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This document is based in part on the Aztlán chapter of *Shadows of Latin America* by Jason Levine.

AZTLÁN

>>>> BEGIN FACTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC BOX

Aztlán: As-tlaan

Population: 135,326,000

Primary Languages: Aztlaner Spanish, English, Nahuatl

States: Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, North Venezuela, Panama, Yucatán

Government Type: Direct Democracy in Corporate Partnership

Bordering Countries: Amazonia, Carib League, Confederated American States, Panama Canal Pan-Corporate Zone, Pueblo Corporate Council

Geography: At the northernmost border, the Pacific Mountain System splits into the Sierra Madre Oriental and Sierra Madre Occidental mountain ranges, which frames the Mexican altiplano until the Sierra Madres merge into the Sierra Nevada mountain range; the Pacific Mountain System continues down through the states of Aztlán until they join the Andes; these are the highlands of the country. The lowlands consist of the Yucatán peninsula and other coastal areas away from the mountains, and range from semi-arid brush forests to tropical rainforest.

Notable Features: Nicaraguan Canal, Pacific Mountain System, Mexican Plateau

>>>> END FACTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS BOX

A BRIEF HISTORY

The politically unstable and nigh-bankrupt Mexican government disintegrated in 2010 when the first wave of VITAS hit Mexico City (modern day Tenochtitlán). A coalition of Mexican corporations, led by giants like ORO (modern day Aztechnology) and Pemex formed a caretaker government. The Awakening was followed by a period of introspection on the part of Mexican scholars, artists, and nationalists—a movement that reexamined the ancient beliefs of the native peoples of the region, which had been abandoned and in many cases actively suppressed by priests and conquistadors. The Azatlán party formed around the strong imagery of embracing Mexico's mythic past.

In 2015, the caretaker government officially stepped aside and direct elections were held using a Matrix-based electoral system provided by ORO. Azatlán took all major posts in government, and Francisco Pavón y Gutierrez del Córdoba was elected president. His first official act was to rename the country Aztlán. In 2017, Aztlán was invited to and joined the Sovereign Tribal Council and provided a safe haven and limited logistical support to the emerging Native American Nations.

The new Aztlaner government, in partnership with Aztechnology, strongly promoted a Neuvoaztecán religion, the Path of the Sun, and worked to suppress other religions, particularly Catholicism. The suppression of non-state religions coincided with a rise in militant nationalism and a desire to reclaim Mexico's traditional territory.

In 2034, citing the ineffectiveness of the STC, Aztlán withdrew. That same year, the CAS seceded from the UCAS, presenting an opportunity—in 2035 Aztlán declared war, quickly pressing into the state of Texas. The assault was halted at Austin, but in 2036 another Aztlán army invaded the California Free State and seized all territory up to San Diego.

In part to sponsor its ongoing conflicts, in 2044 the Aztlaner government nationalized all foreign corporate assets in their nation, giving Aztlán quadrillions of pesos. From 2045 to 2048, a combination of brief military campaigns and diplomacy saw the rest of Mesoamerica join Aztlán as member states. 2048 also marks the Veracruz Settlement between the Aztlaner Government and the Corporate Court, which ended reciprocations for its 2044 nationalization of corporate assets. In 2049, the CAS, California Free State, and Aztlán reached détente, and signed ceasefire agreements.

All of this merely set the stage for Aztlán's two longest and most bitter conflicts. In 2050, Aztlán and Amazonia both moved into Colombia and Venezuela, finally reaching a deadlock at the free city of Caracas; a year later marked the beginning of the Yucatán conflict, a revolt by the native Mayan descendants of the region. These two conflicts—the active one in the Yucatán and the cold conflict on the Amazonian border—would consume Aztlán for the next decade. The equilibrium was shattered in 2062 when the great dragon Ghostwalker, with the support of the CAS, forced Aztlán to withdraw from Denver. This prompted the opening of a dialogue with the Yucatán rebels, and the conflict ended in 2064 with an accord recognizing the peninsula as an autonomous state, led by the feathered serpent Pobre.

MAJOR CITIES

Aztlaner cities owe a great deal to their Spanish colonial roots, with neighborhoods organized around a central square or plaza, and generally becoming progressively more modern the further they get from the old town. In some cities, the colonial structure has been all but buried by successive North American-style urbanization, while in others features of the original pre-Colonial indigenous settlements have been retained, emphasized, or artificially instated to conform to the Neuvoaztec cultural fad. Most prominent of this revival are the presence of *teocalli*, step-pyramid temples to the Aztec gods, and the promotion of the ancient Aztec language Nahuatl, particularly in religious and magical studies.

