

XOCHITLCOZAMALOTL

Flower Rainbow, An Aztec Soap Opera by Jason Morningstar

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Xochitlcozamalotl uses material from the Wikipedia category Aztec Mythology, which can be found here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Aztec_mythology

RONNIES NOTE

This game was designed for entry in the October 2005 Ronnies contest. To that end, Xochitlcozamalotl uses "cosmos" and "sphere" and does not include "fight" or "pain". Sphere refers to the overlapping influence and authority of the four player character gods - each represents an elemental sphere. Cosmos refers to *cosmos bipinnatus*, Mexican aster, a daisy-like flower that grows in absurd abundance in the Valley of Mexico.

INTRODUCTION

Centzontotochtin, the Four Hundred Rabbits, are having a party, and many of the gods will attend and become drunk on pulque. It is a time for celebration and subterfuge in equal parts. The four principal gods - fiery Smoking Shield, kind Feathered Snake, celestial Hummingbird of the South, and terrible Tlaloc, will seek new wives and new alliances. It is the time of *temicxoch*, the Flowery Dream, when gods and men mingle and the spheres of influence are nudged, shaken, and re-aligned. One will emerge supreme by assembling the largest number of followers in his sphere.

FLOWERS

You will need flowers to play Xochitlcozamalotl. The very best choice for repeated play are loose synthetic petals, which can be purchased at a craft store. Oriental Trading Company (<http://www.orientaltrading.com>) offers 250 for three dollars; the item number is IN-34/927. If you can't or won't buy flowers, I suppose you could use coins or poker chips. But flowers are prettier.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

Choose a pleasant place to play - ideally out of doors or sprawled on comfortable furniture, with a bowl of loose flowers forming a common pile. There should be a central table or tray upon which you can drop flowers as you announce your bids. Never pick these up - let the area become covered in flowers. Have a few beers or some hot chocolate.

You need four players. Each of these four chooses one of the principal gods to portray, and divides sixteen flowers between Majesty and Beauty. Make a pile for each - Majesty on the left and Beauty on the right. Decide who you want to be your bride and write your choice down.

MAJESTY AND BEAUTY

Majesty and Beauty are paired concepts that drive interaction. Every character in the game has a score in each, and these numbers represent flowers that you gain when they enter the sphere of your player character god. Thus, if you were to win Flower Feather (Majesty 2, Beauty 6), you would immediately add two flowers to your Majesty pile and six to your Beauty pile.

Majesty includes raw power, the mysteries of conception, childbirth, and renewal, feats of arms, skill, religious zeal, nobility in lineage and purpose, the strength of heritage and tradition, great deeds of every sort, and the triumph of righteousness. It also includes the dreadful and awesome spectacle of death in all its forms, including the epic sacrifices made by the people to appease you.

Beauty includes the arts, including painting, feather-working, and music, as well as the sensual arts of love-making and dance. It encompasses the broad streets of the Imperial capitol, gleaming white in ordered perfection, and the savage beauty of temple steps stained deep red with the sacred blood of joyful victims. Beauty can be as simple as a cloud of butterflies or as magnificent as the lifeless body of a royal child in a still pond, drowned to keep you sated.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Each of the four players, in turn, gets to be the middle-man (*tlahcoyan*). The middle-man sets the scene for some role-playing.

There is bidding then between the players to determine who will compete for the middle man's non-player character, with the fourth player assuming the role of watcher. The scene is enacted for the pleasure of the watcher, with players narrating the arguments and actions of their god, as well as any noteworthy members of his sphere that may join in the struggle over the non-player character's allegiance. The non-player character is awarded to the sphere of one god or the other. If the winner wants to claim his bride, this is the time.

Finally, the watcher awards a flower to one of his three peers. The role of middle-man then passes to the next player in sequence, rotating clockwise.

The goal is to bring as many gods, people, and peoples into your sphere as possible. Supplementary goals include securing the proper bride and, for Tlaloc and Hummingbird of the South, getting aspects of your rivals into your sphere.

CHOOSING A BRIDE

Each player character must choose a bride. Do this secretly, before the game begins, and write down your choice. Bringing your chosen bride into your sphere is a victory condition - if other players realize which goddess you are angling for, they will certainly try to prevent you from having her.

Any unrelated female that you win for your sphere can become your bride - you must announce your decision once you have won her and it takes effect instantly. You do not need to marry the goddess you initially chose, if it makes tactical sense to choose someone else in play - but you won't get rewarded for it. You may only marry once during the game.

THE MIDDLE MAN

The middle-man arranges a conflict between two other players. He chooses which non-player character the conflict will be about (which god, goddess, person, or region), and he secretly chooses whether the conflict will be about Majesty or Beauty.

Then other players may bid to enter into the conflict.

