanteotl's followers states that he was the only Immortal to hear the Azcan cries for succor. He carried them to the Hollow World, where he immolated himself, as Otzitiotl had in the previous sun, and brought out of the darkness of the Hollow World the red, thirsty, unmoving sun. To sustain him and hold him in the sky, Atzanteotl requires *chalchuiatl* from his Azcan children.

Ritual Sacrifice

The Azcans are most infamous for their brutal practice of human sacrifice. There are several methods that the priests of Atzanteotl employ to sacrifice sentient creatures to their Immortal patron. It is not necessary for us to discuss the graphic details; if you are really interested, your library may have several volumes on the topic of related Mesoamerican customs.

Player characters' being sentenced to death by sacrifice does not ensure their demise. Some methods may be similar to gladiatorial combat: If the object of sacrifice can overcome a certain number of Azcan warriors (say, five)

in ritual combat before Atzanteotl's altar, it is taken as a sign of Atzanteotl's special favor, and the victim's life will be spared. A feast will typically be held in his honor to celebrate Atzanteotl's beneficence.

Death by sacrifice is, according to Azcan beliefs, one of the best ways to leave this world. They believe that warriors who die on the stone of sacrifice, like those that die in battle, become *quauhtecatl*, "companions of the eagle," the bird associated with the sun. These spirits live in bliss, near the Hollow World's red sun, and revel in the splendor of mighty Atzanteotl.

The Four Hundred Rabbits

Besides Atzanteotl, the acknowledged overlord of everything Azcan, there are countless minor, local divinities that are implicitly tolerated by Atzanteotl's priesthood. These beings are called "the Four Hundred Rabbits." (Four hundred is not literal in this context; it simply means a large and indeterminate number.) Most of these minor deities and powerful spirits are guardians of the land, guarantors of fertility and prosperity. They may be associated with particular locales, after which they are named (e.g., *Tepoztecatl*, "he of [the village of] *Tepoztlan*"). While treated as Immortals, many are just fairies, such as *Xochiquetzal*, or other such nature spirits, that have been helpful to the humans. Few of the "four hundred rabbits" have clerics or druids. Instead, the simple commonfolk who honor them leave offerings of food and drink, and hold gay harvest festivals in their tribute.

Under the ostensible tolerance for the honoring of the Four Hundred Rabbits, there flourish several cults of genuine immortals. Foremost among these are *Kalaktatla* and *Otzitiotl* (known as *Ka the Preserver* and *Ixion*, respectively, among other cultures).

The priests of Atzanteotl closely monitor the cults of the Four Hundred Rabbits—especially those of *Kalaktatla* and *Otzitiotl*—and arrange for "accidents," "coincidences," and ubiquitous

bureaucratic roadblocks, to keep any of these groups from gaining too much power or knowledge. Well-known priests of the lesser cults have an unfortunate habit of disappearing or dying under questionable circumstances.

The formal leader of the all the minor cults together is the *ometochtzin*, “venerable two-rabbit” (whose title is the name of one of the innumerable minor deity-spirits). He is subservient to the hierarchy of Atzanteotl, and administers the proliferation of servants of the Four Hundred Rabbits. The hierarchy perceives the minor cults as hotbeds of heresy and threats to the theocracy; but for the moment their policy is that the best way to repress religious dissent is to authorize and supervise the minor cults as part of the larger hierarchy. Many PC clerics would be answerable to the *ometochtzin*.

The Priesthood

The most talented youngsters of the empire and the children of nobles attend a special monastic school called the *calmecac*, where they live side by side with pious priests in austere poverty. Here they are not taught the arts of war, as are most male children; they are instead educated in the history and beliefs of the Azcan people, and the secrets of reading and writing.

Most children leave the *calmecac* and find roles in Azcan secular society—as judges, administrators, merchants (if they come from a merchant family), and so forth. A select few (who have the requisite high wisdom) become novices, destined for the priesthood.

Between the ages of 20 and 22, the novice must decide whether or not he will forswear marriage and become a *tlamacazqui*, or priest. Some novices decide against this, and join other professions; others choose to be initiated into a priesthood of the Four Hundred Rabbits. Most, however, select Atzanteotl’s priesthood. The prestige and power of a position in Atzanteotl’s theocracy is virtually unparalleled in Azcan society.

From *tlamacazqui*, the young Azcan may rise to higher ecclesiastical grades. Next is the *quacuilli*, an assistant or village priest; and the *tlenamacac*, a title for experienced and important clerics such as the chief priest of a town.

A host of high-level clerics carry the *teohuatzin* titles, indicating that they are important administrators. The *uitzinauac teohuatzin*, for example, is the arbiter of questions of ritual; the *tepan teohuatzin* is the administrator of education in the Church. The high priest of each Azcan city bears the title of *teohuatzin*.

Finally, above all of Atzanteotl’s priests, answerable solely to the *tlatoni* and Atzanteotl himself, is the *Coatl Atzanteotl Tlamacazqui*, the supreme high priest of Atzanteotl.

Priests of Immortals other than Atzanteotl must be registered in the temple records, or risk the punishment of death by sacrifice. Such priests are theoretically subservient to Atzanteotl’s clerics (see “The Four Hundred Rabbits”).

Azcan women are able to become clerics. Sometimes a couple will deposit a girl-child, with an offering of copal (a type of incense), at a temple. If the child has the potential, the priests will educate her for the religious life. When she becomes an adult she may elect to become a *ciuatlamacazqui*, “priestess,” so long as she will accept celibacy. Priestesses of Atzanteotl retain this title and role as long as they do not marry.

There’s no written law that prevents women from rising in the hierarchy, but it’s no secret that the theocracy is a “male club.” For this reason many priestesses prefer the Four Hundred Rabbits, amongst whom they are relatively free of the sexism and patriarchal oppression that dominate the high levels of Atzanteotl’s theocracy.

Clerical Titles and Levels

The titles of the ranks of Azcan priests do not correspond precisely to clerical levels, but the following may be used as a guide for estimating the level of an NPC cleric with a particular station:

Rank	Level
Novice:	Normal Human or Level 1
Tlamacazqui:	Level 2
Quacuilli:	Level 3-5
Tlenemacac:	Level 6 +
Teohuatzin:	Level 9 +
Coatl Atzanteotl Tlamacazqui:	Level 12 +

Note that the titles of Teohuatzin and Coatl Atzanteotl Tlamacazqui are limited by the number of administrative positions to be filled.

Soothsayers and Physicians

Divination is performed by a particular class of specialists, the *tonalpouhque*, who are educated in the monastery schools. They do not enter Atzanteotl's hierarchy, though; they rather set up a "private practice" of astrology and soothsaying outside the temple (often on its steps!). Business flourishes, as everyone in Azcan society is obsessed with predestination. Soothsayers are well-off financially, and their social independence makes them excellent material for PC clerics, thieves, or magic-users.

Physicians are another special, semi-secular class of calmecac graduates. Men and women may be officially recognized as doctors. In game terms, this may reflect knowledge of healing techniques and herbalism; or the character could in fact be a cleric with access to healing spells.

Both soothsayers and physicians are often secretly clerics of the old Immortals.

The Temple

The great temple of each city is traditionally the meeting point of all walks of Azcan life. Even those who despise Atzanteotl find it necessary to visit the temple, whether for paying certain taxes, answering a court summons, or meeting someone (since it's the most accessible landmark in any city).

Azcan temples are in the shape of step pyramids. They have several square tiers, each at least the height of a man. A great, narrowing staircase ascends the front of the temple, and faces the main plaza of the city. At the top of the highest tier is a shrine (usually roofed) where important temple ceremonies (including sacrifices) are held. This shrine is also the entrance to the inside. Stairs lead to various interior chambers, including dormitories and rooms in which Atzanteotl's acolytes live and learn.

A detailed description of the remarkable Great Temple of Atzanteotl in Chitlacan, which was built over an earlier temple consecrated to Otzitiotl, is found in module HWA1, *Nightwail*.

The New Way

Over the centuries a secret cult, known to its adherents as the "New Way," has arisen. These heretics (as the priests of Atzanteotl would call them) deny Atzanteotl and reject him as an evil deceiver.

They don't necessarily put much faith in the old gods, either; they believe, like the followers of Atzanteotl, that the Immortals—if they ever existed at all—abandoned the Azcan people to the horror of the cataclysm. As such, a return to the service of Kalaktatla, Otzitiotl, and their ilk would serve no purpose. Most followers of the New Way do not realize that it is thanks to those Immortals that the Azcan people were saved at all, and transported to the Hollow World.

Followers of the New Way reject this Hollow World as a passing illusion, and they await the

day of a savior, the new Sun, whose sacrifice will return a world of seasons, of a moving sun. This messiah's sacrifice will not require more blood in the future, but will rather be the last blood, the satiety of the thirsting sun; his chalchiuatl will free the Azcan people at last.

This messiah myth is rooted in the legend of a beneficent god-king, Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl was a king in the early days of this age, when the Azcans were new to the Hollow World. He so loved his people that he refused to permit human sacrifices. Instead, he offered sacrifices of birds, snakes, and butterflies, to placate the Immortals. The priests of Atzanteotl declare that Quetzalcoatl was a weak and heretical priest-king, and so Atzanteotl justly destroyed him. Adherents of the New Way say otherwise: They tell that Quetzalcoatl spoke the truth, and refused to bow down before the diabolical Immortal. Quetzalcoatl refused to let him dominate and enslave the Azcan people. Atzanteotl hated Quetzalcoatl, and used black magic to turn the people against the king, and drive him from the city.

In various stories, Quetzalcoatl lived before or after the terrible cataclysm. Some hold that after exiling Quetzalcoatl, Atzanteotl deceived the Azcans, and stole them away to this evil place over which he holds sway.

Many people who have heard his story secretly hope that Quetzalcoatl still wanders, that he has achieved Immortality, and that he will return—in full Immortal splendor, or by reincarnating himself as an avatar among the Azcans—to free his people from the scourge of Atzanteotl's evil shackles.

The highest initiates of the New Way are often skeptical of this belief in a messiah. They doubt that such a person will ever come, but still, they recognize that it is a powerful myth, one that gives hope to those who chafe under evil's burden. It is a heresy that makes the priest-kings of Atzanteotl tremble with rage and dream terrible plots in the dusty inner sanctums of their palatial temples.

Inner circles of the New Way also realize the difficulty, or even futility, of their project: Thanks to the *Spell of Preservation*, Azcan society can never be fully purged of the evil which has become its nature; and there are no Immortals who will overtly oppose Atzanteotl in Azcan matters. These highest initiates suspect, or are even quite convinced, that their quest is utterly futile—and yet, they are the project's most unconditional devotees. Having devoted their lives to a goal, revealed now as impossible, they renew the struggle hundred-fold, for the struggle's sake. These desperate crusaders have a burning passion unmatched in gentler climes.

They know that they run a terrible risk. By opposing the bloodthirsty Immortal's will, they may be subject to the evil spirits and horrors that, in return for human blood, Atzanteotl holds at bay from his people. But those of the New Way fight on for Truth and Goodness and its inevitable triumph.

Little is known about the structure of the New Way, even by its followers. Some of its members are placed very high in the clergy and government; but their identities are kept utterly secret. (If the truth were to leak out, it would mean certain death.) It seems that these individuals are not the real movers behind the Way, however; perhaps no one but those individuals themselves know who they are.

Members meet in secret, and do not use their real (public) names. Instead, they take as a use-name among their comrades the glyph of the name-day under which they were born. (Anyway, that is more useful for the group's soothsayers than a public name!)

Followers of the New Way may have special adventuring opportunities—and obligations—because of their allegiance. They are open targets for terrible, extraplanar creatures that Atzanteotl holds at bay from his loyal followers; and they may be called upon at any moment by their superiors, to risk or give up their lives for the hope of the Way.

Who are my people? If we counted and counted across many calendars, still we could not list them all. And yet I, Atruatzin, know them, as a shepherd on the high plateau knows every lamb in his flock. I know their beauty and their ugliness, their virtues and wickedness, all; and I know that even the darkest of Azcan souls longs to be set free from the shadow of the false twin, the viper who poisons my land. I will come to them, and show them the Way they seek. I will cast off their chains of wickedness, washing clean my people's souls. By my chalchuiatl this shall come to pass, satisfying those who thirst for justice. Flowers will bloom in the deep desert.

Atruatzin

Quetzalcoatl, Atruaghin, the Feathered Serpent

Sphere and Alignment: Matter; Lawful.

Manifestation Power: Greater

Followers' Alignment: Any. Clerics are almost always lawful; rarely (about 10%) neutral.

History: Atruatzin was priest-king in Chitlacan when Atzanteotl achieved immortality. Atruatzin had ruled long and wisely, and had gained the reputation of being skilled in every art. He was a faithful priest of Kalaktatla and Otzitiotl, the two major Azcan Immortals.

Atzanteotl had set his mind to winning the Azcan people, and Atruatzin was a barrier. Finding the priest-king to be incorruptible, Atzanteotl had to manipulate other, weaker souls into eliminating Atruatzin. Though their attempts to kill him failed, they did succeed in exiling him first from Chitlacan, then from the Hollow World altogether.

In the course of his wanderings, Atruatzin and some followers rested a while at a place they named Mictlan, "the land of the dead" (for so they virtually thought themselves, betrayed by their people and abandoned by their

Immortals). There they built a temple and consecrated it to both Otzitiotl and Kalaktatla.

Even there, Atruatzin was not safe from Atzanteotl's meddling. Before long their haven was overrun by desperate elves, who had been wandering since being driven underground by a Blackmoorian catastrophe in Glantri. Around Atruatzin's temple, these elves built the city of Aengmor, rededicated to Atzanteotl's glory. Atzanteotl subsequently arranged for the elves to be killed or driven away, and he handed the city over to humanoids. (For the whole story, see GAZ10, *The Orcs of Thar*, by Bruce Heard; and GAZ13, *The Shadow Elves*, by Carl Sargent and Gary Thomas.)

Alone and exiled again, Atruatzin wandered to the surface world. He found a people similar to him, in language and appearance, though their customs were very different from the city-dwelling Azcans of the Hollow World. A medicine man among them, following a vision, discovered Atruatzin in the forest, and welcomed him to their tribe.

Among these strong people, Atruatzin at last found a home. Their language was easy for him to learn. Among them his name became Atruaghin. His brilliance and multiplicitous skills made him an immediate hero. His diplomatic skills brought the formerly warring tribes together, to protect them from external threats.

But Atruaghin also found his difference from them: He did not age. This was all the more apparent in the strange outer world, with day and night and seasons.

Atruaghin contemplated long and hard, and at last determined to embark on a vision quest, in the custom of his adopted people. After setting affairs straight, to ensure that the tribes would survive and be strong in his absence, Atruaghin again set to wandering the world.

In each place he visited, Atruaghin studied their customs, and learned their arts and crafts. He even returned to the Hollow World,

but did not feel ready to challenge the order which, he saw, Atzanteotl had created. He did create an artifact, however, which connected the ancient ruins of Quauhnahuac—his last Hollow World stronghold—with the lands of his adopted tribes on the outer world. He intuited that it would serve good purpose in the distant future. The other great deeds Atruaghin achieved are too numerous to list here.

Gradually, his two patron Immortals revealed to him what he was doing, and what he was to become: He was following the Path of the Polymath, destined to become an Immortal himself. Atruaghin would be of great importance in the unfolding of destiny and the great war among the Immortals that was seen to be coming.

Atruaghin was most unusual because he had two Immortal Sponsors: Ixion (whom Atruatzin, as an Azcan, had called Otzitiotl), of the Sphere of Energy; and Ka (known to Azcans as Kalaktatla), of the sphere of Matter. When, at long last, Atruaghin won Immortality, he chose to enter the Sphere of Matter.

Personality: Atruatzin is an extremely patient Immortal. It is 1,900 years since he achieved Immortality (and that was after an unusually long path), and he has not yet exacted vengeance upon Atzanteotl. Like a good Azcan soothsayer, he waits patiently for the right moment, when all the right elements are in correct alignment, to make his move.

