

## AZTLAN

by Ken St. Andre (1977)

INTRODUCTION: For a long time now I've wanted to create a Diplomacy variant based on the Aztec Empire of Mexico. They were a fascinating, bloody, and warlike people with a lust for empire equal to that of Genghis Khan and Adolph Hitler put together. Their world consisted of scores of warring city-states and about half a dozen burgeoning empires, a perfect situation for Diplomacy, and it was by combining the most treacherous modes of diplomacy with ruthless bloody-handed conquest that the Aztecs rose to be the mightiest empire of the New World in their time.

Anyway, I found in creating the Aztec variant, that I was forced to go far from the original rules of Diplomacy if I wanted to come up with a reasonable simulation of what happened, or what could have happened. Also, being primarily a fantasy freak, I knew I would not be satisfied unless I could work in some element of the supernatural. And again, I also wanted to do something that would give an idea of the tremendous population explosion that the Valley of Mexico was experiencing when the Conquistadors landed. Our best estimates place the population of the Aztec Empire alone at over 20 million in 1519. The final result is a game that bears only slight resemblance to a normal Diplomacy game. Indeed, it is a new variety of game somewhere midway between Diplomacy and Risk which I call Blitz, and it has similarities to my 20 player variant, Barsoomian Blitz. Good diplomacy will certainly help a player win, but good tactics will help even more.

1.1 The official name of the game is AZTLAN. An alternate name is SMOKING MIRROR which is a deity's name as well as an oblique reference to human sacrifice.

1.2 This is a game for from 3 to 10 players. It may be played by mail, or face to face on a board.

1.3 The game spans the years 1450 to 1519. There are 4 game turns per year, commonly called Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. If no player has achieved victory conditions by Spring of 1519, the Spanish land and conquer everybody. All players lose, though some will lose worse than others.

1.4 There are 79 city supply centers on the board. In order for any player except the Chichimec barbarians to win, it is necessary to hold at least 41 of them, and to have conquered either all of the Aztec or all of the Tlaxcalan supply centers (i.e. in order for the Aztec player to win, he must conquer the Tlaxcalan, and vice-versa.) (For Chichimec victory conditions see rule 7.2.)

1.5 The player empires are outlined on the board with a solid black line, double thick and very heavy. All other segments are separated by a thinner black line. Both the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines are shown, but there is no movement or combat at sea.

2.1 The minimum number of players for this game is 3; the maximum number is 10. The order of importance for assigning players to Indian empires or countries is: (1) The Aztecs, (2) The Tlaxcalans, (3) The Chalcans, (4) The Tarascans, (5) The Meztitlans, (6) The Yopis, (7) The Totonacs, (8) The Chichimecs, (9) The Soconusco Mayans, (10) The Hot Country (Veracruz).

2.2 At the beginning of the game in Winter 1450, all 79 cities have one army in each center, except for Tenochtitlan and Tzintzuntzan which both have 2. All of the non-player city armies have orders just to stand, which means if they are attacked and defeated, they will retreat and disband if possible instead of being captured for sacrifice. See rule 3.5.

2.3 Since players may attack and conquer non-player cities, it is only fair that they may support such neutral units against the attacks of other players.

2.4 Unless a city has been destroyed and plundered by Chichimecs, there is no such thing as a totally unoccupied city supply center. Players may move freely through their own, or through an ally's city with permission, but may not just move into a city belonging to a hostile empire even though no army is currently defending it. Players must Attack to get into a hostile city, which means they must have been at rest at the beginning of their turn.

2.5 The following supply centers belong to the following empires at the beginning of the game. All other cities are neutral, independent, and occupied by a garrison of 1 army.

AZTECS:	Tenochtitlan*, Texcoco, Tacuba
TLAXCALANS:	Tlaxcala, Huexotzingo, Cholula
CHALCANS:	Chalco, Coyoacan, Amecameca
TARASCANS:	Tzintzuntzan*, Patzcuaro, Apatzingan
MEZTITLANS:	Meztitlan, Zimapan, Tototepectli
YOPIS:	Yopitzingo, Acapulco, Ayotlan
TOTONACS:	Tototepec, Icpatepec, Coatlan
CHICHIMECS:	None. (However, 2 armies start in the Chichimec desert.)
SOCONUSCANS:	Soconusco, Huixtlan, Mazatlan, Ayatlan
HOT COUNTRY:	Veracruz, Cotaxtla, Mixtlan

\* 2 A's in these spaces.