Once the participants are established, the middle-man then sets the scene, taking the role of the non-player character in dispute, and the three of them role-play a scene in which both participants attempt to persuade the non-player character to join their sphere of influence. This interaction should present a clear indication of whether the conflict is about Majesty or Beauty, but a clever middle-man can muddle the issue in good conscience.

BIDDING

BIDDING TO ENTER A CONFLICT

The key game mechanic in Xochitlcozamalotl is bidding. There are two types of bidding - bidding to enter a conflict and bidding to win a conflict.

The three players may bid for the privilege of competing to bring the current non-player character into their sphere of influence.

Each potential competitor conceals flowers from either or both of their piles in their hands. On a signal from the middle man, everyone displays their flowers and lets them fall. The player with the lowest bid sits out the conflict as the watcher. If there are ties, the middle man decides who competes.

If no one wishes to bid for the chosen non-player character, the middle man automatically wins them for his own sphere. Play then passes to his left, just as if there had been a conflict.

BIDDING TO WIN A CONFLICT

A player can bid flowers from his Majesty and/or Beauty piles against other players in an attempt to secure an alliance with the non-player character who has been chosen by the middle man to be at stake.

In addition to the four principal gods that serve as player characters, there are six major gods and sixteen minor gods, nobles, and peoples. Most of these have connections to others - lovers, patrons, ex-wives, siblings, and so forth. In any conflict in which you - or anyone in your sphere - has a connection, you gain an extra flower with which to bid from the common pile. Multiple connections means multiple bonus flowers. If you have connections, narrate them into the scene and pick up the appropriate number of flowers from the common pile. They can be used to augment either Majesty or Beauty bids.

Bidding is secret. Choose how many flowers you will bid from your Majesty and Beauty piles and place them in your closed right and left fists. Hold these fists over the central table along with your rival. When you are ready, the middle-man announces the nature of the conflict - Majesty or Beauty - and you each open the appropriate hand, letting the flowers fall. The player with the highest bid wins the non-player character.

Finally, let the "off" hand bid fall as well - these flowers are lost and useless.

ALLIES

When you win a conflict and an ally enters your sphere, you gain flowers based on their attitude and responsibilities. Each will have a score in Majesty and Beauty - you immediately add these flowers to the appropriate pile before you.

Allies have connections of their own - if you narrate them into a conflict, they can use their connections to add flowers to your bid.

Two of the gods - Smoking Mirror and Feathered Snake - have aspects. These are lesser gods that are semi-independent facets of their personalities, but they are capricious and can be drawn into the spheres of their rivals. Possessing an aspect is worth a game-end bonus for the players of Tlaloc and Hummingbird of the South, who suffer a slight disadvantage in play through lack of connections.

THE WATCHER

The fourth player is the watcher (*niquiniitztotz*, literally "I will be watching them"). When the matter has been resolved and the non-player character has entered the sphere of one of the contestants, the watcher must give a flower from his piles as a gift to one of the three participants. This should ideally be the one who was most entertaining, but it is up to the watcher to decide what the criteria truly are.

Once the watcher has awarded his flower, the role of middle man passes to the left, and the cycle begins again.

ENDGAME

Temicxoch, the Flowery Dream, ends when the last non-player character has been selected - and thus, so ends the game. At this point, count up the gods, nobles, and peoples within your sphere. Add these together for your score. Add three if you managed to secure your bride as well. The players of Tlaloc and Hummingbird of the South gain an extra point for each aspect of Smoking Mirror and Feathered Serpent in their sphere at game end.

Hopefully, your play area is awash in beautiful flowers.

The player with the highest score wins Xochitlcozamalotl! His god is the chief god, until the Four Hundred Rabbits throw another party.

THE FOUR PRINCIPAL GODS AND PLAYER CHARACTERS

SMOKING MIRROR, GOD OF FIRE

Player character; divide sixteen points between Beauty and Majesty

Smoking Mirror (Tezcatlipoca) is the god of the night, the north, fire and temptation. He owns a mirror that gives off smoke, killing his enemies. He is the antithesis and rival of Feathered Snake. He is a god of beauty and war. In one of the people's accounts of the creation of the world, Feathered Snake and Smoking Mirror joined forces to create the world. There was only the sea, and the monster of earth Cipactli. To attract her, Tezcatlipoca used his foot as bait, and Cipactli ate it. The two gods then captured her, and distorted her to make the land from her body. After that, they created the people, and people must offer sacrifices to ease Cipactli's sufferings. Because of this, Smoking Mirror has a missing foot, and the bone of his leg exposed.