Soft-spoken, yet quietly commanding, Atruatzin is a conciliator and a sort of diplomat. He is not the scheming, plotting kind of diplomat, but more of a mediator, disarmingly open, startlingly reasonable, and flexible in mind and attitude. He is not a weakling or pushover, however: When he recognizes that violent struggle is the only solution, he pursues it with the cold competence of an Azcan warrior.

Allies: Kalaktatla and Otzitiotl, who co-sponsored Atruatzin's path to Immortality, are his chief allies. He has also made numerous

friends, not only within the sphere of Thought (in which Diulanna has taken an especial liking for him, admiring his tenacity and gratefully remembering the peace made with Neathar tribes during his mortal reign over the Azcans—a peace all too soon broken by Atzanteotl's minions), but amongst all spheres save Entropy. He's not extravagantly popular, but is well liked and widely accorded great respect. Some wonder if his sponsors had in mind some destiny even greater than Immortality.

Enemies: Atruatzin's chief enemy is of course Atzanteotl. After years of contemplation, however, Atruaghin does not think in terms of vengeance. He is sorry that Atzanteotl is the bitter, cruel, being that he is; but still greater is the sorrow he feels for his people, still chafing under Atzanteotl's yoke. The responsibility to them is what motivates Atruatzin's desire to oppose Atzanteotl.

Atruatzin opposes all Immortals of entropy on similar grounds: the fact that they are inherently and irrevocably committed to the destruction of life and the other four spheres. This being so, Atruatzin has no choice but to apply all his resources toward restraining them and thwarting their evil plans.

Appearance: Atruatzin prefers not to present a stunning image, despite his heroic stature in myth and legend. He appears as a middle-aged Azcan, with a noble, hawk-like nose and piercing eyes. His skin is deeply browned and weathered, crossed with the wrinkles of millennia of pain and patience. He usually wears the skins and moccasins popular amongst the Atruaghin Clans, and the either the headdress of a chieftain or a more simple head-band, sewed with small, brightly colored beads making sharp geometric patterns reminiscent of Azcan architectural decor.

Symbol: Among the Atruaghin Clans, this Immortal is known by his feather headdress. The feathered serpent is associated with Atruatzin among his scattered Azcan adherents; it embodies the fusion of the hawk (sym-

bol of Otzitiotl) and the reptile (symbol of Kalaktatla).

DMing Notes: The Atruaghin Clans (see GAZ14, by Bill Connors) have been Atruatzin's chief focus of interest since he attained Immortality. For the present, he is but a quiet observer of Azcan things, using only the most subtle influence to mire Atzanteotl's projects, and lending some quiet assistance to the New Way. The time is coming soon, however, when this will change. . .

The Feathered Serpent

Atruatzin is often known as Quetzalcoatl, which means "the feathered serpent," or also "precious twin." A story of the New Way tells how he received this name, and what it signifies:

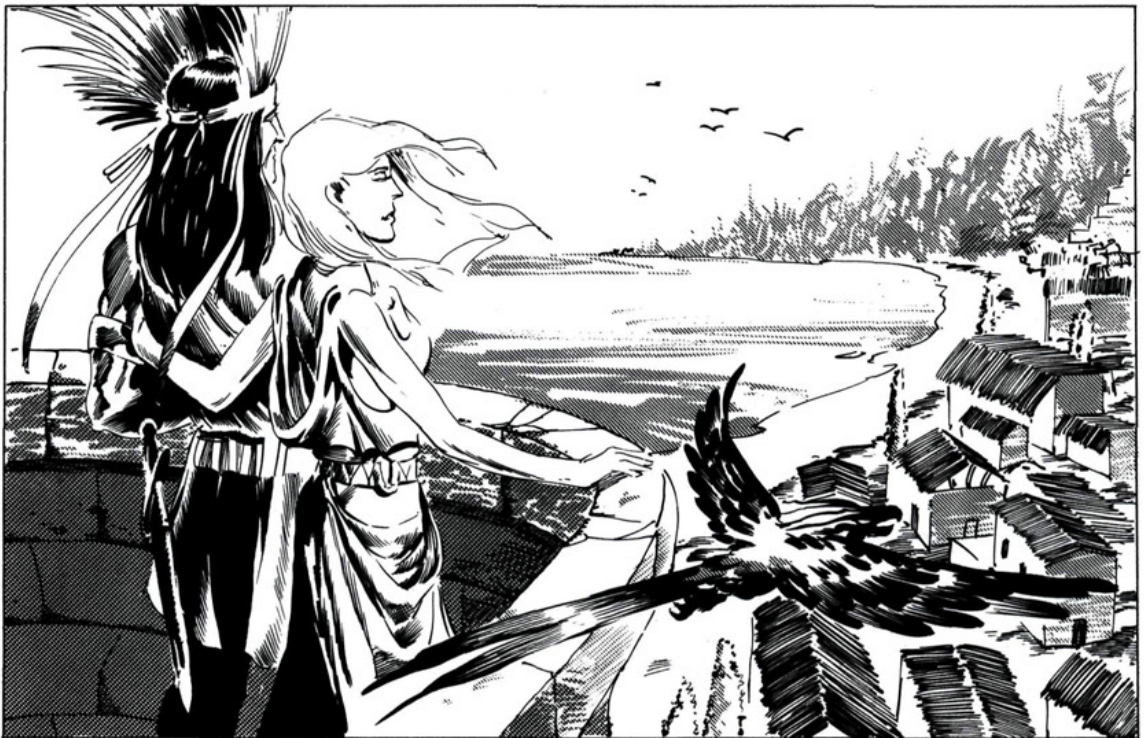
One day in the forest, Atruatzin was walking with friends and family. A flock of deadly flying snakes suddenly descended,

threateningly, and there was no way the humans could escape. Atruatzin stepped forward and said, "Please, leave my people be, and I will offer myself; for surely my flesh is enough to satisfy you all."

Instead of attacking, the snakes landed on the rainforest floor, bowing and prostrating themselves before him. "We honor you, O Quetzalcoatl, whose greatness will glorify our image. We shall await your return from Mictlan, to free us from the blasphemer."

In some versions of the story, the winged serpents then kissed his feet, pricking him gently with their fangs. The venom did not kill him; instead, he ceased to age, and stayed in his middle years even as grandchildren died of old age.

No one, not even Atruatzin, whose wisdom went unequaled amongst mortals, understood then what the serpents meant. But the name "Quetzalcoatl" remained, and was remembered by the people.



Only when Atzanteotl came did people understand: Atzanteotl took the shadow of the feathered serpent as his symbol, just as Atzanteotl's works are but a shadow, a mockery of Atruatzin's crafts. The flying snakes, which had made peace with Atruatzin, never again spoke, but instead attacked people and poisoned them with their venom.

But Atruatzin, the precious twin, will return to free and redeem his people; and his chalchiuatl (sacrificial blood) will end Atzanteotl's wicked reign.

This story is told among people who only know of the bat-winged flying viper—Atzanteotl's beast—and do not realize that friendly, intelligent feathered serpents once roamed the Azcan Empire.

Chupicuario

Huitlaktima Teohuatzin: High Priest of Atzanteotl in the city of Huitlaktima.

History: Chupicuario is unusual in that he hails from one of the powerful merchant families, the pochtecatl. He was educated in the calmecac, the school run by Atzanteotl's priests, where he came to feel that he had a special calling for clerical service. The decision to become a novice and then tlamacazqui upset and alienated Chupicuario's family who, like many pochtecatl, were suspicious of Atzanteotl and his priesthood.

In the priesthood Chupicuario flourished. He rose slowly but steadily, always having to face a certain degree of suspicion and resentment on account of his pochteca heritage. Eventually, at the age of 45—thirteen years ago—he was appointed to become Huitlaktima Teohuatzin: Atzanteotl's High Priest of Huitlaktima.

Since then Chupicuario has worked steadily to broaden his connections, personal wealth, and power. From the start he cultivated a cal-

culated "friendship" with the tecuhtli, Prince Tlachatlatlan. The third son of Moctitlapac is a hopeless ruler, and has come to rely deeply on Chupicuario's sense, wisdom, and careful flattery. Chupicuario's real dream is to take the Azcan throne for himself, upon Moctitlapac's death. Tlachatlatlan and the other eligible princes would of course have to be first eliminated. Since there are no surviving uncles or cousins (thanks to Moctitlapac's having killed all his eligible brothers), a completely new dynasty would be required, and Chupicuario would be well suited to initiate it. He has earned a great deal of respect amongst the great clerics, and his exhortations for a return to asceticism appeal to Atzanteotl's hardliners, who resent the sloth and debauchery of the tlatoani and his family.

Personality: Though hardened by many long, brutal years of priestly duty, Chupicuario retains a remarkable idealism with regard to Atzanteotl and the clerical vocation. He has little patience with the pochtecatl and their endless insistence on autonomy and privilege, still less for the "misguided" clerics of the Four Hundred Rabbits, and absolutely no room in his world-view for the New Way. Chupicuario's unassailable convictions and deep-rooted intolerance make him a dangerous man indeed—and have earned him numerous enemies.

Although fanatical about Atzanteotl and Azcan superiority and its destiny of world rulership, Chupicuario is neither hotheaded nor impatient. On the contrary, his calm verges on the icy, and he is content to progress in a methodical, calculating way toward his goals.

Appearance: Age 58; black eyes, short black hair, dark skin, and a lean and wiry build.

DM Notes: This man is extremely wealthy, in terms of personal property as well as prestige and power in Azcan society. He owns several buildings in the city of Huitlaktima, including a residence with a secret tunnel from its cellar to the palace of Prince Tlachatlatlan.

Chupicuaro also has a room in Atzanteotl's temple, as is traditional, where he performs most of his administrative duties and occasionally sleeps.

Chupicuaro is well suited as a long-term adversary for a character party. He has plenty of plots and interests for the party to foil (wittingly or not); he also has plenty of enemies who may court the party's assistance.

If the long-awaited, cataclysmic return of Atruatzin were to wrench apart the empire, Chupicuaro is well-placed to assume power, even without his own plots to steal the icpalli. His fanaticism, a stark contrast with the self-indulgence of the emperor and his sons, would be a rallying point for Atzanteotl's last supporters.

Combat Notes: 12th-level cleric; AC 9; hp 43; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 club or magic; Dmg 1d6 or by spell type; Save C12; ML 10; AL C; S 10, I 14, W 18, D 9, Co 9, Ch 13. Languages: Azcan, Neathar, Traldar. General Skills: Alertness (D), Deceive (Ch), Honor Atzanteotl (W), Intimidate (S), Knowledge of Azcan Laws & Customs (I), Persuasion (Ch), Soothsaying (W).

Spells Carried: Level 1: *cause light wounds, detect evil, detect magic, cause fear*. Level 2: *blight, find traps, resist fire, silence 15' r*. Level 3: *continual darkness, cause blindness, cause disease, bestow curse*. Level 4: *animate dead, Atzanteotl's hand, dispel magic*. Level 5: *cause critical wounds, sticks to flying vipers*. Level 6: *barrier*.

Magical Items in Possession: *Viper staff* (like a *snake staff*, but it turns into a flying viper), *ring of water walking*, 3 *potions of healing*.

Malinalxoch

The Ometochtzin

History: One of the most extraordinary women in the Azcan empire, Malinalxoch is the daughter of the emperor—though they have little else in common. She studied to become a priestess, but chose to serve the Four

Hundred Rabbits rather than Atzanteotl.

It was not required by her Immortal cult that she remain unmarried. This was never any issue to her, however, until she met Oztzilpac, the brilliant young soldier who had saved the day at the Battle of Tihuantepec. The immense respect each accorded the other only increased their intense feelings of attraction, and they fell in love. With Mochtlapac's begrudging blessing, they married.

Both went on to achieve still greater status: Malinalxoch has risen to become the *Ometochtzin*, the official head of all Azcan cults save that of Atzanteotl; while, largely thanks to the marriage, Oztzilpac was appointed tecuhtli of the city of Titlapoca, where both now reside.

Personality: The generations of evil in her family weigh heavily on Malinalxoch's shoulders. She is much happier in Titlapoca than she ever was in Chitlacan now that she is far from the bloody sacrifices and cruel tlachtli tournaments, but she cannot forget that they still exist, perpetuated by her blood relatives. As though to expiate her guilt, she devotes herself wholly to her ministry.

Appearance: Age 32; shoulder-length black hair, brown eyes, light brown skin. Although she is of the highest nobility and entitled to wear the most exotic attire, Malinalxoch favors plain, homespun garments much like peasants wear. Her face is so well known in Titlapoca, however, that no one would ever mistake her for a maceualli!

DM Notes: Malinalxoch does not yet realize her husband's involvement with the New Way. Although he rightly believes she would sympathize with many of its tenets, he is unwilling to effectively force her to betray either her father or her husband. If the day of reckoning were to arrive, Malinalxoch would likely be counted among Atruatzin's supporters.

Combat Notes: 14th-level cleric; AC 6; hp 37; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 club or magic; Dmg 1d6 or by spell type; Save C14; ML 10; AL L; S 9, 16, W 18, D 10, C 11, Ch 15. Languages: Azcan, Beastman, Neathar. General Skills:

Healing (I), Honor the 400 Rabbits (W + 1), Knowledge of Azcan Politics (I), Music (Ch), Nature Lore (I), Persuasion (Ch), Soothsaying (W), Storytelling (Ch).

Spells Carried: Level 1: *cure light wounds, detect evil, detect magic, light, remove fear.* Level 2: *bless, find traps, resist fire, silence 15' r., speak with animals.* Level 3: *cure blindness, cure disease, locate objects, remove curse, striking.* Level 4: *cure serious wounds, dispel magic, neutralize poison.* Level 5: *create food, cure critical wounds, dispel evil.* Level 6: *barrier, speak with monsters.*

Magical Items in Possession: *staff of withering, ring of protection + 3, slate of identification.*

Moctitlapac

Emperor of the Azcans

History: When Moctitlapac was born in the dry season 50 years ago, under the day 3 Quauhtli—the only one of his father's sons born under the number of the Emperor, and under the powerful glyph of the eagle as well—it was remarked by many soothsayers that this child would rise to the icpalli, the throne of Chitlacan. Moctitlapac grew up believing his destiny, foreordained by Atzanteotl, was to rule the Azcan people.

The way was not easy, since he was the youngest son who could become a cleric (and thus qualify for the throne). With the subtle guidance of Atzanteotl, Moctitlapac willingly forged himself into the most ruthless of his father's sons, and arranged for "accidents" to kill all the other contenders for the throne of the Azcans. One brother fell down the full length of the great Pyramid of Atzanteotl in Chitlacan and broke his neck; another was crushed when the rope tackle lifting a huge block of dressed stone snapped; and so on.

Naturally, the commoners whose "neglect" contributed to these "mishaps" were consecrated (i.e., sacrificed) to Atzanteotl in the days of mourning following each death, so

that the deceased princes would have company on their journeys to Mictlan, the land of the dead. Moctitlapac learned quickly the ways to accomplish and cover up dark deeds, and ensure that none but himself lived to know the truth of them.

The first murder took place when Moctitlapac was but 14; by the time he had reached the age of 18, he was the sole surviving claimant to the imperial throne. Several years thereafter he became Tlatoani, and has ruled with an iron fist for the twenty-eight years since.

Personality: Moctitlapac is of course a cleric of Atzanteotl, but he does not really care about religion. After his rivals and father were dead, he ascended to the throne, and encountered the administrative tedium that marks most of an emperor's life. The thrill of imagining himself the chosen one of Atzanteotl wore off quickly.

His ambitions have devolved to the strictly personal: Power, gold, jewels, women, the right to kill whomever he pleases whenever he pleases, and so forth. His avarice is particularly famous. Moctitlapac knows that much of what Atzanteotl's priests have taught is false, but it makes no difference to him. Similarly, Atzanteotl fully realizes that Moctitlapac's devotion is not genuine, but does not care; as long as the king does his duty, fulfilling the ritual obligations and keeping steady the course of the Azcan Empire, Atzanteotl is content to leave the mortal in his place. When the time is ripe (and a better servant is ready to come forth) Atzanteotl will strike Moctitlapac from the throne like rotten fruit from a tree.