The pulse of life in Aztlaner cities is different. Many rise with the sun for the dawn-greeting ritual before going to work, and during the heat of the day many government and corporate offices allow time off for a nap, or *siesta*. Dinners are often much later in the evening than in other cities; in much of Aztlan it is common for workers—who have been up since before dawn—to go directly to bed when they get home, wake again near midnight for a meal and to meet with their families, and then catch another few hours of rest before they have to get up again.

Tenochtitlán (Mexico City) is the political, economic, and religious capital of Aztlan, and the global headquarters of Aztechnology. As the principal *altepetl* (city-states) in classic Aztec times, Tenochtitlán has major symbolic significance to the Aztlaner people and is also the location of the *Templo Mayor* (Great Temple) of Quetzacoatl and the slightly smaller Temple of Tezcatlipoca; all told there are sixty thousand priests of the Path of the Sun catering to Tenochtitlán's 18.5 million residents. Severe air pollution in Tenochtitlán has given it the nickname of *El Humo* (The Smoke), and no one in the city except the very poorest goes without a respirator.

The formal city is organized around the *Zócalo*, a massive plaza flanked by the Great Temple of Quetzacoatl, the National Palace, the Aztechnology Pyramid, and the Temple of Tezcatlipoca. Beyond this, Tenochtitlán sprawls in all directions, with the outermost districts little more than shanty towns. Tenochtitlán is a bastion of Neuvoaztec architecture and culture, and also the primary bastion for Catholic resistance groups, hidden among the Christian-derived sects among the metroplex's poor.

Guadalajara is the second most important city in Aztlan in terms of economics and education; many Aztlan corporations and foreign subsidiaries (whose majority owners must be Aztlan nationals) have their headquarters in the city, mostly in the Puerto de Hierro district. Neuvoaztec cultural themes are subtle but heavily prevalent, more in the city's augmented reality scheme than its architecture, but also in the city's many traditional dishes and fashions. Guadalajara is also known for Panteón de Belén, a famous cemetery famous for its ghosts, several of which have appeared since the Awakening. The municipality of Tequila was incorporated as part of Guadalajara sprawl in 2038, making Guadalajara the center of mescal production in Aztlan as well.

Monterrey is a major industrial town, surrounded by mountains and centered on the famous Macroplaza. Along with its major output of commercial products, from clothing to high-end commlinks, Monterrey has become famous as a center for Neuvoaztec media (in the form of Matrix and trideo stations), and for the education of priests and initiates of the Path of the Sun other than Quetzacoatl and Tezcatlipoca (which is done in Tenochtitlán), particularly those dedicated to the worship of Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli.

Bogotá is the largest city in the Aztlaner state of Colombia, and the staging ground for Aztlan's military presence outside of Mesoamerica. Consequently, Bogotá is primarily a military town, catering to both Aztlaner and Aztechnology corporate military and intelligence forces. The local community has been steered toward supporting the Aztlaner military presence in terms of miltech (munitions, vehicles and drones, armor), pharmaceuticals (stimulants, antibacterial, and antiviral drugs), and sustenance (dry rations and fortified water). Aztechnology owns all of the coca fields surrounding the city to ensure the products are not misused by local criminal interests.

San Antonio is the largest city in the territory of Tejas, captured during their campaign against the CAS. The metroplex was under martial law from 2035-2048, and then again from 2055-2062, due to recurrent guerilla elements, reportedly supported by the New Jesuits and the Texas Rangers. San Antonio is an important cultural and economic hub in the Tejas territory, home of the Alamo and the River Walk, a commercial, tourism, and shopping district organized around the banks of the San Antonio River, which flows along an artificial course one story below Downtown. The capture of San Antonio was key to the initial Aztlaner conversion due to its extensive military training facilities, which have since been taken over for Aztlaner use.

The **San Diego/Tijuana Metroplex** is Aztlan's major port on the Pacific, and to North America in general. A number of lesser-known Aztechnology subsidiaries and wholly-owned corporations like Pyramid Foods, Stuffer Shack Inc., Genetique, and BANCOMEXT have a substantial presence in the city. Bioware and biosculpting are almost synonymous with the San Diego/Tijuana Metroplex in Aztlan, and even over the border in the Pueblo Corporate Council. While the city's clinics do not have the reputation Chiba does for the quality of their augmentations, they are known for having no legal or ethical stipulations on the nature of such augmentations, and the identities of the parties involved are generally kept private.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Aztlan hosted a number of advanced pre-Colombian civilizations, whose principle legacy is their descendents, who continue to live in the same geographic area, and in a large number of sizable historical temples and city complexes. These areas have received renewed interest since the Awakening, particularly from the backward-

looking powers-that-be in Aztlan, as many are power sites of considerable potency. Aztlan is part of the Ring of Fire manaline network, which passes through the volcanoes of the Sierra Madres but also possesses an unusual and tangled artificial manaline network centered around the Great Temple of Quetzacoatl in Tenochtitlán.