- Seven Serpent was once my wife
- Cloud Serpent is my aspect
- I Lust after Flower Feather
- I am Patron of the people of Malinalco
- Water Bird is my disciple

FEATHERED SNAKE, GOD OF EARTH

Player character; divide sixteen points between Beauty and Majesty

Feathered Snake (Quetzalcoatl) is a powerful god of civilization, in opposition to the cruelty of Smoking Mirror. He is the god of the morning star. He is known as the inventor of books and the calendar, the giver of corn to mankind, and sometimes as a symbol of death and resurrection. One story claims Feathered Snake was seduced by Smoking Mirror into becoming drunk and sleeping with a celibate priestess, and then burned himself to death out of remorse. His heart became the morning star. His aspects are the Lord of the Star of Dawn and Lord Wind.

- Flower Feather is my mother
- Cloud Serpent is my father
- Lord of the Star of Dawn is my aspect
- Lord Wind is my aspect
- I am patron of the people of Tenochtitlan
- Reed Hare is my disciple

HUMMINGBIRD OF THE SOUTH, GOD OF AIR

Player character; divide sixteen points between Beauty and Majesty

Hummingbird of the South (Huitzilopochtli) is a Powerful god of war and sun god, and a much-loved god among the common people. He is also a god of death, young men, and storms. His mother is Skirt of Serpents, his father Cloud Serpent. All things celestial fall under his sway.

- Skirt of Serpents is my mother
- Cloud Serpent is my father
- I lust after Mayahuel
- I am patron of the people of Xochimilco
- Knife Cape is my disciple

TLALOC, GOD OF WATER

Player character; divide sixteen points between Beauty and Majesty

Tlaloc is the god of rain and fertility. He is greatly feared among the people, who drown children to appease him. Tlaloc is responsible for both flood and drought. Tlaloc was first married to Flower Feather. He later married the goddess Jade Skirt but they parted ways as well. Tlaloc's underworld includes those killed by lightning, drowning and disease.

- Jade Skirt was once my wife
- Flower Feather was once my wife
- Five Flowers is my dear friend
- I am patron of the people of Tlaxcala
- Obsidian Snake is my disciple

MAJOR GODS AND GODDESSES

CLOUD SERPENT, Aspect of Smoking Mirror

Majesty 8, Beauty 0

Cloud Serpent (Mixcoatl) is a god of the hunt, the north star and war. He invented fire using the heavens, revolving around their axes, as a drill. By Flower Feather, he is the father of Feathered Snake.

- I am an aspect of Smoking Mirror
- Flower Feather is my lover
- Skirt of Serpents is my former lover
- Feathered Snake is my son
- Hummingbird of the South is my son

FLOWER FEATHER, Goddess of art and beauty

Majesty 0, Beauty 8

In Aztec mythology, Flower Feather (Xochiquetzal) is a goddess of flowers, fertility, games, dancing and agriculture, as well as craftsmen, prostitutes and pregnant women. She is a moon goddess as well. She is followed by a retinue consisting of birds and butterflies. Worshippers wear animal and flower masks at a festival, held in her honor every eight years. Her twin is Five Flowers, and her husband is Centeotl. By Cloud Serpent, she is the mother of Feathered Snake.

- Five Flowers is my twin brother
- Centeotl is my husband
- Tlaloc was once my husband
- Cloud Serpent is my lover
- Feathered Snake is my son

FIVE FLOWERS, God of agriculture and the harvest

Majesty 6, Beauty 2

Five Flowers (Macuilxochitl) is the god of love, games, beauty, dance, flowers, corn, and song. His wife is Mayahuel and his twin sister is Flower Feather. As one of the gods responsible for fertility and agricultural produce, he is associated with Tlaloc, god of rains, and Centeotl, god of corn. Five Flowers is worshipped through the use of plants that admit devotees into temicxoch, the Flowery Dream, an ecstatic state of hallucination.

- Flower Feather is my twin sister
- Mayahuel is my wife
- Tlaloc is my dear friend

MAYAHUEL, Goddess of alcohol

Majesty 2, Beauty 6

Mayahuel is a human girl whom Lord Wind fell in love with. He gave humanity the gift of love so that she could return his favor. She later married Five Flowers and with Patecatl, she was the mother of the Four Hundred Rabbits. Mayahuel is now the goddess of alcohol.

- Five Flowers is my husband
- Patecatl is my lover
- Lord Wind was once my lover
- The Four Hundred Rabbits are my children

THE FLAYED ONE, God of renewal and the seasons

Majesty 4, Beauty 4

The Flayed One (Xipe Totec) is a life-death-rebirth deity, god of agriculture, the west, disease, spring, goldsmiths and the seasons. He flayed himself to give food to humanity, symbolic of the maize seed losing the outer layer of the seed before germination. Without his skin, he is golden and beautiful. Annually, people are selected as sacrifices to the Flayed One. These people are carefully flayed to produce a nearly whole skin which is then worn by the priests during the fertility rituals that followed the sacrifice.

- The Flayed One has no connections.