Appearance: Only about five and a half feet tall, Moctitlapac is well-muscled, verging on burly. His eyes are hard and small, and his face is pocked, the scars of a childhood disease. He carries a magical, stone-tipped club (treat as a war hammer), which was a gift from Atzanteotl.

DM Notes: Moctitlapac is a man of pure evil, of cynicism and malice undiluted even by faith or loyalty to his Immortal. He has be-

come increasingly motivated by whims—cruel whims—over the years. All sorts of persons, even the most powerful officials and priests, give Moctitlapac wide berth, since they realize that even one of them could be summarily sacrificed on the emperor's command.

Combat Notes: 18th-level cleric; AC 9; hp 52; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 war hammer or magic; Dmg 1d6 + 4 or by spell type; Save C18 + 2; ML 4; AL C; S 13, I 11, W 17, D 9, Co 14, Ch 10. Languages: Azcan, Neathar. General Skills: Military Tactics (I), Danger Sense (W), Detect Deception (W), Honor Atzanteotl (W), Alertness (D), Hide in Shadows (D), Stealth + 1 (City, D + 1).

Spells Carried: 1st level—*cause light wounds* × 3, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *darkness*. 2nd level—*blight* × 2, *find traps* × 2, *resist fire* × 2. 3rd level—*continual darkness*, *cause disease*, *growth of animal*, *locate object*, *striking*. 4th level—*animate dead*, *cause serious wounds*, *poison*, *sticks to snakes*. 5th level—*cause critical wounds* × 4. 6th level—*barrier* × 2, *speak with monsters* × 2. 7th level—*earthquake*, *unholy word*.

Magical Items in Possession: *war hammer* + 3.

Otziltipac

Governor of Titlapoca

History: The ruler of Titlapoca is, unusually, neither a son of the emperor nor a cleric of Atzanteotl. Since the emperor only had four sons who were clerics, he selected a military hero (of remarkably undistinguished lineage, but who had won his daughter's heart) to assume the rulership of the most distant imperial city.

Otziltipac made his name at the Battle of Tihuantepec, twenty years ago, where he led a small army of recruits, acknowledged incompetents, and a few crusty lizard man auxiliaries against an invading Neathar horde. By clever deployment of his troops, intimate familiarity with the terrain, and judicious use of Fort

Zitapan's spellcasting priests of Atzanteotl, Otziltipac so bewildered his enemies that they retreated in chaos.

He was then summoned to Chitlacan to be rewarded for his performance, where he met the emperor's daughter, Malinalxoch, without knowing who she was. They soon fell in love, and were married.

Not long before Otziltipac was appointed to govern Titlapoca, Malinalxoch achieved her own life's dream of being named Ometochtzin, the supreme Azcan cleric of Immortals other than Atzanteotl. She is the only woman in anyone's memory to have held the position.

Personality: Otziltipac is a brilliant, flexible thinker on the battlefield, and he tries to have the same approach to administrative matters—he's always looking for the invisible, improbable, and retrospectively simple solution.

As he's grown old, Otziltipac's moodiness and thoughtfulness have increased, as the mass of Azcan brutality—perceptible even in far-away Titlapoca—has weighed upon him. He wonders if even being a follower of the New Way can outweigh his participation in the system as tecuhtlin of Titlapoca.

Appearance: The tecuhtli's dark hair is being shot with gray—some premature—as he ages. He exercises regularly and maintains an excellent physique.

DM Notes: Governor Otziltipac is not in his heart a follower of Atzanteotl, but must pretend to be in order to maintain his position. In fact he is the highest-placed follower of the New Way. His calculated laxness as an imperial administrator has made Titlapoca a haven for the New Way, the pochtecatl, and clerics and followers of the Four Hundred Rabbits.

Combat Notes: 11th-level fighter; AC 4; hp 50; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 2 (club) or 1d4 + 4 (magical dagger); Save F11 + 2; ML 10; AL L; S 17, I 14, W 13, D 9, Co 12, Ch 15. Languages: Azcan, Neathar. General Skills: Intimidate (S), Leadership (Ch), Military Tactics (I + 2), Mysticism (W), Rain-forest Survival (I), Stealth (D).

Magical Items in Possession: a flint dagger +2, ring of safety, shield +2.

Xochiquetzal

History: Xochiquetzal, the seductive fairy queen of Oltec tradition, figures prominently in many Azcan legends. Most notably, she assisted—and fell in love with—Atruatzin, the noble king exiled by Atzanteotl. She sheltered him and the other survivors of Quauhnahuac, showing them the way through the tunnels of the world's crust, and then to the surface, when they declined to enjoy her timeless fey hospitality for eternity.

Because she is ageless and well-known in legend, Xochiquetzal is mistaken by some for an Immortal, and thereby considered one of the Four Hundred Rabbits.

Personality: The Azcan fairy queen is, in stark contrast to Atzanteotl and his blood-thirsty priests, a light and playful being. She enjoys music, dance, storytelling, and especially jokes. Targets of her pranks include other well-known fairies, stuffy Hollow World leaders, and the occasional unwary Immortal.

Xochiquetzal is not frivolous, however; she is very seriously concerned with maintaining the balance of nature and protecting the weak and the innocent. She has in the past personally intervened to protect the Gentle Folk from would-be invaders. In these respects she is the implacable foe of the entropic Immortals Thanatos and Atzanteotl.

Xochiquetzal also has a soft spot for romance—she is attracted to men who are brave, good and gentle (traits that often make them into fine practical joke targets!). She also appreciates the vicarious pleasure of secretly assisting mortal lovers in their endeavors.

Appearance: This fairy is a stunning beauty. She is small and lithe, with deep bronze skin, large brown eyes, and straight, luxurious black hair that falls well past her waist. Her ears are slightly pointed. She bears herself with exquisite dignity, and is always on the edge of merry laughter. Her personal symbol is the flower

(xochitl), and numerous blossoms will always be found in her clothing, hair, and general vicinity. Some legends say indeed that wherever she walks, flowers spring forth.

DM Notes: Xochiquetzal is the sister of Titania, Queen of the (outer-world) Faeries and Mistress of the Dreamlands. Unlike Titania, Xochiquetzal lacks a jealous (and too-often-unfaithful) spouse. She amuses herself by watching the affairs of mortals, sometimes helping out those whose extraordinary courage, gentle temperament, and noble mien catch her eye. She does not know that her paramour of centuries past, Atruatzin, has achieved Immortality.

A retinue of 3d4 tepictotons will normally be found attending this fey queen.

An adventure in the Campaign Book, "The Wager," uses Xochiquetzal.

Combat Notes: Xochiquetzal is an extremely ancient and very powerful being—she was born on the outer world, when the Azcans lived there. This means she is a lot more powerful than most PC parties; besides this, she is on good personal terms with several Immortals, such as Faunus and Ordana. They would doubtless interfere if her life were somehow threatened.

In case it is somehow relevant, we can give Xochiquetzal statistics, based on the rogue sidhe class in PC1, *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*. If you do not own that book, treat her as a being with the powers of a 36th level thief and a 24th level magic-user.

36th-level rogue sidhe; AC 1; hp 59; MV 120' (40'); #At 1; Dmg 1d4 + 7 or by spell; Save T36; ML 10; AL C; S 16; I 18; W 15; D 18; C 16; Ch 18. Special Abilities: invisibility to mortals, thief abilities at level 36. Languages: Azcan/Oltec, Neathar, Fairy, Dryad, Elvish, Gnome, Treant, Schattentalfen, Traldar, can communicate with animals. General Skills: Alertness (D), Dancing (D + 1), Healing (I), Hiding (I), Horticulture (W), Leadership (Ch), Musical instruments (basically all the ones common in Azcan and Oltec culture—she's

had a long time to practice them all!) (Ch), Mysticism (W), Persuasion (Ch), Singing (Ch + 1), Soothsaying (W), Storytelling (Ch), Tracking (I).

Spells Carried: Level 1: *charm person, chill, courier, light, precipitation, read languages, sleep.* Level 2: *ESP, fairy slumber, know alignment, levitate, phantasmal force, warp wood, web.* Level 3: *clairvoyance, fear, fly, hallucinatory terrain, haste, protection from normal missiles, remove curse.* Level 4: *bestow second sight, call lightning, create food, cure disease or blindness, plant door, telekinesis, summon weather.* Level 5: *animate objects, anti-magic shell, create normal animals, dissolve, feeblemind, hold monster, lore.* Level 6: *dance, geas, metal to wood, shapechange, speak with the dead, speak with monsters, truesight.* Level 7: *dispel evil, maze, mind barrier, polymorph any object, reincarnation, summon object, timestop.*

Magical Items in Possession: *Ring of protection + 5*, a fabulous (and priceless) *dagger + 5* that is cut from a single, gigantic diamond, plus other potions, scrolls, and devices too numerous to list here.

Bibliography

A note to those who would do their own research to further develop the Azcan Empire in the Hollow World: The great advantage you have is that the Aztec civilization of the real world, on which the Azcans are loosely based, is the most extensively documented Native American culture (after all, it was at its zenith when the Spanish arrived on Mexico's shores). Most libraries are bound to have a wealth of materials directly related to Aztec culture, art, architecture, religion, and so forth. Following are the sources I actually consulted while writing *Sons of Azca*:

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Special acknowledgement is also due to D&D® game product authors Aaron Allston, Bill Connors, Bruce Heard, Carl Sargent, Gary Thomas, and Allen Varney, whose works set the context, and provided many details and ideas, for *Sons of Azca*.



If you are going to be a player in an Azcan campaign, *please read no further in this booklet!* What follows is meant for the Dungeon Master's eyes only. Players who read ahead will only spoil their own fun by ruining surprises.

Dungeon Masters, welcome! Now that you've read the *Guide to the Azcan Empire*, you're all ready to play adventures or even entire campaigns in that setting! This second booklet, the *Azcan Campaign Book*, will give you a head start on the project.

Campaign Options

The first decision your gaming group will be required to face is their characters' origin: Are the PCs natives of the Hollow World, or are they characters from the D&D® game's Known World, set adrift in this mysterious new land by chance or unknown forces? The latter option works best if you are adapting the Hollow World setting to an preexistent, ongoing campaign.

But even if you're starting up a new campaign, there are a number of good reasons to consider characters of outer-world origin. First of all, the Hollow World is a strange and alien place, one that may take players some time to get used to. Role-playing is made easier when characters are as new to the setting as their players. As the players gradually become familiar with the cultures and curiosities of the land, so too do their characters.

A second reason for using outer-world characters is cultural bias. This, you remember, is the tendency of Hollow World natives to cling tenaciously to their own ways and customs. This sort of "cultural conservatism" is not usually conducive to the adventuring life. Characters from the outer world have no such restrictions; they may come and go as they please, and adopt customs, skills, and possessions as the mood strikes them. Faced with the plethora of Hollow World cultures, many players will appreciate having characters which are able to change, adapt, and grow more than

the *Spell of Preservation* permits among natives.

As the campaign goes on, it is inevitable that some characters will retire or pass away. It should not be expected that the original outworlder characters of the adventuring party will last forever. In fact, their eventual departure is probably a good factor in a healthy, long-running campaign—players and DMs like a change of faces.

Where will new characters come from? The outer world is again an option. However, it may be a difficult one. Do the characters have easy, constant access to the outer world, where they can recruit for their adventuring group? Probably not (although it would not be impossible). This makes for quite an ordeal (and quite a delay in game terms) for new player characters to be introduced. Failing this, the DM will have to come up with a long string of increasingly improbable excuses for each new character to find him or herself in the Hollow World.

So it's most likely that those new faces will be Hollow Worlders. You'll find the transition can work very smoothly, and is harmonious with the two reasons suggested for beginning with Outer World characters.

First, after some time playing in the Hollow World, discovering it as strangers, the players will be familiar and comfortable with the setting. They may be all set to play a native Azcan, for instance, after game-years of playing a foreigner to that setting. That experience of the culture through another character's eyes will have prepared the player for superlative role-playing.

Second, cultural bias: While it is extremely rare for there to be adventuresome characters at all in the Hollow World, it is even less common for them to occur in some proximity to an adventuring party. However, when a party of outworlders blows through, they attract the attention of those individualistic natives who yearn to see the world beyond their little home hamlet. Such individuals—would-be player

characters—will recognize that the adventurers are perhaps their only chance to realize their dreams. This provides a plausible connection, one that does not disrupt the game's continuity. Through this process, the entire party may eventually consist of Hollow Worlders.

To make the process even more smooth, low-level natives may periodically join up with the party as NPCs, to serve as retainers and hirelings. They'll become familiar to the party, and gain experience that will keep them from being too far behind the old, original characters. When an old character dies or retires, it's an easy matter for the player to take over one of the native NPCs as his own, without so much as a pause in the play of the adventure.

Role-Playing Paradox?

The Azcan setting presents something of a paradox for gamers. Our characters are supposed to be heroes, and yet the Azcans have always been portrayed as villains. Indeed, after reading the Guidebook, the feeling that there is great evil at the heart of Azcan culture should hardly have been dispelled. Still we encourage you to create Azcan player characters, and we require them, by the Hollow World's magic, to maintain their cultural bias. Given all this, how can you use Azcan player characters and still have your players aspire to goodness and heroism?

As you might well imagine, this problem has been foremost in the designer's mind throughout this project. You probably already have discovered ways around the problem. But just in case, let's talk about a few ideas.

First of all, let's clarify the *Spell of Preservation*: It prevents the introduction of new cultural elements. So the wheel, no matter how you demonstrate its practical and aesthetic value, will never be adopted by the Azcans. But this does not mean the Azcan culture is frozen in time! Remember, the cult of Atzanteotl is a relatively new thing in Azcan history—circa 1,500 B.C., while the Azcans had been under the *Spell of Preservation* since

their arrival 1,500 years earlier.

Atzanteotl was able to win the Azcans because he appealed to cultural elements that already existed. He appealed to and reinforced the cultural bias towards violence, cruelty, human sacrifice, and all the other nasty things that virtuous player characters love to hate.

But the same instability within Azcan culture which enabled Atzanteotl to rise in the first place, makes his grasp on Azcan hearts eternally uncertain. There is always the opportunity for the old elements of goodness—such as all those embodied by Atruatzin—to emerge, grow strong, and overthrow Atzanteotl's evil. Atzanteotl doesn't let his priests know this—he'd prefer they believe the *Spell of Preservation*, if they know of it at all, will guarantee Atzanteotl's hegemony eternally—but it's why he makes sure they're extremely vigilant in watching the cults of the Four Hundred Rabbits, especially in case the old followings of Otzitiotl and Kalaktatla threaten to regain stature. The campaign of disinformation, besmirching the names of those Immortals, is ceaseless, because there's always the chance that the truth could surface and prevail.

So it's quite possible for Azcan player characters to be virtuous, good and heroic; indeed, it is conceivable (although, let's admit, extremely unlikely at this point) that Azcan culture could become predominantly so. This gives us the niche of possibility in which player characters worth playing can exist.

Possibilities beget possibilities, so now we'll move on to discuss a few campaign outlines—"meta-scenarios," if you will—for player character heroes in the Azcan Empire. The Azcan Empire can serve as the setting for many "simple" adventures, interesting for their own sake. It can also make the fascinating focus of a campaign, as characters struggle from the inside to overthrow an immensely powerful and evil theocracy. The DM must carefully decide to what extent he wants to tamper with the course of history. If he is willing to see the

Azcan Empire change radically, after a long and fruitful series of games, and due to the influence of player characters, there are various ways it may come about.

You may find these conceptual frameworks useful as you plot out your own Azcan campaign. Just be careful to use them to inspire or enhance your dramatic vision; do not let them stifle the creativity of yourself or your players.

The Visitors' Campaign

The most basic way to use the Azcan Empire is simply as another adventure setting—an exotic place the characters visit once or twice in the course of their heroic saga. If you have a great deal of information on other Hollow World lands, and the Gazetteers about the Known World to boot, you might be unwilling to devote your creative resources to a full-fledged Azcan campaign. If this be so, the visitors' campaign is for you.

In this kind of set-up, the characters have no long-term interest in the Azcan Empire; it's little more than another colorful oddity as they cross the Hollow World. This is a perfectly legitimate approach, and we hope that the sourcebook and the adventures that follow will put many possibilities at your fingertips for exciting Azcan exploits.