2.6 With following noted exceptions, all supply centers are designated by the first 3 letters of their names. Non-supply centers are designated by simply using a number in a sector instead of a name. Exceptions: Tototepec (Tto), Acaxochitlan (Acx), Tlapacoya (Tlp), Toltoltepec (Ttl), Oaxtepec (Oxt), Tlaxiaco (Tlx), Xalapa (Xlp), Quetzaltepec (Qtz).

3.1 At the time period of this game, Mexico's population was growing rapidly, especially in the centralized empires with their highly efficient social organization. The only natural check on the growth of the human population was war and sacrifice. To symbolize that we are instituting the following unique supply rules.

3.2 Any city which is a member of some player empire will produce another army for the empire at the end of every fourth turn of peace. That is, a city which has not been attacked for 4 consecutive turns will be able to supply and provision another army, which will then be placed on the board in that city. This is not a quantitative measure which will go on growing for cities indefinitely, but a reflection of a full year of prosperity. Such bonuses must be taken immediately (indeed, the G.M. will automatically place the new armies that are due on the board at the end of each turn.) or they will be lost.

3.2.1 Any city which is a member of some player empire will begin its count of turns again from zero if it is attacked. Even if the attack is unsuccessful, it will have served the purpose of preventing a new army from being formed. Thus if a city had been at peace for 3 turns and was attacked at the beginning of the fourth, it would lose all it had gained, and would have to begin to count again with 1.

3.2.2 A Cut Support order is not the same as an Attack, and will not prevent a city from building and supplying another army. A city could have Cut Support orders directed against it four times, and have its support cut all 4 times, and still produce a new army at the end of the fourth turn.

3.3 New armies are placed on the board after all combat is resolved, in the city which produced it. Beginning with the next season turn, the new army may be maneuvered around the board by the player just as any other army would be.

3.4 If the home supply centers of a player are all conquered (i.e. say the Aztecs conquer Chalco and Coyoacan while the Tlaxcalans take Amaxacameca), that player is eliminated from the game. Any units he may have left on the board become neutral units. Those in a supply center sector set up new independent kingdoms with perpetual orders to stand. Such new kingdoms may have a multiple army unit in them, which will make them that much harder for other players to overcome. Units not in a supply sector disband and are removed from the board and the game.

3.5 Any army which is defeated in an Attack, and has no friendly or vacant sector to retreat to is captured (not merely slain) and will be held by the captor for sacrifice.

3.5.1 If the defeated army has been Holding, it requires odds of 3 to 1 to capture it. Holding armies need not be surrounded, as they will not retreat, but any odds less than 3 to 1 result in mutual slaughter, not capture.

3.5.2 Captured armies must be sacrificed within 4 game turns or 1 game year from the time of their capture. Otherwise, the captor just loses the army and gets no reward for his effort.

3.5.3 Sacrificing a whole army at one time in a tremendous bloodbath pleases the gods greatly. They favor the sacrificer with 1 magical support for each army sacrificed, on the following game turn. (Example: In winter 1487 the Aztecs sacrifice 3 captured armies. In Spring 1487 the Aztecs will get 3 magical supports representing Divine Intervention (Written God Supports). Such supports may be used either offensively or defensively. The Aztecs could not hoard their supports for use in Summer of 1487. Unused delfic supports are simply lost.

3.5.4 When sacrificing an enemy unit, the city doing the butchery must be declared. Such an order looks like this: Tit sac 1. Sacrifices my take place in any city on the board. If a city is captured on a turn when it orders a sacrifice, the captive army becomes the property of the new captor. If the captor is not the army's original owner, the captives are still only good for sacrifice.

4.1 Any sector on the board may contain up to 3 army units at any 1 time. All such armies must belong to the same player (at the end of the turn) Even if players A & B are allied, they may not leave armies from both forces in the same sector at the end of a turn, though one player might move his armies through sectors belonging to the other with permission. Movement into or through another player's sector without permission will always fail, even if the moving units outnumber the stationary forces.

4.1.1 A player may "give" armies to another player by simply stating that the army changes its allegiance or was given to X. Armies given away belong permanently to their new owner, and cannot be recalled to the original owner, though they could be "given" back. Players whose home supply centers have all been taken cannot make or receive gifts. Any gifts made by such a dying player during his last season in the game (i.e. while his last home supply center is falling) do not count.

4.2 Cities, even empty cities, belong to the player who has most recently conquered them at all times, and may not be moved through or into without permission. Non-city sectors have no permanent owners and may be moved through whenever they are vacant.

5.1 Movement is simultaneous in this game. All players write down their moves. The game master collects the orders, indicates moves, resolves conflict, and then puts new units if any on the board. Written moves may be abbreviated in any manner clear to the players and the game master.