SKIRT OF SERPENTS, Goddess of the moon, stars, and maternity

Majesty 4, Beauty 4

Skirt of Serpents (Coatlicue) gave birth to the moon, southern stars and the Hummingbird of the South. She is also known as Grandmother, the patron of women who die in childbirth. A fearsome maternal goddess, Skirt of Serpents indeed wears a skirt of writhing snakes and a necklace made of human hearts, hands and skulls. Her feet and hands are adorned with claws (for digging graves) and her breasts hang flaccid from nursing.

- Hummingbird of the South is my son
- Cloud Serpent was once my lover

MINOR GODS AND GODDESSES

LORD OF THE STAR OF DAWN, Aspect of Feathered Snake

Majesty 0, Beauty 4

The Lord of the Star of the Dawn (Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli) is the majestic personification of the planet Venus.

- I am an aspect of Feathered Snake

LORD WIND, Aspect of Feathered Snake

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Lord Wind (Ehecatl) is the god of wind, an aspect of Feathered Snake. His breath moves the sun and pushes away rain. He fell in love with Mayahuel, and gave mankind the ability to love so that she could return his passion.

- I am an aspect of Feathered Snake
- Mayahuel was once my lover

PATECATL, God of healing

Majesty 0, Beauty 4

Patecatl is a god of healing and fertility, and the discoverer of peyote. With Mayahuel, he is the father of the Four Hundred Rabbits.

- Mayahuel is my lover
- The Four Hundred Rabbits are my children

THE FOUR HUNDRED RABBITS, Gods of drunkenness

Majesty 4, Beauty 0

The Four Hundred Rabbits (Centzontotchtin) are a group of deities who meet for frequent parties; they are divine rabbits, and the gods of drunkenness. Some of their named members include Texcatzonatl, Colhuatzincatl and Ometochtli.

- Patecatl is our father
- Mayahuel is our mother

CENTEOTL, God of Corn

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Centeotl is a god of corn, brother of Seven Serpent, and the husband of Flower Feather.

- Flower Feather is my wife
- Seven Serpent is my sister

JADE SKIRT, Goddess of oceans and streams

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Jade Skirt (Chalchiuhtlicue) is the goddess of oceans, streams, and any other running water. She is the wife of Old God.

- I was once married to Tlaloc
- Old God is my husband

OLD GOD, God of hope

Majesty 4, Beauty 0

Old God (Xiuhtecuhtli) is the personification of life after death, warmth in cold, light in darkness and food during famine. Every 52 years, the gods are able to end their covenant with the people. Feasts are held in honor of Old God to keep his favors, and human sacrifices are burned after removing their heart.

- Jade Skirt is my wife

SEVEN SERPENT, Goddess of fertility

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Seven Serpent (Chicomecoatl) is a goddess of food and produce, especially corn and, by extension, a goddess of fertility. Every September, she receives the sacrifice of young girl, decapitated. The sacrifice's blood is poured on a statue of Seven Serpent and her skin is worn by a priest. She is the sister of Centeotl and wife of Smoking Mirror.

- Smoking Mirror was once my husband
- Centeotl is my brother

THE NOBLES

By consuming psilocybin, morning glory, and cacahuaxochitl, these stalwarts among the people have entered *temicxoch*, the Flowery Dream, where they can freely interact with the gods.

OBSIDIAN SNAKE, Ruler of all the people

Majesty 4, Beauty 0

Obsidian snake (Itzcoatl) is the emperor of all of civilization.

- Tlaloc is my patron

KNIFE CAPE, Shorn One and Hero

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Knife Cape (Itzquemitl) is a valiant warrior-priest in the service of the empire. He has taken 200 prisoners in battle with his left hand.

- Hummingbird of the South is my patron

WATER BIRD, Princess and sorceress

Majesty 0, Beauty 4

Water-Bird (atototl) is a beautiful but evil princess.

- Smoking Mirror is my patron

REED HARE, High Priest of the people

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Presiding over the great temple complex at Tenochtitlan, Reed Hare (Acacitli) personally attends to the crucial yearly sacrifice to Feathered Snake.

- Feathered Snake is my patron

THE PEOPLES OF ANAHUAC, THE WORLD

These peoples, along with their armies, priestly retinues, and rulers, are minor pawns in the games of the gods.

TENOCHTITLAN, Capitol of the empire

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

A floating paradise, no other city in the world compares to Tenochtitlan.

- Feathered Snake is our patron

XOCHIMILCO, Region of the empire

Majesty 0, Beauty 4

Xochimilco's floating gardens are a splendid wonder.

- Hummingbird of the South is our patron

TLAXCALA, Enemies of the empire

Majesty 4, Beauty 0

The fierce Tlaxcalans provide a steady stream of courageous sacrifices to the empire.

- Tlaloc is our patron

MALINALCO, Region of the empire

Majesty 2, Beauty 2

Malinalco is a bustling city of merchants and warriors.

- Smoking Mirror is our patron