The advantage of the visitors' campaign for outworlder characters, and characters from other Hollow World lands, is that they don't have to consider the long-term impact of their presence. The Azcans are quite xenophobic—distrustful of foreigners—and so most non-Azcans (especially non-humans) are likely to end up as slaves or sacrificial victims before long. For visitors, this threat is just something that makes their time in the Azcan Empire more dangerous and thrilling. It's not the kind of problem it would be for people who wanted to settle down and make a stronghold, or interact with Azcan society regularly for an extended period of time (like years or decades).

How do characters get to the Hollow World? There are countless possibilities. Besides those

discussed in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set and the HWA modules, we've mentioned a connection to the plateau of the Atruaghin Clans, in the ruins of Quauhnhuac.

A good example of a visitors' campaign in the Azcan Empire already exists: Modules HWA1 and HWA2 (*Nightwail* and *Nightrage*). In these stories, the Azcan Empire is one of several settings. It is integral to the adventure—and the modules are chock-full of details pertaining to Azcan life, customs, architecture, and so forth—but it is not the whole of the adventure. In fact, it is expected that the characters have a certain distance from the empire; they are outworlders, on an important quest, so they can't afford to stop and get too involved in Azcan doings.

The Immigrants' Campaign

Some foreigners (by which we mean outworlders or people from other Hollow World cultures) may intend to make the Azcan Empire a longer-term base of operations, even a home. To do so, it is necessary for them to establish connections that will help them avoid trouble with imperial officials (especially soldiers, priests, and bureaucrats) who would be eager to enslave or sacrifice them. Many commoners, even, are distrustful and resentful of foreigners, and would be inclined to report their presence to the authorities.

With all this trouble, why would any foreigners bother settling in the Azcan Empire? Two reasons spring to mind, and each has possible solutions to the problem of Azcan xenophobia.

First, obviously, characters may be searching for adventure, and may be intent on scouring the Azcan lands for it. To better facilitate their vocation, they may be interested in setting up a stronghold.

In this situation, the characters would be best off to find a desolate place—perhaps in the deep jungle, the rugged southeastern hills, or the desolate Aztlan Mountains. These areas are all rarely frequented by Azcan officials,



and the characters should be well able to silence (by threat or bribe, if necessary) anyone who happens along. Alternately, they might set up some sort of magical or natural cloaking to hide their base. When the infrequent need for civilized contact arises—to barter for provisions, for instance—they should be able to approach a nearby Azcan community with a minimum of risk. (Characters in the mountains near Colima might be in the best situation, since that town is relatively open toward strangers.) In time those villagers may become close, trusting friends of the characters. The village could also be a source of new PCs as the old outworlders die or retire.

Another reason for foreigners to remain in the Azcan Empire is if they have a special mission—perhaps one inspired by the Immortals. Either they would be allied with Atzanteotl and his priesthood, or opposed to it. In the former case, characters will have no difficulties; they'll have the protection of the tlaotoni, priests, and army—none (save perhaps

courageous or foolhardy followers of the New Way) would dare to harm them.

If the characters are against Atzanteotl, then they have sure friends within the New Way. This group may somehow contact them, and provide them shelter and assistance in avoiding problems with officials. A high-placed, secret member of the New Way could even arrange for a false identity, whereby the party is said to be foreign advisors retained and protected at Atzanteotl's command!

Our connection with the Atruaghin Clans, presented later on, comes with a built-in connection for foreign characters and the New Way.

The Natives' Campaign

Finally, characters may be born and bred as Azcans. They might buy into the system—perhaps the party even includes clerics of Atzanteotl. A more heroic situation, however, is one where the characters—like many Azcans, too fearful to show their opinions—come to

see that Atzanteotl's way is evil and destructive. They may then devote their lives to undermining the system—or, for those with a roguish streak—just getting by as comfortably as they can at the expense of the corpulent priests and princes.

With regard to the New Way, there are simple and complex ways to handle player character involvement. The simple one is to start the game by telling the PCs all about the New Way, and set them up as already being initiates. Their membership can lead to many adventure possibilities, secretly fighting for goodness and justice. It will also give them lots of valuable connections, possibly even assistance in tight spots. (Usually members are on their own, lest the entire society be endangered; but if the characters have made themselves extremely valuable, the powers that be may deem the risk of other New Way adherents' lives worthwhile.)

The other way of bringing player characters and the New Way together requires more role-playing skill. Characters start on their own, possibly as unquestioning members of the evil Azcan system. In the course of the campaign they come to question the priests' teachings and the morality of the whole society in which they live. They meet like-minded people—secret members of the New Way, sent to study the PCs, who have garnered the attention of important leaders in the movement (such as Governor Oztzilipac). If the player characters prove themselves to be trustworthy and as uncompromisingly virtuous as their reputation suggests, the New Way will try to recruit them into its ranks.

Imagine the players' surprise when they find that all their best friends are part of a secret society, and now they're being invited to join! Are they willing to face the dangers it might involve? If not, their friends, disappointed, will apologize for any inconvenience their observation has caused, and melt back into Azcan society. Characters will not learn the identities of any high-placed New Way adher-

ents until they have proven themselves as followers of the Way.

To make the initiation even more exciting, some player characters could be recruited before others, or could even have been members from the start! Take those players aside, without the others' knowledge, and inform them of the New Way and their characters' participation therein. Tell them that besides being adventurers, they have a special assignment: They are supposed to judge the mettle of their compatriots, and if the adventurers seem worthy, they are to invite them to follow the Way.

Atruatzin's Return

Player characters' questioning and adventures may lead them to the secret New Way movement, which looks to overturn Atzanteotl and his wicked influence. After a long and difficult campaign, these people may actually find some success.

This is in part because the player characters and the New Way are not alone in their task. They have a powerful, but as yet silent, ally: the Immortal Atruatzin. Atruatzin has waited patiently for a very long time to return to the Hollow World. It would seem that the moment is coming soon.

But even this is part of a bigger tapestry, one which about which even Atruatzin is only vaguely aware. There is a mighty storm brewing across the cosmos, one for which the Immortals of both Life and Entropy have prepared for countless centuries. Characters may ascend through the difficult hours in the Azcan Empire to play a role in this greater saga.

In the adventures that follow, we present numerous connections with these larger plotlines.

An Unwelcome Visitor

Beginning level characters (levels 1-3) would be sufficient for an adventure of this sort.

Set Up

- The characters are in an “immigrants” campaign: They have set up a stronghold somewhere past the fringes of Azcan civilization, as a base of operations. For supplies and civilized amenities, they travel half a day to the nearest village once a week. This time, they arrive to find the village in shambles—a rogue dinosaur has trampled through the village not once, but twice since the party’s previous visit! The greatest warrior of the village set out to stalk the great lizard, but alas, failed in his quest. He was given a serious concussion by the dinosaur’s heavy, armored tail. Wouldn’t the characters be so good as to help by hunting down the dangerous beast before it causes more destruction?

- Returning to the home village of a native character, the party encounters destruction left by a crazed dinosaur. They agree that the troublesome lizard must be killed to prevent future incidents.

DM’s Background

Normally the dinosaurs of the Azcan lands steer clear of human settlements—the smell of humans distresses them, and dinosaurs who are overly fond of human flesh tend not to survive to beget more dinosaurs with such tastes. Sometimes, though, a dinosaur “goes bad,” wandering near to human civilization—perhaps deciding, as it were, that it’s easier to raid human settlements than hunt bigger game in the wilderness. Sometimes an herbivore just wanders into human territory and doesn’t pay much attention to the people whose homes it wrecks as it forages about. Such was the case in this adventure.

The dinosaur was an ankylosaurus (see the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, *Adventures*

Book). The villagers don’t know the monster’s name, but they can describe its appearance.

The PCs don’t stand to gain any substantial material awards from the villagers, but they can earn invaluable respect and gratitude. If the PCs are foreigners and relatively new to the area, winning the trust of the local villagers will be of paramount importance, and hunting down a problem dinosaur is a great way to do it.

The Adventure

Characters with tracking ability (or Tozilopac, a young boy from the village with that skill) will have no trouble tracking down the ankylosaurus. It’s a large beast, and doesn’t try to hide its presence.

Because the dinosaur is large and powerful, players will probably want to devise some way to defeat it other than a frontal assault. Pits, snares, and the like might not be able to catch the dinosaur on their own, but they could hamper its ability to defend itself. The fact that the ankylosaurus has a soft underbelly (AC 8, as opposed to the AC 0 of its armored back) makes spiked pit traps especially effective against it.

If the characters are ecologically-minded, and have the resources, they may even attempt to capture the dinosaur alive and transport it to the deep jungle, far from human habitation, where it can trample in peace.

Ankylosaurus (1): AC 0 (top) or 8 (underside); HD 7; hp 40; MV 60' (20'); #AT 1 (flail-like tail); THAC0 10; Dmg 2d6; Save F4; ML 6; AL N.

The Lost Temple

This adventure could be easily adapted for low-level characters (levels 1-5). If the DM beefed up the encounters, it could even challenge parties of more powerful stature.

Set Up

- A PC cleric of Kalaktatla receives a vision instructing him to travel south, to the ruins of Axateotl, where he will be rewarded with ancient lore.
- Soothsayers of the New Way have divined that somewhere in the ruins of Axateotl is knowledge, and perhaps allies, that will help in the future struggle against Atzanteotl's minions.
- Characters are traveling the southern jungles, perhaps even searching for Axateotl (hoping to find ancient gold undiscovered by Schattentalf pillagers) when they stumble across the lost temple.

DM's Background

In the ruins of Axateotl, a secret temple of Kalaktatla has been maintained for more than thirteen centuries (see "Geography of the Azcan Empire"), about which the priests of Atzanteotl are completely ignorant. Most Azcans are also ignorant of the tribes who live in and near Axateotl. These tribes hold the ruins to be sacred ground.

The Adventure

The biggest challenge for characters in Axateotl will be one of role-playing, not combat or spells. An ancient, primitive sect of Kalaktatla-followers has maintained the lizard god's shrine for thirteen centuries. Like all the southern, proto-Azcan tribes, the Axateotecs (as they call themselves) are extremely xenophobic, and avoid contact with all other peoples. Moreover, Kalaktatla's temple is sacred ground; the presence of outsiders would be desecration, and require the offenders' deaths.

Despite these harsh views, the tribes are fundamentally good. They left Atzanteotl's fold soon after Axateotl was sacked for the last time. As their customs devolved to an earlier stage of Azcan history, so too did their reli-

gious beliefs; they are avid followers of Kalaktatla, in a way that the Azcans as a whole were 4,500 years ago.

The player characters must be delicate ambassadors, proving their virtue, good intentions, and perhaps even divine connections (for a cleric of Kalaktatla). The Axateotecs remember Atzanteotl and loathe him, so they are potential allies of the New Way. They may also be of use to player character adventurers, as they are intimately familiar with the southern jungles.

Although they maintain the temple, the Axateotecs have lost the skills of reading and writing; they cannot decipher the glyphs on the temple walls. Player characters who know Azcan writing and language, however, may decipher the relief text and recognize it as an inspirational text that enables a cleric who has studied it to learn a long-forgotten fifth-level clerical spell: *sticks to feathered serpents*. It was this spell which was corrupted long ago by the followers of Atzanteotl into the spell *sticks to flying vipers*. The two spells are identical except for the sort of creature they produce. Feathered serpents generated by the spell are treated as though they've ingested serpent-mint (see New Monsters for more information).

This spell will not be of immediate use to low-level characters, but it will create a stir in the New Way (if the characters have connections to that movement) and Kalaktatla's surviving following in Azcan society. Many will take it as a sign that the return of Quetzalcoatl, the great Feathered Serpent, is close at hand.

It would be rude (and dangerous) for the characters to remove anything from Kalaktatla's temple (except for the text, which they can of course copy down). Amongst the other parts of the ruined city there may yet be challenges and treasures to occupy the party for a time.

The Assassination

Foreign characters and native Azcans should be usable in this adventure with nearly equal ease. They should be of mid-levels (6th to 8th).

Set Up

The player characters are approached by a nondescript Azcan man, dressed in the manner of a commoner. "May we speak openly?" he asks. "I have a business proposition that may interest you." The proposition is this: For a suitable weight of raw gold and jewelry (approximately 3,000 gp worth), would the characters arrange the demise of a certain wicked priest of Atzanteotl? Only if the party is interested in this task and these terms will the agent, who calls himself Tizo, say more. The priest is Chupicuaro, the high priest of Huitlaktima. The characters need only penetrate Atzanteotl's step-pyramid in that city, find the high priest, and eliminate him. The

assassination must be neat; is preferable that no other persons be killed. The agent does not divulge any information about his employers; he only declares that Chupicuaro is a menace to the well-being of the Azcan people. If the PCs accept the job, Tizo pays them 1,000 gp worth of jewelry in advance. When it is known that Chupicuaro has been killed, he will deliver the remaining 2,000 gp. If the party can avoid killing anyone except the high priest, Tizo will pay them a 500 gp bonus.

DM's Background

Any number of people could conceivably desire Chupicuaro's death—from rival priests to the prince of Huitlaktima himself.

In fact, the PCs' secret employer is a consortium of the powerful merchants of Huitlaktima. They have discovered that Chupicuaro, who has always been a thorn in their side, plans to use his influence over Prince Tlachatlantlan to curtail their traditional freedoms, and levy heavy taxes against them. They also



have reasons to suspect that Chupicuaro has broader ambitions that could threaten the internal stability of the Azcan Empire—and the merchants' business as well. They have decided that a clean, surgical removal of this ambitious priest is in order, and will result in the least disorder for the empire. The player characters are their scalpel.

If the PCs take their advance payment and skip town, they will undoubtedly be followed by Tizo and others. These merchants have many connections; PCs who double-cross them will find no end of trouble throughout the empire, perhaps even in other lands where the merchants can buy influence.

The Adventure

You may use the sample floorplans for the temple of Atzanteotl as the temple in Huitlaktima. If you wish, feel free to modify it additionally.

Characters will have to use the utmost stealth and careful preparation to accomplish this task. They are probably incapable of massacring the entire temple staff (even if they are willing to disobey their employers' orders to minimize the bloodshed); furthermore, a large battle would bring the military garrisons of Huitlaktima running. The PCs are not equipped to defeat an army.

Chupicuaro is slightly paranoid—with good reason—so he can be expected to have numerous traps and alarms set to obstruct the party, besides the guards, acolytes, and other temple occupants.

The full description of Chupicuaro is found in the "Personalities of the Azcan Empire" section of the Guidebook.

Twists and Turns

If it suits your long-term campaign goals, arrange things so the party can't possibly succeed in assassinating Chupicuaro. Why would you want this? Primarily because Chupicuaro is interesting and powerful enough an NPC to be a foe over the course of many adventures.

With his designs on the ipcalli, he has the potential to become even moreso. Consider the following possibilities:

- Chupicuaro is ahead of the game, thanks to his old merchant and street connections, and he knows the assassination attempt is coming. The PCs are walking into a trap. The high priest does not want to kill them, though—at least not immediately. Rather, he wants them to lead him back to their employer (whose true identity is unknown to them).

- Things are arranged so that the player characters, and everyone else in Huitlaktima, believe Chupicuaro to have been assassinated successfully. In fact this is a ruse—the party is being followed, and after they meet with Tizo he will be followed back to the merchants. Even if Chupicuaro doesn't stoop to snuff out the characters, the merchants—when the high priest is found to be still alive—will be upset with their former employees.

- The assassins' employers are Chupicuaro's own family! Why do they want him eliminated—or do they? Is Chupicuaro secretly an agent of the pochtecatl—and is the assassination attempt, set up purposely to fail, meant to keep the connection obscured?

- Perhaps Chupicuaro's family hides a cult (as many pochtecatl do)—a dark, ancient cult, far older than that of Atzanteotl? Thanatos would be a suitably nasty object for their veneration. Chupicuaro traces the assassination attempt back to the Thanatos cult—and his estranged family. The bizarre family reunion results in the setting aside of old differences, and cooperation to cultivate chaos, death, destruction, and personal profit for the "reconciled" family. Perhaps the pochtecatl would rally other merchant families—and even other nations—to support a bid of Chupicuaro's for the Azcan throne.