5.2 The possible orders for any army on the board are Attack, Cut Support, Support, Hold, Stand, or Move. Only one order may be given to an army per turn, except that it is possible to order multiple supports with 1 army in order of priority on a contingency basis. See Rule 5.5. The possible orders for Cities are Build and Sacrifice. Build orders will be taken care of automatically by the G.M. Armies may not be ordered disbanded and rebuilt elsewhere. Disbanded armies are gone forever. Only neutral units will (disband) and they do so only when forced from their home supply center.

5.3 **ATTACKS.** Attacks are premeditated assaults on enemy-held territory. In any given sector, one player may attack with only 1 force, though that force may be a single, double, or triple army. Double armies have a weight of 2, and triple armies have a weight of 3 in an attack. To take any hostile city, it is necessary to Attack it. You can never just move into it, or retreat into it, even if it has no armies defending it. An Attack will always set a city back to 0 in its count for new army building, even when the attack fails.

5.4 **CUT SUPPORTS.** Cut Support is a special kind of attack, designed not to conquer anyone, but to harass an enemy unit so effectively that it cannot aid another unit elsewhere on the board. A single unit may thus Cut Support for a triple army which has 3 supports at once. Units ordered to Cut Support shall be treated as if they were Standing (See rule 5.7) if they also come under Attack. Cut Support orders against a unit doing anything but Supporting will fail and be simply Stand orders. (Thus a unit will not annihilate itself by trying to Cut Support on a hostile unit that is Holding. It would just Stand and watch. Also a Cut Support order against a unit that is also ordered to Cut Support is meaningless, and nothing happens.) A Cut Support will fail to cut support when the unit is attacked and dislodged by other forces.

5.5 **SUPPORT.** Support is defined as intelligently using an army to aid another army in accomplishing a specific task. It can be used offensively, defensively, or to support travel. Thus, Support is the only order that may be spelled out for different contingencies. Only 1 contingency may be supported during a turn, but several may be planned for use in order of priority. (Thus, if you had army A with 3 friendly units around it, you could order it to support armies B, C, D. If B wasn't attacked, but armies C and D were, A would support C because that was the priority for Support assigned. If you had wanted a different order, you might order A to support D, C, B in that order.) Armies may not be ordered to Support another army that is also Supporting. You may also Support an army that is moving rapidly into more than 1 sector as long as not more than 1 of the sectors it tries to move into is contested. See Rule 5.8.

5.5.1 If an army ordered to Support is attacked and dislodged, its Support is cut. The only other way to cut support is to specifically order a Cut Supporter. A 1 to 1 Attack on a Supporting army will neither dislodge it nor cut support.

5.6 **HOLD.** Holds are fanatical defense to the death with no retreat. Even if a retreat sector is available, a Holding army facing defeat will not use it. An unsupported Attack against a Holding army with odds of 1 to 1 results in the attacker being annihilated. Odds greater than 1 to 1 will always carry the day for

the Attacker, but unless odds are 3 to 1 or greater in favor of the attacker, there will be a mutual slaughter of 1 Attacking army for each 1 defending (Holding) army.

5.6.1 As the instance of combat involving a unit that is Holding is the most complex this game will see, several examples of different possible situations follow with resolutions:

- (1) Army A, a single unit, Attacks Army B, a single unit which is Holding. There is no support for either side. ARMY A IS ELIMINATED. ARMY B IS UNCHANGED.
- (2) Army A, a double unit, Attacks Army B, a single unit which is Holding, no other Supports. ARMY A TAKES THE SECTOR AND BECOMES A SINGLE UNIT. ARMY B IS WIPED OUT.
- (3) Army A, a single Supported by Army B, a single unit, Attacks Army C, a single unit which is Holding. ARMY A AND C ARE WIPED OUT. ARMY B TAKES ARMY A'S PLACE AND OCCUPIES THE CONQUERED SECTOR.
- (4) Same situation except that Army B suffers a Cut Support or is dislodged from elsewhere. ARMY A IS ELIMINATED WHILE B AND C ARE UNCHANGED.
- (5) Army A, a single unit, supported by another single unit, B, Attacks Army C, a single unit which is Holding, supported by Army D, a single or multiple unit. ARMY A IS ELIMINATED WHILE B, C, AND D ARE UNHURT.

The general principle is this: when attacking a Holding army and the attack fails, the first to suffer is the attacking army. If the attack succeeds, the first to die are the attackers and the Holders, but Supporting units will move to fill the gaps left by slain attackers if necessary to take the sector.

5.6.2 You may not order part of a multiple unit force to Hold while other units in that sector have other orders such as Attack, Cut Support, etc.

5.7 STAND. Stand is the normal defensive order, representing an ordinary garrison or army going about its ordinary duties. An army which comes under attack will be considered as Standing unless it is also attacking or has been ordered to Hold. An army that is Standing will retreat when defeated if it can. If it cannot retreat, it is captured.