The Mines of Madness

Characters of up to seventh level can play this adventure. The tone and objectives of the tale will vary according to the party's strength and abilities, however (and how you set up the climactic encounters). For less experienced characters (under fourth level) this will be a story of horror; their objective, once they've discovered the miners' fate, will be simply to escape the cannibalistic Gruquotecs alive.

More powerful characters may forge their way through the whole adventure, and discover precious knowledge in the tower of Wastoure.

Due to unfortunate space limitations, this adventure, like "The Wager" (which follows), is not completely fleshed out. We provide a detailed background, set-up options, and an opening encounter to start you off. Here also are essential notes and maps for fleshing out the remainder of the adventure. You can tailor the main part of the adventure to the party's specifications and your whims with a relative minimum of preparation.

Set Up

There are several set up options for the player characters, such as:

- The last expedition to the Tepetitlan gold mines has not returned. The PCs are commissioned by Cuitlazoc, the commanding officer of Ximac Fort, to make their way to the mines and found out what befell the miners. Cuitlazoc is unwilling to commit soldiers (that is, unless the PCs are themselves scouts under his command), because his intelligence reports that the Schattentalfen are massing at Fort Myridas. He fears—and forewarns the PCs—that an attack on the mines is a Schattentalfen ruse to lure the Azcan army to the hills, into an ambush that would replay the disastrous Battle of Wondyviel.

- A friend or relative of a player character was on the ill-fated mining expedition. Perhaps it

was a foreign-born PC, captured and enslaved by the Azcans; the rest of the party has learned that the hapless individual was sent to work the mines. (In this case the party might not realize what danger they are approaching.)

- The characters are journeying across the south-eastern hills when, by chance, they stumble across the Tepetitlan mines or Wastoure's tower.

DM's Background

If you've read the HWA-series modules, in particular *Nightwail* and *Nightrage*, then you've encountered one variety of the burrowers: the Great Annelids. But there are other, related minions of chaos (tzitzimime in the Azcan mind) that still lie in the Hollow World's crust, dreaming unspeakable dreams of decay and destruction.

Even though they are in most respects held inert by the *Spell of Preservation*, the burrowers are such monstrous and terrible psychic presences that their corrupting influence may still occur, within a narrow range of effect.

In case you haven't guessed, there's a burrower near the mines of Tepetitlan.

More history: When the burrowers roamed, they corrupted the Beastmen who were the Hollow World's chief sentient inhabitants. The *Spell of Preservation* returned most Beastmen to their "natural" state—except those who resided near powerful dormant burrowers. The burrowers' destabilizing psychic-magical presence causes disturbances in the *Spell of Preservation*, encouraging physical and cultural mutations. Unlike any other Hollow Worlders, a group that lived for centuries near a dormant burrower would have a marked tendency to change (but not necessarily for the better!).

Thus we have the Gruquotecs, a degenerate, twisted offshoot of the Beastman race. For thousands of years this tribe has lived in the hills, following the dread Earth-Beast which revealed itself in the dreams of the most sensitive and brilliant Gruquotec shamans and wokani.



The Gruquotecs are not the only ones who have encountered the burrower. Parts of the Tepetitlan gold mines extend within a half mile of the burrower's location. Among the Azcan miners the *cipactli* (as they call it) is material for chilling fireside stories when the daily rains fall. No one has actually *seen* the *cipactli*, but many have *dreamt* its terrible visage with disturbing clarity. Some have lost their sanity to such unspeakable dreams. Still, gold beckons, drawing its constant pilgrimage of miners.

Enter a dreamer. Wastoure is a cold, heartless man, cursed with a talent that would have been graceful adornment for a gentler soul. He has a unique empathy, an ability to deeply intuit the soul of a nation or people—whether or not he wants to. Born and raised amongst the harsh Antalians of the northeast, this mixed blessing brought untold suffering upon him as a child. Wastoure took up sorcery, in part so that scholarly isolation might fill his mind and hold back the feelings of his neighbors, but magic is frowned upon among the Antalians. Wastoure did not mind when a sentence of exile was pronounced.

Among Hollow World cultures, Wastoure found he liked the Azcans best, and so here he settled. He made his home in the hills, not far from the Tepetitlan Mines. There he found a primitive tribe—the Gruquotecs—who were malleable, easily adapted for use as servants or experimental subjects. The locale also had quirks, oddities in the way magic worked. Wastoure constructed a tower with the labor of the Gruquotecs, and called it home.

Wastoure too dreamt of the *cipactli*. But the Earth-Beast was able, thanks to Wastoure's empathic receptiveness, to communicate more clearly than ever before. Even in a dormant state, the Earth-Beast's intellect is massive. Consciously it and Wastoure began to plot.

Such plots are outside the scope of the present adventure. Wastoure, in the *cipactli*'s service, has gone to the outer world to stir trouble and arrange the release of his master

(cf. module DDA2, *Legions of Thyatis*). His tower and the Gruquotecs remain.

The most recent mining expedition extended the tunnels toward the burrower, and broke into the Gruquotecs' warrens—to the miners' eternal regret.

A Fool and His Gold

You may design wilderness encounters as you see fit for the party's journey to the mines. Use the lists by terrain, provided later in this booklet, for ideas. For certain the characters should have the following encounter.

In the rainforest, or the hills nearer to the mines, the adventurers stumble upon an Azcan man—or rather, he literally stumbles into them. His eyes are glazed and feverish, with pupils dilated, like those of someone using *peyotl*. He is barefoot, clothed in only a dirty off-white breechclout, and he reeks of days' sweat and grime. He carries a large, heavily-laden sack. His name, when he can remember it, is Tezolahuac.

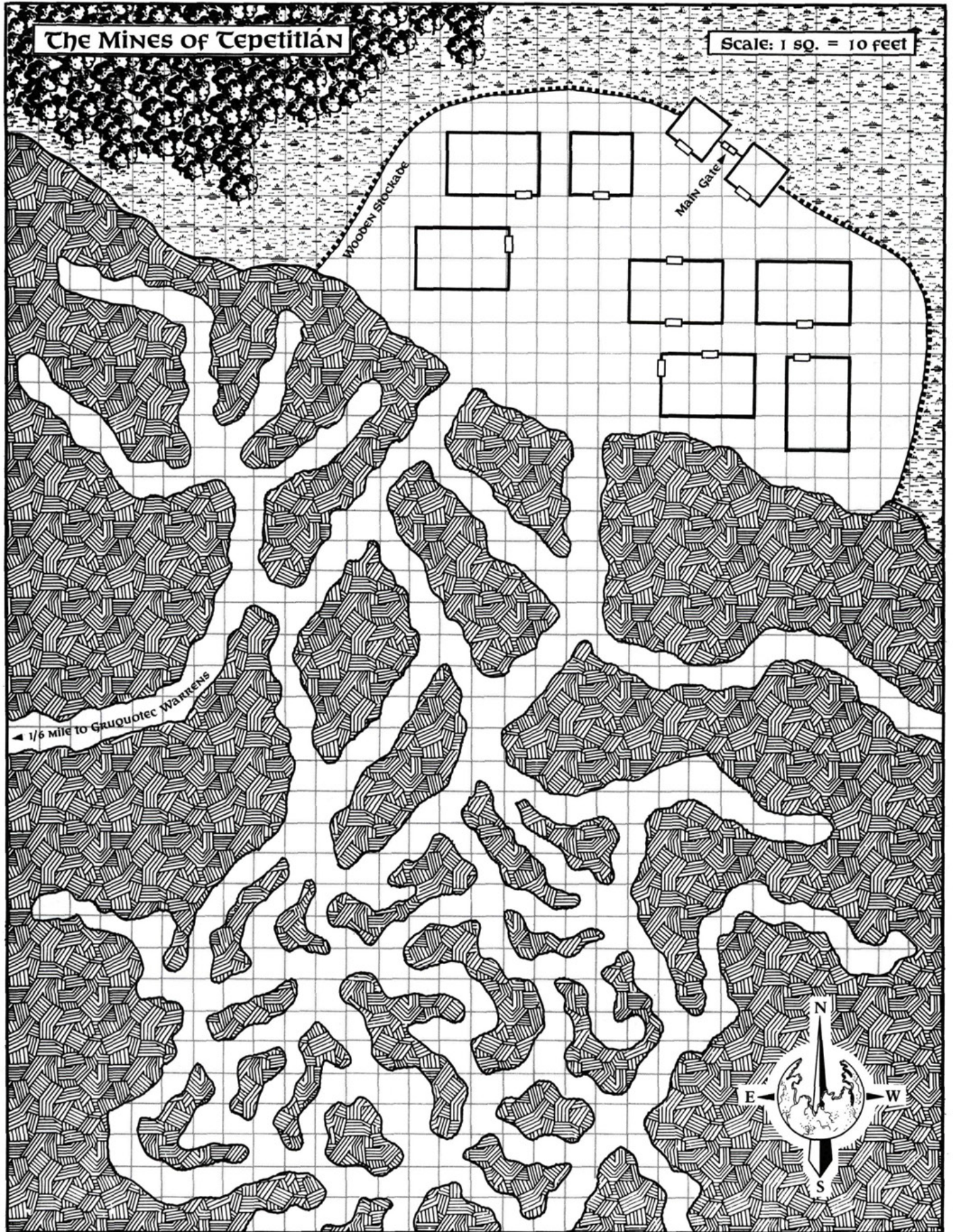
Tezolahuac, slave miner: AC 9; Normal human; hp 3; AL C. He has neither weapons nor armor, and in his present state of mind is incapable of even defending himself. He might run if threatened or struck.

As a boy, Tezolahuac was assumed to be priestly material; he had that uncanny something that set some people aside from the crowd. But his great weakness—greed—got the better of him. An inept attempt at theft landed Tezolahuac in the ropes of a slave, bound to labor in the rich mines of Tepetitlan. Suitable punishment for one who longed to be near gold, reasoned the sentencing magistrate!

But Tezolahuac was not to enjoy his new life. Apart from the drudgery of a slave's existence, Tezolahuac's sensitive mind made him especially susceptible to the *cipactli* nightmares that plagued mining expeditions. In fact, they drove him insane. Tezolahuac retained his composure just long enough to direct the miners to extend a passage in a certain

The Mines of Tepetitlán

Scale: 1 sq. = 10 feet



direction. The “hunch” at first seemed a brilliant success, as a rich vein of gold was discovered. But then it led to the Gruquotecs.

As chaos broke out, Tezolahuac escaped with a heavy load of gold nuggets. He neglected to gather provisions, unfortunately.

Ever since, Tezolahuac has been quite mad, stumbling through the wilderness, muttering to himself and clutching his petty hoard (about 250 gp worth of nuggets). He has occasionally thought to gather food (berries, fruits, and tubers) or to drink from a stream; but the unbalanced combination of strange herbs, exhaustion, hunger, and thirst has exacerbated his mental instability. Tezolahuac is completely unable to distinguish dreams and hallucinations from reality; he indeed believes himself to have had an ongoing conversation with the ciptactli.

Characters will not get a lot out of Tezolahuac at the start. He babbles about the ciptactli, sometimes calling it the “dragon-worm” or “earth-beast.” He cries for lost comrades (for whom he seems to feel responsible); and he raves about the “Beastmen.” (Characters might know that there aren’t any Beastmen except hundreds of miles to the north!) All the while he shifts, almost at random, between the Azcan and Neathar languages. Above all, he clutches avariciously to his sack of gold—he’d sooner die than part with it. And he refuses, even on pain of death, to return to “the mines of madness.”

If characters are patient, gentle, and insistent, they might nurse Tezolahuac back to an improved state of mental health. This would require a decent meal, clean water to drink, and a good sleep. He still clings to his gold and refuses to return to the mines. The poor Azcan cannot clearly remember what happened (he won’t even recall his meeting the party), and is largely unwilling to do so. Its horrific magnitude is too much for him to admit—especially his own role. Tezolahuac insists it was all dream, nightmares. His memory is unclear, and he cannot explain where he

found the gold to which he clings so tightly. Asked about the other miners, Tezolahuac breaks down in tears. He has completely repressed the memory of his burrower-inspired role as betrayer, but just facing the question upsets him profoundly.

While the party might not get many concrete details from Tezolahuac, they’ll have glimpsed the unwholesome character of the situation they’ll soon face.

If you wish (and depending on how the player characters treat him), Tezolahuac could be a recurrent NPC in the campaign. He is young (17 years old), with the potential to become a powerful cleric (Wisdom 17). After the horrors he’s met, though, he would just as well avoid the ritual demands of Atzanteotl. PC clerics could find in him an earnest, if slightly unstable, protégé. He has a profound unconscious desire to redeem his forgotten crime with acts of goodness.

Tepetitlan

Map 2 depicts the Tepetitlan mines. When characters approach the stockade around the mine entrance, they find it eerily deserted. Not so much as a guard is there to hail them, and the gates are open, swinging sometimes when the wind blows.

The DM should script the village as a suspense-builder. Devoid of living humans, the village does contain corpses. The first is a mutilated human body, propped up just inside the gates like a scarecrow, dire warning to those who would pass. Inside, the buildings that served as slaves’ quarters and guards’ barracks have been converted to charnel houses for the many Azcans slain by the overwhelming and unexpected Gruquotec attack from the depths of the mines. (The Gruquotecs’ own dead were removed to tribal burial caverns, leaving the party to wonder what laid waste to the mining camp in so brutal a manner.) If a PC or friend of a PC was at the mines (as part of the Set Up), that character’s body is nowhere to be found. . .



If you'd like to whet the players' appetite for battle, you may place a prowling carnivore or scavenger (a hyenodon would be appropriate) in the encampment. It was attracted by the charnel stench that permeates the camp and wafts out into the forest.

Within the mines more clues to the Azcans' fate should be found—including some Gruquotecs, who may ambush the PCs. A couple of other "dungeon" monsters may liven up the exploration, which will ultimately lead the characters into the Gruquotecs' home territory.

The Gruquotec Warrens

The Gruquotec's home territory is depicted by Map 3. The map's tags indicate the general occupants of each room, which you should flesh out in greater detail. The shaman should be given spellcasting ability; the chieftain and his lieutenants are considerably more powerful than typical Gruquotecs (having 10 and 7 hit dice, respectively). Female Gruquotecs have 2 + 1 Hit Dice and defend the tribal territory

as fiercely as the males; young have 1 + 1 and are noncombatant. Provide numbers according to the strength of the party.

The room that will be of most interest to the party is the grisly sacrifice chamber. The chamber is directly above the dormant burrower's resting-place. In the center of the room, spattered with blood (fresh and dried), is a very crude stone sculpture of the Earth-Beast.

Live, captured humans from the mining camp have been bound and held in this chamber, without food or with little water, and slain, one by one, "that their blood may nourish the earth-beast" (in the shaman's words). If a PC or a PC's friend or relative was captured, they should still be alive (although very weak and desperately terrified, perhaps even wounded from the battle, if you'd like added drama) so that the PCs can rescue them.

They may subsequently flee, if the Gruquotecs are capable of overpowering them; or they could continue to explore the warrens, and even find the entrance to Wastoure's tower.

Additional caverns may be placed past the bounds of the map. They may be home to assorted dungeon monsters with which to challenge the party. They also may hold the Gruquotecs' burial grounds (which recently acquired a considerable population boost, with the deaths in the battle with the humans).

The Gruquotecs

Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	3 + 1
Hit Points:	14
Move:	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 weapon
Damage:	1d6 or by weapon
Number Appearing:	1d20
Save As:	F4
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	B
Alignment:	Chaotic
THAC0:	16
XP Value:	50

These humanoids are a degenerate offshoot of the Beastman race, corrupted by untold generations of inbreeding and the entropic emanations from the cipactli burrowers.

Gruquotecs are found only in the Azcan Empire, in the southeastern hills. Their name itself is a Azcanized corruption of "Gruuk," which the "pure" Beastmen call themselves.

The Gruquotecs have their own language, and speak none other. Their words seem a gibberish of mixed Beastman, Neathar, Azcan, and (thanks to Wastoure's recent influence) Antalian—almost, but not quite, completely indecipherable to someone who knows those languages.

The Gruquotecs are smallish, males and females averaging about five feet in height, and stocky. Like Beastmen, their features vary widely—some are dog-faced, others tusked. Most are quite hairy. All have a bold, black tattoo highlighted with earthy red: a draconian head, the symbol of their unholy Earth-Beast.

For clothing, the Gruquotecs have augmented their ancestral furs with Azcan trappings. They like to wear gaudy feathers—especially the females and warriors—and gold jewelry.

Hunting and gathering constitute the Gruquotecs' economic life. Except when seeking sacrificial victims, they go to great length to avoid other sentient beings.

Uninhibited by the *Spell of Preservation*, thanks to the Earth-Beast's corrupting presence, the Gruquotecs happily wield whatever weapons they can lay their hands on. Left to their own devices, they favor clubs (often with splinters of obsidian, flint or other rocks imbedded therein) and stone axes. Some carry weapons lifted from the corpses of Azcans, Schattenalfen, and other hapless wayfarers who stumbled upon the lost tribe.

Wastoure's Tower

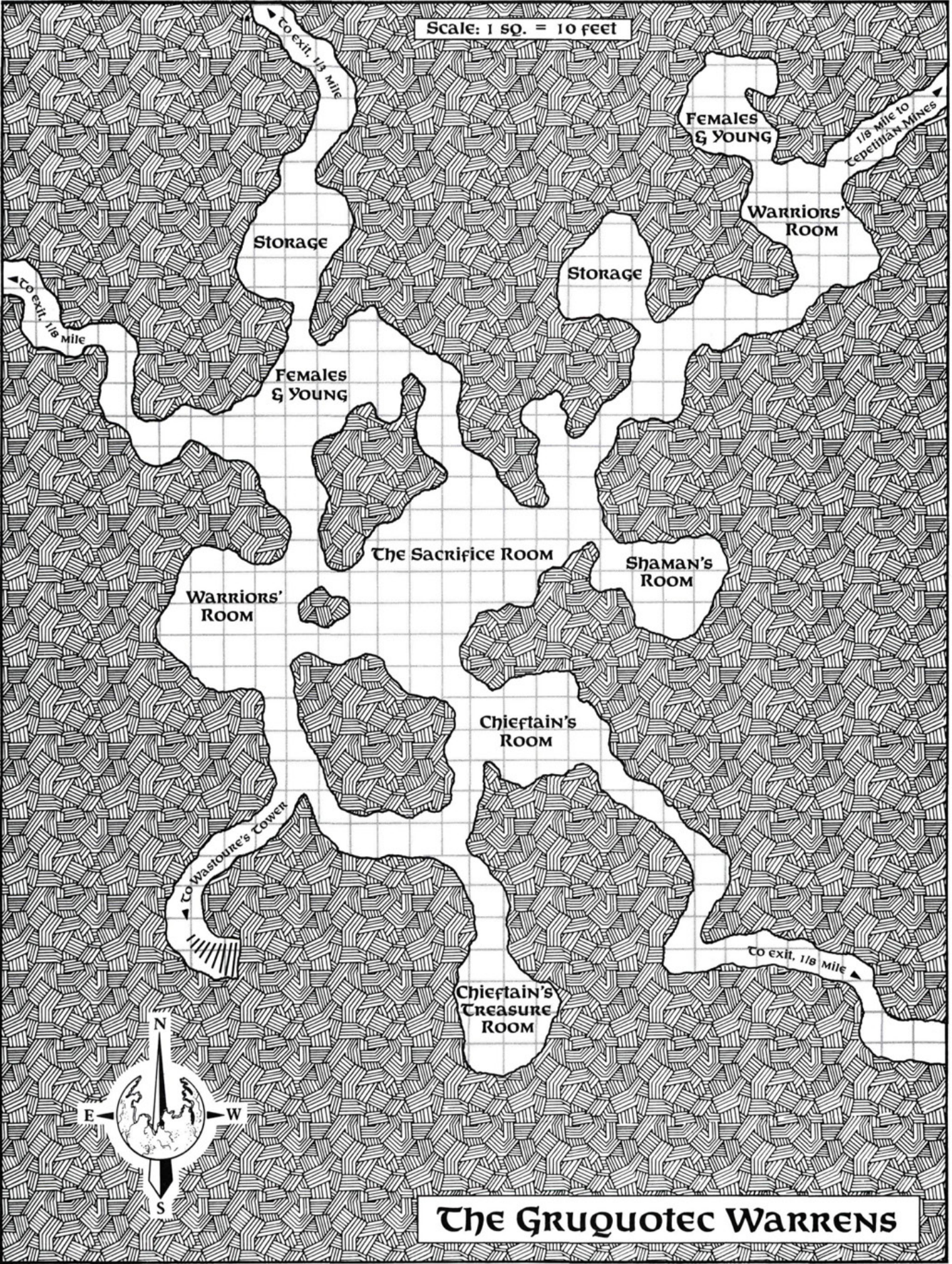
A rough-hewn stairway connects the Gruquotec warrens with Wastoure's tower.

The Gruquotecs fear and adore Wastoure as the "Pale Lord," and believe him to be an avatar of the Earth-Beast. He used them as guards and personal servants, and rewarded them with sacred knowledge of their blasphemous Earth-Beast, secrets he learned in his dreams. There was a certain degree of rivalry with the Gruquotec shaman, who felt Wastoure had usurped his authority—but the usurpation was so complete, so indisputable, that even the shaman holds the enigmatic Antalian in awe.

They don't know where he is now. . .so PCs might reasonably fear that the tower's owner may return unexpectedly! (He won't, however—he is occupied with schemes on the surface world; cf. modules DDA1 and DDA2.)

More Gruquotecs are to be found in the tower, plus some treasures (well-protected by

Scale: 1 sq. = 10 feet



Females & Young

Warriors' Room

Storage

Storage

Females & Young

The Sacrifice Room

Shaman's Room

Warriors' Room

Chieftain's Room

Chieftain's Treasure Room

to Wastoure's Tower

to exit, 1/8 Mile

1/8 Mile to Capellian Mines

to exit, 1/8 Mile

to exit, 1/8 Mile



The Gruquotec Warrens

traps). Among these are several handwritten journals, chronicling Wastoure's explorations of the Hollow World. Besides containing useful and penetrating anthropological insights into Hollow World cultures, these journals may contain clues to new adventures all across the far-flung inner lands.

The most fabulous treasure in the tower—and the best protected!—is a sculpture of the cipactli (of infinitely more refined craftsmanship than the burrowers' idol). It is fashioned of solid gold, set with eyes of jade. It radiates faint chaos or malignancy to a *know alignment* or *detect evil*. The value of the statue should be appropriate to the PCs' level and the challenge the adventure has given them; if they are low-level and you made the adventure relatively easy, this prize is but a statuette of about 500 gp value. If the adventurers are higher-level and had to face formidable challenges to make it this far, then it is a massive idol worth 6,500 gp. (Most parties—and statue values—should fall in between.)

The Cipactli

Buried in solid rock, several hundred feet directly beneath Wastoure's tower and the Gruquotec Warrens, the dormant burrower of this adventure will not be physically encountered by the characters—to their advantage, for the beast's powers (which we need not present in detail) come close to that of a minor Immortal. Suffice to say the active creature could dispatch any PCs short of Masters level with minimal effort.

The monster known to the Azcans as the cipactli was one of the most powerful of the ancient burrowers. Even though dormant, thanks to the *Spell of Preservation*, the Earth-Beast has a powerful influence on its nearby environs. It has been able to establish nearly conscious contact with a human,

Wastoure (the contact is fully conscious for Wastoure, but for the awesome burrower the dream-projection is a mere fraction of potential consciousness). It has warped generations of a Beastman offshoot, the Gruquotec tribe.

Furthermore, it even has a powerful, yet unpredictable, effect on magic: Enchantments which would normally not function in the Hollow World might do so near the cipactli, thanks to its entropic emanations. This is a function of the unstable interaction of the burrower's naturally generated chaos field (powerful even in dormancy) and the Immortal magics of the *Spell of Preservation*.

To properly express the effects of this interaction, we'd need to borrow some very complicated mathematical models from Wastoure's workbooks. We won't do this. Instead, for simplicity, consider outworlder magics (the spells listed in the Hollow World set as not working in the Hollow World) as having a 50% chance of working within Wastoure's tower and the Gruquotec warrens. Outside the tower, but within a half-mile radius thereof, such magics have a 1 in 6 chance of success. The effects in any case cannot extend outside this radius, nor through the World-Shield; so a character couldn't, say, *teleport* to Chitlcan or some outer world destination such as Thyatis City. (He could *teleport* from the Warrens to some floor of Wastoure's tower, for whatever that's worth.)

In dreams, as in reality, the cipactli appears as a colossal mixture of centipede, beetle, and dragon. Its body is long, segmented, and many-legged, built of shining black, chitinous armor; its leering, mocking face seems vaguely human.

The Wager

This adventure presupposes that the characters have acquired a certain degree of fame and stature in Azcan society. It would be best suited for three to six characters of approximately name level (from 8th to 11th). If you believe the characters of your campaign are significantly more or less powerful than this, by all means develop and modify the details of the adventure accordingly. You can do this beforehand—generating new stats for monsters, or adjusting numbers—or you can do it at the spur of the moment in play, if you find that things as you set them up in advance are simply too difficult or too easy for the adventure to be any fun. This is easy enough to do, since no one among the players should have read this or your development notes, anyhow—they can't know if you decide in the middle of a battle that, for dramatic purposes, a foe's hit points should be adjusted by ten. This sort of manipulation, used with discretion, is the DM's prerogative.

Like the previous scenario, "The Wager" is not completely fleshed out. Once again we provide detailed set-up, background, and a first encounter to get the adventure underway; but even more than in "The Mines of Madness," you'll need to do some work to make the ideas we've sketched for the later parts of the adventure ready for play.

Set Up

At the beginning of the adventure, the PCs find themselves in the city of Huitlaktima. Their reasons for being there will depend on your campaign. Characters who are involved in trading would have an obvious reason to be there, as it is the acknowledged center of Azcan commerce, second only to the capital in importance for the Azcan mercantile class.

Word gets around the city's social circles that the characters are in town, and what their fabulous past exploits have been. Among the ears it reaches are those of Prince Tlach-

tlatlan, the tecuhtli of Huitlaktima and son of the emperor. Tlachtatlatlan is widely regarded as a boor, a bore, and an incompetent administrator (fortunately for the merchants, this means their class has a great deal of latitude in conducting their affairs); but he is nonetheless a very important person. When an invitation to a feast, held in their honor, arrives in the PCs hands, they can hardly expect to refuse.

The Feast of Honor

The feast is rich and extravagant, filled with toasts to the PCs. As the evening drifts on, the strongly alcoholic *octli* flows freely, as do the boasts and tall tales. Ideally the characters will start to loudly proclaim the virtues of their own extraordinary exploits. Encourage them to role-play the scene of recounting their adventures before the appreciative audience of imperial bureaucrats and dignitaries.

Prince Tlachtatlatlan is not as magnanimous as he seems, however: he has a secret agenda. At some point in the evening, he proposes a wager to the adventurers. If you can work it into the role-playing, this would best come on the tail of the party describing their most fabulous successes. If not, Tlachtatlatlan finds some other opportune moment to present it.

The object of the wager is the *Miquiztli Ring*, a piece of gold jewelry so named because its sole ornament is the death's-head glyph. Legends say it is a wondrous magical item, able to provide its wearer with incomparable wealth and power. According to the legends, this precious artifact is in the possession of the Azcan fairy queen, Xochiquetzal.

The terms of the wager are simple enough: If the player characters find the *Miquiztli Ring* and return it to Prince Tlachtatlatlan within one Azcan month (that is, twenty days), he will shower them with gifts and honors at another magnificent feast, to which the most distinguished persons of the empire will be invited—perhaps even the tlatoani himself. If they fail, the same persons will be on hand

that day for the honor of witnessing the PCs entrance to paradise, as they are sacrificed to Atzanteotl. A suitably festive wake will follow their sanctifying demise.

This is truly an Azcan wager—and the sort of bet to which a sane person would not readily commit himself. Tlachtatlatlan makes it clear, however, that the characters don't really have a choice. If they do not accept his wager, he insinuates that he has the means to bring about their untimely ends.

For instance: Drunkenness among the common people is punishable by death, but the tecuhtlin and emperor may permit it on special occasions, such as this. The prince may threaten to have the whole party put to death for lack of this permission (even though it's his party, thrown in the PCs' honor). The party should know that the prince could get away with it (a minor bureaucrat might whisper this fact in a PC's ear, if the players don't clue in), and to judge from his nasty reputation his conscience probably wouldn't hold him back.

It's all the better if these threats need not be made explicit, if the characters just understand that accepting the wager, mad though it be, is in their best interests. Better yet would be if, role-playing the evening's cockiness to the hilt, the characters would bellow that they'll win the wager, and in half the time Tlachtatlatlan suggested!

In the course of the adventure, characters may feel tempted to welsh on their bet, and run away from Azcan lands. This is, to say the least, very dishonorable—not at all a sporting way of doing things! Such cowards guarantee themselves ignominy (and summary execution) if they ever turn up in Azcan lands again.

Native Azcans will do their utmost to fulfill the wager. Running away would be useless, since Atzanteotl would find some way to harvest his promised sacrifices. And, even if dissected atop the terrible Immortal's temple, at least the characters are guaranteed paradise. . . Right?

The Impossible Journey

Once the characters have slept off their hangovers and realized the mess they've gotten themselves into, they'll wonder: How in the world do you find fairyland? A good question indeed!

Consultation with the local wise-woman or soothsayer reveals about this much: "Fairyland," she advises, "is by definition wherever you're not looking for it. It creeps in from the corners, just like the fairies who are only visible from the corners of your eyes. . . You don't find fairyland—it finds you. But it will never find you if you hang around in a coastal city, waiting for the Prince to have your heart on Atzanteotl's temple. The best thing you can do is pack your bags and travel east, since that's where most fairies are said to be found—or is that just those funny elves?—and hope to catch their attention. You are heroes, right? Then it'll work out fine." She demands a hefty payment of gold or goods for this advice.

So off goes the party, heading in some random direction, trying to find a passage to fairyland. If the players have some clever ideas on how to find their way there, allow them to try. To spice up the wilderness, you might set up various and sundry encounters and challenges. The regional monster lists should be helpful.

At some point, as the characters travel along a dusty road or jungle path, they encounter a wizened little man in dirty robes, wearing an off-balance feather headdress of the sort one sees on the tecuhtlin. He greets them boisterously and seems quite intoxicated. "From whence come you, O travelers, and whither are you bound?" he slurs.

He offers them drink from his gourd. The party members may decline, but he will hear none of it. He is a powerful wizard, he claims, the powerful wizard Peyotlotzin, and none may leave his company before they have drunk deeply of his gourd. He forcibly restrains PCs who attempt to leave without having had a drink.

Mysteriously, the gourd never empties, and one forgets how the time is passing when one has it to one's mouth. Some imagine they are having but a sip, but their companions behold them quaffing quarts. When all have drunk their fill, Peyotlotzin guffaws merrily, gives them his blessing and wishes them well in their quest to find Xochiquetzal. (Players may wonder how he knew this, if they did not mention it to him.)

Without further ado, he bids them farewell, and stumbles along the road, playing a hauntingly alien tune on a bone pipe. Characters who look carefully through their already-dimming vision may see that his legs are hairy and feet cloven, like the wild goats that roam the Azcan hills and mountainsides.

If the PCs are intractable in their refusal to drink of Peyotlotzin's gourd, the encounter may come to blows. The characters are in over their heads, but, for their good fortune, Peyotlotzin is benign. In fact, he is a mortal form of the Immortal Faunus, recently returned

from paying court to Xochiquetzal. This mortal shape is that of a silenus, an ancient faun, with the following characteristics (for full information on faun characters, consult PC1, *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*; in practice, the following information should be sufficient for this tightly-scripted encounter):

Peyotlotzin 36th-level faun/36th-level shaman.

HD 10d4 + 54; hp 109; S 16, I 18, W 18, D 16, C 18, Ch 12.