5.7.1 You may not retreat into a sector held by an ally unless you give your ally that retreating army. If you do that, it becomes his unit henceforth, and he is under no obligation to return it to you.

5.7.2 For the play by mail version of this game, retreats should be anticipated if possible and specified. If a player does not specify his retreat, the game master will retreat the unit, if possible, by house rules, namely that the unit will retreat in as nearly opposite the direction from which the attack came, as is possible.

5.8 MOVES. When an army is simply interested in transporting itself rapidly from 1 sector to another without conflict, that is the time to Move. Any army may move up to 3 sectors per turn as long as it passes through friendly or unoccupied country. Orders are written thusly: A Ten M Tex, Zem, 7, which could be a 3 sector Move through friendly and unoccupied territory for the Aztecs. Neutral, unconquered cities are never considered fix friendly.

5.8.1 If 2 unsupported hostile units try to move through the same sector, their scouts will spot each other, and both units will stop before entering the contested sector. If 1 force is supported to a sector, and the second force tries to move through that sector without support, the supported unit gains the sector. Etc.

5.9 DESIGNATION OF ARMIES: Since there may be up to 3 units in any given sector it is necessary to understand exactly what may be done with them. An army may be either single, double, or triple. To get a double or triple army it is necessary to have at least that many units in 1 sector at the beginning of a turn. Then one need merely say Triple army in Tit does whatever you want it to do. Or, you might have 3 individual armies in 1 sector, and give them 3 separate commands (but never a Hold command in this situation), such as 1A Attacks, 1A Supports and 1A Moves (but not to the attacked sector). Multiple armies may also be split up at the beginning of any turn.

#### SPECIAL RULES

6.1 The Aztec, Chalcan, and Tlaxcalan players are forbidden to cross each other's borders during the game year of 1450. None of them may directly attack the others' homeland, though they may struggle as much as they wish in cities outside their empires.

6.2 The Aztecs and Tlaxcalans may not attack each other's homeland during the game year of 1451. Either one may attack Chalco, or support Chalco against the other. (Historically, it took the Aztecs 13 years of constant war to conquer Chalco and its confederated cities, but they were the first to fall to the rising power of the Mexica. Thus Chalco is the toughest country to play, for it actually had the roughest time in Mexican history.)

#### CHICHIMEC RULES

7.0 At the end of each turn, either the Chichimec player (in the face to face game) or the game master (if played by mail) will roll 1 die. If a one comes up, one Chichimec army appears in the Chichimec Desert (which has no sectors). If a six comes up, two Chichimec armies appear. Any other number is no result.

7.1 Chichimecs may Attack, Support, Cut Support, Stand, or Move. They cannot retreat; they cannot retreat. A retreating Chichimec is a dead Chichimec. Defeated Chichimec hordes with a possible retreat sector disband and die. If there is no possible retreat move, they are captured.

7.2 The Chichimec player wins if at any time he has more armies on the board than all the rest of the players combined. Do not count independent cities as players.

7.3 Cities are not worth anything except their loot value to the Chichimec barbarians. There is no reason for them to guard and defend cities like the other players would.

7.3.1 However, for each city captured by Chichimecs, word goes back into the desert and attracts another double horde (2 armies) of plunder-hungry barbarians. (Each time a city falls to Chichimecs, the G.M. will place 2 more Chichimec armies in the desert at the end of that turn.)

7.4 Cities destroyed and left vacant by Chichimecs are still potentially productive, and belong to the first other player to move an army in and order it to either Stand or Hold there for the next season (turn). That is all the time necessary to attract a population and re-establish a city.

7.5 Players may enter and leave Chichimec country anywhere along the border on one turn, as long as the number of units making such a move outnumbers the number of Chichimecs in the desert.

7.5.1 Player armies attempting to move through the Chichimec Desert who do not outnumber the Chichimec hordes therein on any given turn are killed and eaten and removed from the board.

7.5.2 If armies of superior numbers move into the Chichimec Desert while Chichimecs are there, the Chichimec units will retreat off the board and out of the game for fear.

7.5.3 Chichimecs busy plundering in the civilized lands will not be affected by anything that takes place in the Chichimec Desert.

7.6 Chichimecs may ally with any player who will trust them.

7.7 Any number of armies may mass in the Chichimec Desert.

end

The above rules are designed to simulate as nearly as possible the power struggles in the Aztec age. If you would like to try this game, contact Ken St. Andre here at Stormbringer Publications, 2232 E. Pinchot #8, Phoenix, Ariz. 85016

(Chicimecs)



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