Spells Carried:

Level One—*cure light wounds* (× 4), *detect magic* (× 3), *faerie fire*, *protection from evil*.

Level Two—*heat metal*, *hold person* (× 6), *obscure*, *snake charm*.

Level Three—*continual light* (× 5), *hold animal* (× 3), *water breathing*.

Level Four—*cure serious wounds* (× 3), *dispel magic*, *neutralize poison*, *plant door*, *protection from lightning*, *summon animals* (× 2).



Level Five—*control winds, cure critical wounds* (× 3), *dispel evil, dissolve, insect plague, pass plant* (× 2).

Level Six—*anti-animal shell, cureall* (× 3), *summon weather, turn wood* (× 3), *word of recall*.

Level Seven—*creeping doom* (× 2), *metal to wood* (× 4), *summon elemental* (× 2), *weather control*.

You might notice that this list contains spells which are supposedly useless in the Hollow World. Because Peyotlotzin is a manifestation of an Immortal, the normal strictures of the Hollow World do not apply.

As a faun, Peyotlotzin can use his pipes to make magical music, to stir extreme emotions in the listener (rage, euphoria, desire, etc.), or even to stir plants to extreme growths. This is handy because it means Peyotlotzin could make grass, vines, and trees grow according to his commands, so that they entrap PCs—leaving their mouths accessible, so he can amuse himself by emptying his gourd down their throats!

As Peyotlotzin departs, the characters become increasingly drowsy. Finally, as the wizened faun vanishes in the distance, they fall into a deep, enchanted slumber.

The Fairy Queen

From this point, the Dungeon Master must supply many more details.

The characters awaken in a changed world—in fact, they’ve entered the timeless realm of the fairies, not far from the court of Xochiquetzal.

The Azcan fairy queen welcomes the adventurers to the court, and bids them share tales of their travels and their reason for being here. Obviously, the party has two options: Tell Xochiquetzal what they’re after, and see if she’ll bargain; or find some way to trick her and steal the prize.

The Theft

It would be reasonable to suppose that Xochiquetzal would not be eager to part with the precious artifact. As such, characters may elect to pursue their goal by stealthy means. Violating the hospitality and good will of a quasi-immortal is, however, no simple matter!

As DM, you’ll have to generate the details necessary for the theft to be played out. What is the layout of Xochiquetzal’s court? You should base the architecture on Azcan and Oltec models (not the western European ones we usually associate with fairies). A glance into library books about Mesoamerican architecture may inspire you.

What obstacles will be in the way? Xochiquetzal has many servants, including tepictotons (see new monsters, at the end of this booklet) and other fairies and woodland creatures (e.g., pixies, sprites, dryads, centaurs . . .), plus the rare and wondrous feathered serpent (also described among the new monsters). A sampling of such creatures as well-placed guards, or just passing revelers who might raise the hue and cry, complicates the characters’ job of theft.

Finally, if the *Ring* is stolen, the PCs must find a way to beat a hasty retreat. In fact there is a doorway within Xochiquetzal’s court that will transport creatures out of fey dimensions, back into the mortal world. (Where the PCs end up is up to the DM—perhaps they can even control the destination.)

So much for outright theft. Trickery is another matter: Perhaps the characters can get themselves in such a position that Xochiquetzal has offered them a wish—and they may then ask for the *Miquiztli Ring*.

Xochiquetzal’s Favor

A more polite approach is to be up front with the kind hostess, telling her that their lives depend on the acquisition of the *Miquiztli Ring*. Would she be so kind to relinquish it? Well yes, she would—but not for nothing! The characters will first have to do her a favor.

The nature of this favor needs to be such that the fairies would be unable to fulfill the task, for some reason or other.

Let loose with your creativity on this one. Xochiquetzal could send the party literally anywhere in the Known World—inside or out, or even in the middle (cf. *The Shadow Elves* and *The Orcs of Thar*). With help from her Immortal friends (such as Faunus), she might even send them to another world! This frees you, as DM, to design a suitably bizarre and fantastic task.

The Trip Home

If the characters succeed in their endeavors, they make their way back to Huitlaktima to report and prove their success. Prince Tlachtatlatlan was dubious as to their chance of success; but in any case, he is not eager to lose his wager. He would naturally prefer not to pay the piper, and has arranged some scheme to sabotage the PCs at the last minute. Remember, besides having the problem of acquiring the artifact in the first place, the player characters are in a race against time. If they are but a minute late, they are accorded due honor for their efforts, but will be sacrificed nevertheless. Thus, Tlachtatlatlan's agents need only delay the party long enough for them to miss their 10- or 20-day deadline.

If it's feasible, the prince's agent might even be part of the party—an NPC retainer perhaps, or even a player character. Be careful with the latter, however. Dividing the party against itself is a touchy thing to do, even among friends and mature role-players. If the traitor is to be run by a player, make sure the player understands that he'll probably lose, and should not take it personally.

Sweet Success

Assuming they beat the prince's last-ditch gambit, the characters are received in Huitlaktima with cheers and celebration, carried on the shoulders of jubilant crowds to the gates of the tecuhtli's palace. There he mag-

nanimously receives them, embraces them, calls them his brothers and sisters, and welcomes them inside.

A crowd of the empire's elite cronies await in the great hall, expecting to witness the adventurers' demise. When they hear of the party's success, they are all the more delighted by the unanticipated turn of events, and Prince Tlachtatlatlan's well-concealed (but nonetheless widely assumed) chagrin.

At the height of the festivities, the characters are to present the *Miquiztli Ring* to the prince, who has showered them with fabulous and exotic presents. The nature of the artifact is revealed in the tecuhtli's hands: It is in fact an entrapped tzitzimitl, and something about the wicked prince has set it free! Stretching out to its full size, the monstrous spirit surveys the room, and casually toasts (with flame, that is) a number of guests.

The tzitzimitl offers its gratitude to the player characters, as the remaining audience members crush and trample each other in their haste to reach the exits. The exits are blocked, unfortunately, by columns of palace guards who have been called in to deal with the chaos—with a net result of yet more death and pandemonium.

After surveying the scene with more than a little amusement, the tzitzimitl stoops to grab by the neck the trembling, pitiful Prince Tlachtatlatlan, who is frozen with fear beside him. The tzitzimitl squinches the emperor's son into an impossible little ball, and pops it into his mouth. With a quick wink toward the PCs, he vanishes into thin air, off to whatever unsavory dimension he calls home.

Once the mob scene has cleared out a bit, the characters can pick up their prizes and make their way through the litter of overturned tables, food, drink, bodies, and stunned guests to the streets of Huitlaktima. Confident that they've left their mark on Azcan legends, they move on to new challenges, new adventures, new legends to create. . .

Monsters of the Azcan Lands

Monsters by Region

For each region we first describe generally what the region includes. Then we list the monsters that would naturally be encountered there, according to the source—e.g., “Boxed Set” (i.e., the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set), “Basic Set,” or “New Monsters” (which are described soon hereafter), to help you look up the original description. An asterisk indicates that special notes on that monster follow.

Note that these sources refer to the old rules, divided into Basic, Expert, Companion and Masters sets. If you use the new D&D® Rules Cyclopeda, you’re in luck, because all of those monsters should be found in one place. We’re including the set references for the benefit for those who don’t own the new hardcover compilation.

When designing adventures, don’t feel constrained by these guidelines. For instance, it is perfectly possible that you may place a white dragon in the southern rainforests. As part of the adventure, however, you would surely need to justify its presence to your players. How did it get there? What is it doing? Is it there unwillingly? Placing a monster from a completely different ecosystem in the rainforests of Azca, and then figuring out ways to justify its presence, can be a great source of adventure ideas.

Acatlan Marshes

This misty region, the delta of the Chitlaloac river, is clearly marked on the fold-out map. It is home to many fearsome beasts, and most Azcans dread having to enter it. Although the surrounding climate is colder than the southern regions, and thus less hospitable to dinosaurs, the marshes themselves are warmed by hot springs. Some of the largest of the great lizards thrive here because of this warmth, the abundant flora and the sluggish and stagnant

waters which can support their bulk.

Boxed Set: Apatosaurus (Brontosaurus), Archaeopteryx, Phobosuchus, Pterosaur.

Basic Set: Black dragon, Giant spider, Gray ooze, Green slime.

Expert Set: Crocodile, Giant leech, Giant toad, Hydra, Insect swarm, Water termite (swamp).

Companion Set: Giant weasel.

Masters Set: Onyx dragon.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Death leech, Dragonfly, Gator man, Giant amoeba, Giant serpentweed, Giant spider, Marine decapus, Phororhacos, Sirenflower, Strangleweed, Vapour ghoul, Whipweed.

New Monsters: Moan bird, Tanystropheus.

Aztlan Mountains

The following monsters are also the ones most often found in the environs of the town of Colima, since the townspeople have long labored to eradicate the dangers that inhabited the grasslands between the mountains and the Bay of Colima. Monsters native to the wild mountains occasionally make incursions into the region, however.

Note also that the environs of Colima are the only present habitat of the rare feathered serpent (see New Monsters); the winged reptiles are not found in the mountains, however.

Boxed Set: Archaeopteryx, Giant pteranodon, Hiak (giant eagle), Pterosaur, Thumperlizard.

Basic Set: Gargoyle, Giant centipede, Giant tuatara lizard, Harpy, Mountain lion, Red dragon, Rock baboon, Sabre-tooth tiger, Troglodyte, White ape, White dragon.

Expert Set: Basilisk, Centaur, Chimera, Cloud giant, Cockatrice, Cyclops, Doppelganger, Frost giant, Gorgon, Griffon, Harpy, Hell hound, Hill giant, Hippogriff, Manticores, Pegasus, Roc, Stone giant, Storm giant, Troll, Wyvern.

Companion Set: Cave toad, Gargantua (gargoyle), Snow ape.

Masters Set: Coldrake, Crystal dragon,

Ruby dragon, Sasquatch.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Eagle, Wildcat.

New Monsters: Moan bird.

Lake Chitlaloc

Most of the lake's fearsome monsters are found far out in the middle, and in the depths, where Azcans seldom venture. Herbivorous, legged dinosaurs such as the brontosaurus, however, tend to stay near the shore (especially near river mouths), where their massive bulk is supported by the water, and edible plants are in abundance. Other aquatic dinosaurs, such as the ichthyosaurs, seek fish and other prey in the lake's depths.

Boxed Set: Apatosaurus (brontosaurus), Ichthyosaurus, Plesiosaurus.

Basic Set: Sea snake.

Expert Set: Fresh water termite, Giant crab, Giant fish, Giant leech, Merman, Nixie.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Tylosaurus.

New Monsters: Archelon, Nothosaurus.

Northern Forests

North and northeast of Lake Chitlaloc, the tropical rainforest gives way to temperate woods of deciduous trees. Here the climate is less hospitable for dinosaurs, but mammals, prehistoric and otherwise, abound.

Boxed Set: Archaeopteryx, Aurochs, Flying viper, Pisanosaurus, Pterosaur.

Basic Set: Black bear, Boar, Giant ant, Giant bee, Giant beetle, Giant centipede, Giant draco lizard, Giant ferret, Giant rat, Giant shrew, Giant spider, Giant toad, Green dragon, Grizzly bear, Insect swarm, Mountain lion, Pixie, Robber fly, Sabre-tooth tiger, Snake (pit viper, spitting cobra), Sprite, Stirge, Tiger, Werebear, Wereboar, Wererat, Weretiger, Werewolf, Wolf.

Expert Set: Animal herd, Basilisk, Cockatrice, Centaur, Devil swine, Displacer beast, Dryad, Giant toad, Rhagodessa, Treant, Unicorn, Wyvern.

Companion Set: Giant weasel.

Master Set: Faerie, Hsiao, Jade dragon, Sas-

quatch, Werebat, Werefox, Woodrake.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Aranea, Archer bush, Dog, Eagle, Giant owl, Giant porcupine, Giant spider, Hawk, Jaguar, Killer tree, Magpie, Megatherium, Skunk, Vampire rose, Wildcat, Wood imp.

New Monsters: Baluchitherium, Moan bird, Tepictoton, Werejaguar.

Northern Plains

The climate north of Lake Chitlaloc and the Bay of Uaxactun is distinctly cooler than the rainforests of the Azcan heartland. For this reason, dinosaurs are considerably rarer, and those which are found are typically the smaller species. Prehistoric mammals, on the other hand, abound.

The northern plains cover the Titlapoca peninsula and the open lands that lie between the towns of Izamal and Hualcoyotl. These lists could also apply to the grasslands north of the river Chitlaloc.

Boxed Set: Aurochs, Archaeopteryx, Giant Bison, Hiak (giant eagle), Pisanosaurus, Pterosaur.

Basic Set: Boar, Blue dragon, Giant ant, Giant beetle, Giant locust, Giant rat, Sabre-toothed tiger, Snake (giant racer, giant rattler, pit viper, rock python, spitting cobra), Tiger, Wererat, Wereboar, Weretiger.

Expert Set: Animal herd, Blink dog, Centaur*, Displacer beast, Gorgon.

Companion Set: Grab grass.

Master Set: Sapphire dragon.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Archer bush, Dog, Eagle, Giant owl, Hawk, Phororhacos, Spotted lion, Vampire rose.

New Monsters: Baluchitherium, Hyenodon, Tepictoton.

Notes: There are but two or three surviving tribes of centaurs, living on the fringes of the light forest to the plains' east. These creatures are often hunted for sport by the Azcans, who believe them to be the offspring of evil spirits.

South & Central Rainforests

This geographical region comprises all the hexes marked "rainforest" on the fold-out map. The most dense concentration is found in the southern rainforests, between Ximac Fort and the Schattentalen territories. Around the towns and cities to the north the Azcans have worked to eradicate the threats, especially the giant lizards. Still, the unsettled interior regions (especially the quadrilateral marked by Coatepec, Yuzihuapac, Fort Hueca, and Xotitlan) are the roving grounds of many beasts.

Boxed Set: Allosaurus, Ankylosaurus, Archaeopteryx, Flying viper, Giant pteranodon, Pachycephalosaurus, Stegosaurus, Pterosaur, Tyrannosaurus rex, Triceratops.

Basic Set: Boar, Giant ant, Giant bat, Giant lizard (chameleon, draco, gecko, tuatara), Giant rat, Giant spider, Giant vampire bat, Green dragon, Insect swarm, Panther, Robber fly, Sabre-tooth tiger, Snake (spitting cobra, giant racer, pit viper, giant rattler, rock python), Tiger, Wereboar, Wererat, Weretiger.

Expert Set: Animal herd, Cockatrice, Devil swine, Dryad, Giant toad, Hydra, Treant.

Master Set: Faerie, Jade dragon, Mandrake, Sasquatch, Werefox, Woodrake.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Aranea, Bekkah, Dog, Giant spider, Hypnosnake, Jaguar, Killer tree, Megatherium, Phanaton, Piranha bird, Strangle vine, Wildcat.

New Monsters: Baluchitherium, Moan bird, Tepictoton, Werejaguar.

Southeastern Hills

These include the wooded hills around the Chapultepec Mines as well as the higher foothills of the World Spine around the Tepetitlan Mines. Since the cooler, higher altitudes of the foothills makes survival more difficult for them, the dinosaurs on the following lists favor the lower, wooded hills, especially in cooler weather.

Boxed Set: Allosaurus, Ankylosaurus, Archaeopteryx, Flapsail, Flying viper, Giant pteranodon, Hiak (giant eagle), Pterosaur,

Stegosaurus, Thumper-lizard, Triceratops.

Basic Set: Animal herd, Boar, Gargoyle, Giant centipede, Giant tuatara lizard, Mountain lion, Red dragon, Rock baboon, Sabre-toothed tiger, Snake (giant rattler, pit viper, rock python, spitting cobra, giant racer), Wereboar.

Expert Set: Basilisk, Chimera, Cockatrice, Cyclops, Gorgon, Griffon, Hellhound, Hill giant, Hippogriff, Manticore, Pegasus, Roc, Stone giant, Troll, Wyvern.

Companion Set: Gargantua (gargoyle, troll), Rock toad.

Master Set: Ruby dragon.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Dog, Hawk, Spotted lion, Wildcat.

New Monsters: Hyenodon.

Notes: The flapsail, a sort of miniature red dragon, is trained by the Schattentalen. Many still live in the wild in these hills, however.

Rivers

Besides the creatures that may be found in the river, be sure to remember the monsters of land and air that inhabit the neighboring terrain.

Boxed Set: Apatosaurus (brontosaurus)*, Phobosuchus*.

Basic Set: Lizard man*, Sea snake.

Expert Set: Crocodile, Fresh water termite, Giant fish, Giant leech, Giant toad, Hydra, Nixie.

AC9, Creature Catalogue: Giant fish, Giant poisonous frog, Piranha, Strangleweed.

New Monsters: Nothosaurus.

Notes: The brontosaurus is rarely found in rivers north of Lake Chitlalo.

Among rivers in the Azcan lands, only the Snake River is home to the terrible phobosuchus. All of the specimens in the Toltenco River (where they once roamed as well) were hunted to extinction, both because they were a dangerous threat to Azcans in rafts and canoes, and because their hides were valuable.

It is not uncommon to find lizard men straying from the Malpoggi Swamp into the upper reaches of the Toltenco and Snake rivers.

New Monsters

Archelon

Armor Class:	4
Hit Dice:	6
Hit Points:	27
Move:	30' (10'), swim 150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d6
Number Appearing:	1-4
Save As:	F3
Morale:	5
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THACO:	14
XP Value:	275

The archelon is a prehistoric reptile, the giant ancestor of modern sea turtles. Its twelve-foot-diameter "shell" is not hard and calceous, but rather thick and leathery, like the soft-shelled tortoise.

The archelon, besides being found in many of the seas and oceans of the Hollow World, is

a denizen of Lake Chitlalo, where it feeds on schools of smaller fish. It usually crawls onto land only for the purpose of breeding (for which it requires sandy beaches). It rarely assaults humans purposely, but may unwittingly cause havoc by overturning a canoe or raft when it comes to the surface.

The Azcans occasionally hunt this prehistoric turtle, serving the tender parts of its flesh as a delicacy and making armor and shields out of its sturdy hide. They also harvest the edible turtle eggs from the known breeding beaches. They are careful to leave most eggs undisturbed, lest they upset nature's balance and cause the creatures' extinction.

Baluchitherium

Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	10
Hit Points:	45
Move:	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 trample
Damage:	3d6
Number Appearing:	1d4
Save As:	F5



Morale:	6
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THAC0:	10
XP Value:	900

The baluchitherium is a huge, primitive ancestor of the rhinoceros. It stands as much as twenty feet in height, and is found chiefly in the northern grasslands of the Azcan empire.

Feathered Serpent

Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	2
Hit Points:	7
Move:	60' (20'), fly 270' (90')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d6
Number Appearing:	2-20
Save As:	F1
Morale:	6
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THAC0:	18
XP Value:	20

Thousands of years ago the feathered serpents abounded in the lush rainforests of the Azcan Empire. With the coming of Atzanteotl, a new species also arrived: The winged viper (see the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set for its description), which was similar to the feathered serpent, but poisonous and with the wings of a bat.

The feathered serpent is a lovely creature, admired even among the squeamish who consider ordinary snakes abhorrent. Most varieties (there are over a dozen, in fact) display brilliant coloration such as limpid green scales, brilliantly colored feathers on the two broad wings, the tail, and in tufts behind the skull, and eyes of jewel-like clarity, with hourglass-shaped pupils.

Feathered serpents as commonly encountered have intelligence about on par with a dog (the folk of Colima train them as watchdogs). In fact

there exists another stage in the life of feathered serpents, where their intelligence matches at least that of a human. Serpents in this phase of their life are not presently found anywhere in the Azcan Empire.

In most Azcan lands feathered serpents have disappeared altogether. They remain only in dim memories, in legends of great kings like Atruatzin who were said to converse with them. The legends are blurred today, however, because only winged vipers are familiar; so it seems to the Azcans that once the vipers spoke and were allies of humans, but no longer are, when in fact there was an entirely different species that Atzanteotl's spawn drove away.

The one place where feathered serpents are found is the plain between the Bay of Colima and the Aztlan Mountains. Here grows a plant called serpent-mint, which makes feathered serpents strong enough to resist the vipers and their poison. A serpent that has consumed serpent-mint has AC 5, HD 3, THAC0 17, and hp 9 for 1d4 hours. A few feathered serpents have been reported in other regions (see module HWA2, *Nightrage*).

Half-forgotten myths among the Azcans allude to a powerful queen who lives in the sky and rules the feathered serpents.

Hyenodon

Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	5
Hit Points:	23
Move:	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	3d4
Number Appearing:	2d4
Save As:	F3
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THAC0:	15
XP Value:	175

These giant, prehistoric canines resemble hyenae with tawny gold fur, like a lion's. They



travel in packs, surrounding and pulling down prey with their powerful, vise-like jaws. Due to their numbers and large size (they average about eight feet from head to rump), they are able to take on large prey like the baluchitherium, as well as smaller creatures (including humans). They are also voracious eaters of carrion, eager to tear into remains left by the huge carnososaurs. In the Azcan empire, they are found roaming the southwestern hills and the plains of the northwest.

Lycanthrope, Werejaguar

Armor Class:	4
Hit Dice:	5 + 2*
Hit Points:	25
Move:	180' (60')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite
Damage:	1d4/1d4/1d8 + 1d6/ 1d6
Number Appearing:	1
Save As:	F6
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	V
Alignment:	Chaotic

THAC0:	14
XP Value:	400

Werejaguars are the most common variety of lycanthrope found in the Azcan Empire. Some specimens might be found in other tropical rainforests of the Hollow World, but they are very rare.

Among the Azcans, the werejaguar is both feared and revered. Some of Atzanteotl's priests, especially in more isolated settlements, where service of that Immortal is mingled with that of the Four Hundred Rabbits, believe the disease is a sign of their Immortal's favor. They may even hope to catch it themselves. Tales of whole villages of werejaguars in the southern jungles, however, are probably fictitious. . .

Although Atzanteotl's priesthood officially forbids it, there are perennial rumors of savage cleric-werejaguars in villages of the deep rainforest who, in unspeakable rituals, sacrifice to the darkest Immortals by devouring living victims.

Like the were-sabretooth, another native Hollow World lycanthrope, the werejaguar is

of course not affected by the phases of the moon, since there is no moon here. They do have their own set of special problems, however. Though a werejaguar may eat in human form, it cannot satisfy its hunger. This forces it to take jaguar shape on occasion and devour freshly-killed flesh. A werejaguar who goes more than 24 hours without feeding is likely to transform into jaguar shape involuntarily, and be driven to eat the nearest available prey. The werejaguar in such a case cannot return to human form until it has satisfied its hunger.

In jaguar shape this creature cannot speak, but it retains its human intelligence.

In combat, the werejaguar can rake the victim with its two rear claws if both front claws strike in the same round (+2 to hit, 1d6 damage each). Make one hit roll for both raking attacks.

In jaguar shape these beasts are excellent climbers. Combined with their natural camouflage in rainforests, they gain surprise on 1-3 on 1d6. They also have +1 on attack rolls when leaping from the branches of a tree.

Moan Bird

Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	1 + 1*
Hit Points:	6
Move:	60' (20'), fly 270' (90')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d4
Number Appearing:	1
Save As:	F1
Morale:	5
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THACO:	18
XP Value:	19

This fantastic bird is a cloud spirit, perhaps related to the faerie race. It appears as a combination of the features of a falcon and an owl. It always seems to be accompanied by mist, and looks to be somewhat insubstantial. Never is more than one encountered on the

surface of the Hollow World.

Even then, the moan bird is rarely seen—and for this the Azcans are thankful, for the bird is the harbinger of death. Its piercing cry in the tropical forest is believed to herald the certain death of the hearer.

Moan birds are not normally hostile, but are capable of defending themselves with their sharp beaks. Due to their insubstantiality, they are struck only by magical weapons.

In fact moan birds are considerably more common in the high altitudes of the Hollow World, amidst the floating continents which they make their homes. Their insubstantiality is an important virtue there; it is in fact a sort of phase-shifting that enables them to move through the airless spaces between the floating continents, despite the lack of air for breathing or as a fluid medium for travel.

Nothosaurus

Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	7
Hit Points:	32
Move:	swim 180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d6
Number Appearing:	1
Save As:	F1
Morale:	6
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THACO:	13
XP Value:	450

This voracious relative of the ichthyosaurus and pleisiosaurus is found in Lake Chitlalo and the warm, southern rivers, as well as near-by seas (the Bay of Colima, Gulf of Aztlan, Northern Atlss Ocean, and so forth). It has a shorter neck and thinner body than the pleisiosaurus. Its diet consists primarily of fish, but it is also willing to go after swimmers or even small canoes.

The Gulf of Aztlan is a prime gathering area for these dinosaurs. The nothosauri sun

themselves, like great reptilian walruses, on the shore's rocks.

Azcans wisely avoid the nothosaurus whenever possible. If one seems to be particularly aggressive in seeking human prey or otherwise disrupting the rivers and lakes, a group of soldiers or adventurers will be dispatched to kill the beast.

Tanystropheus

Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	8
Hit Points:	36
Move:	60' (20'), swim 180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	3d6
Number Appearing:	1
Save As:	F4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
THACO:	12
XP Value:	650

A curious water-dwelling dinosaur, the tanystropheus is found occasionally in the warm southern rivers (especially the Snake River—which is itself perhaps misnamed after the tanystropheus, some scholars speculate). It is best known as a danger of the warm, humid Acatlan Marshes. It is long and sinewy, with a snake-like body and small, webbed legs. This body is especially well suited to slithering amongst the reeds and pools of the marshes, chasing and devouring prey with swift strikes of its long neck and sharp teeth.

Tepictoton

Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	1**
Hit Points:	5
Move:	60' (20'), fly 270' (90')
Attacks:	1 bite or sting
Damage:	1-3 + poison (see below)

Number Appearing:	1d8
Save As:	F1
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	C
Alignment:	Chaotic
THACO:	19
XP Value:	16

These tiny Azcan fairies, kin of sprites, pixies and brownies, are usually the benign assistants of farmers. They stand about a foot tall, dress in Azcan fashion, and speak with the oldest idioms of the Azcan language (since the language itself has not changed in 4,000 years, thanks to the *Spell of Preservation*).

They are sometimes mischievous, however, and may take the shapes of spiders and scorpions (normal or giant-sized) to frighten or even do harm. The transformation is instantaneous and occurs by mere will. In these shapes they retain their normal armor class and hit points, and are able to attack with either a bite or a sting. Both attacks do 1-3 points of damage, and the victim must save versus poison. The spider's poisonous bite causes the victim to fall asleep (and leaves him prey to tepictoton pranks!), while the scorpion's sting is deadly (save vs. poison or die).

Tepictotons do not carry weapons (or know how to use them), since they can shapeshift and use natural weapons whenever danger appears.

Like all fairies (cf. PC1, *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*), tepictoton do not normally age or disease. They are able to make themselves invisible to mortal eyes (Though other fairies can still see them). A tepictoton cannot be both invisible and in spider or scorpion shape, however; so it would not be possible for one to strike out invisibly with its poison, for instance.

Tzitzimitl

Armor Class:	-2
Hit Dice:	16 or higher
Move:	180'(60')



Attacks:	Varies with individual; spells + any
Damage:	Variable
No. Appearing	1
Save As:	Fighter: 15
Morale:	14
Treasure Type:	Varies
Intelligence:	13 or greater
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	1850

These creatures, the most feared evil spirits of Azcan mythology, are the servants of Death (the Immortal Thanatos). Even Atzanteotl is wary of these creatures, although he has made a pact with Thanatos to hold them at bay from his faithful followers. Adherents of the New Way, however, receive no such protection. . .

These nightmare beings exist where the world borders other dimensions. The Azcans believe that they are held at bay as long as Atzanteotl is sufficiently appeased—although what constitutes “sufficiency” is never quite certain. On the outer world, according to Atzanteotl’s priests, the failure to fulfill the rit-

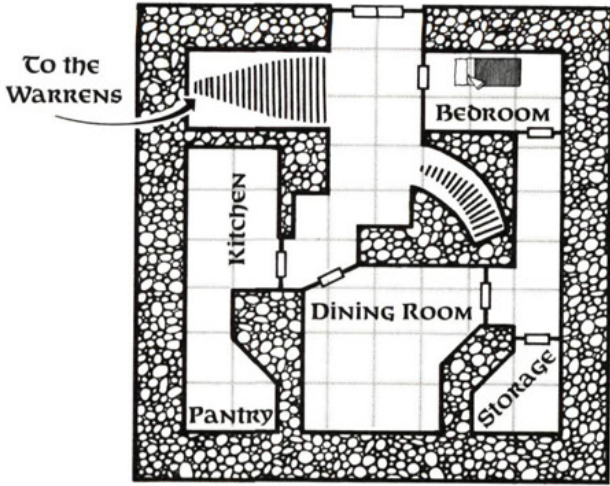
ual needs of the gods resulted in the cataclysm, in which the sun perished, permitting the tzitzimime to descend from their shadow-world of dream and twilight and devour the Known World. Only Atzanteotl’s beneficence saved the last of the Azcans, and preserved them in the Hollow World— so long as they obey his commands and serve him with human sacrifices as is proper.

Each of these fiends is unique in appearance and abilities, but they are uniform in the immensity of their powers (which rival those of the ancient Burrowers—leading some learned scholars to wonder if Azcan myth confuses the two). Their appearance may include the features of animals, insects, humans, and nameless things horrific beyond expression. They are relatives of such hideous creatures as the Brain Collector (a monster which the Azcans would surely consider a tzitzimtl), and have similarly morbid tastes. Their deepest appetite is for destruction, for they hate the universe of the Azcans.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, a tzitzimtl should only be encountered by extremely high level player characters.

Wastoure's Tower

Scale: 1 sq. = 5 feet



First FLOOR



Third FLOOR

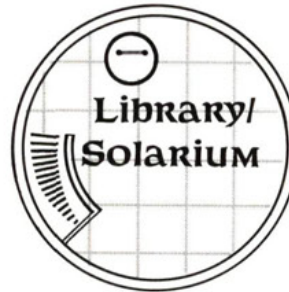


Second FLOOR

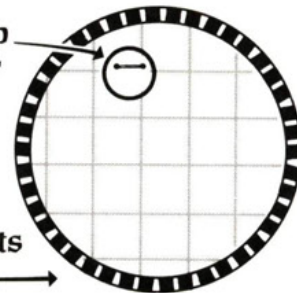


Battlements

Fourth FLOOR



Ladder to trap door ON ROOF



Battlements

Roof



PALACE



MINING



DESERT OR
SEA SAND



SEA GRASS



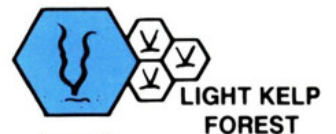
CASTLE



VOLCANO



ROCKY
DESERT



LIGHT KELP
FOREST



FORT



MOUNTAINS



BADLANDS



MEDIUM
KELP FOREST



TOWER
OR KEEP



HILLS



BARREN OR
BROKEN LAND



HEAVY KELP
FOREST



CAPITAL



CAVES



RIVER



UNDERWATER
BATTLE



CITY



FORESTED
HILLS



PLATEAU
OR CLIFF



FEEDING
GROUND



TOWN



LIGHT
FOREST



ROAD



OYSTER
FIELDS



VILLAGE



HEAVY
FOREST



TRAIL



WHIRLPOOL



LIGHT
HOUSE



JUNGLE
OR OASIS



REEF



BORDER



RUINS



CLEAR
PASTURELAND



WATER FALL



ICE FLOW



CAMP



GRASSLAND
OR STEPPE



(RAPIDS)
GREATER
CATARACT



BAD MAGIC
POINTS



BATTLE
FIELD



SWAMP
OR MARSH



(RAPIDS)
MEDIUM
CATARACT



SNOW FIELDS



NAVAL
BATTLE



MOOR
OR BOG



(RAPIDS)
LESSER
CATARACT



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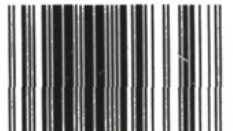
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ISBN 1-56076-138-5



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