Teotihuacan (Birthplace of the Gods) is an ancient city that predates the Aztecs, a short ways from Tenochtitlán. Teotihuacan's importance in Aztec myth has made it an important cultural sight for the nation of Aztlan, and access to it is restricted to priests and approved archeologists. It is known that Teotihuacan is a place of considerable magical power, but rumors suggest it is aspected to magical traditions that predate the Aztlaner magical traditions, and is currently inaccessible to them. Other major pre-Colombian sites include **Chichen Itza** and **Uxmal**.

The **Nicaragua Canal** is the primary transoceanic passage, constructed in 2068 by Aztechnology and Wuxing (which was consulted on geomantic principles). Able to handle larger post-Panamax ships than the Panama Canal (which is maintained by the Corporate Court) further south; it also cuts 800 nautical miles off the distance from Manhattan to Seattle, substantially lowering the time of such journeys. The canal has proven a significant boon to the economy of Aztlan, especially the state of Nicaragua, and the free-trade zone on either side of the canal is filled with sailors and goods from every nation in the Sixth World.

The Alamo Mission in San Antonio is a former Roman Catholic mission and fortress compound. Remembered in history for the Battle of the Alamo, where beleaguered Texian forces succumbed to a siege by the Mexican Army under Santa Anna in 1835; the defeat remained in the Texian consciousness and prompted the eventual defeat of Santa Anna. As an official shrine, the Alamo Mission is still maintained by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, under the grace of the Aztlaner government, which has expanded the attached museum to include the mission's pre-Battle of the Alamo history, as a Mexican fort and a Roman Catholic school for indoctrinating American Indians.

> You might as well call this "Neuvoaztecan" bit Mayincatec; it's a mishmash of Aztec, Olmec, Toltec, Mayan and every other vaguely-related Mesoamerican civilization. Aztec religion is the primary focus, but there were other distinctive cultures that preceded or were contemporary with them, and some of their descendants retain elements of their native religions and architecture, particularly in Belize and Guatemala. I don't want to say anything good about Aztlan as a state, but at least they preserve something of their cultural heritage. The Mayan Long Count (a cyclical calendar which predicted the end of the fifth world in 2012) is why we call today "the Sixth World."

> Elijah

> On which happy note, I should remind everyone that the primary ethnicity of Aztlan is *mestizo*—mixed race. The blood of Amerinds and conquistadors and African slaves runs together in the bulk of the population. Many Latinos, who did not wish to give up their faith or disliked the bloody bread and circuses of the rising Aztecs, fled into the Native American Nations, where they make up a substantial part of the population.

> Marcos

> It should be reminded that the division between Aztlan and Aztechnology is only slight—the two are engaged in an incestuous relationship: all AZT citizens are Aztlaner citizens by default, Aztlan adopted the AZT corporate scrip as a replacement for its own failing national currency in 2064, and AZT lends its troops and vehicles to Aztlan and privately employs Aztlaner troops. The good news is that an AZT SIN will open plenty of doors in Aztlan, the bad news is that you can face AZT security that's equivalent to professional military units, and it's illegal to convert your AZT pesos to nuyen—you'll have to go through criminal brokers like me.

> Mr. Bonds

> If you do want to get into Aztlan these days, the Nicaraguan Canal is it—right beyond the free trade zone is a tent city of black and grey markets, selling everything under the Aztec sun to a bunch of foreign sailors looking for something exotic. You can get lost in the crowd, lose your tails, and find a smuggler, somebody who'll take you across the Nicaraguan border and get you to a bus station or local airport where you can work your way up north where the action is. Alternatively, you could try making a landing from the Carib League—I've heard tell of an underwater river that goes all the way to a big cenote up in the Yucatán—or try and talk your way past the border into San Diego, but I've never tried to run the Azzie gauntlet in those places myself.

> 2XL

> The official religion of Aztlan is the Path of the Sun, a neuvoaztecan religion based on the ancient Aztecs' practices, and the government has gone to great lengths to incorporate this

religion into daily life. There is a pantheon of gods who are invoked or celebrated by prayer for their blessings and intercession, or to satiate them, based on a strict calendar and complex cosmology. In general, there is a major religious festival every month.

Foremost of the gods are **Quetzalcoatl**, the Feathered Serpent, a hero and culture-bearer who is often paired with his trickster brother **Tezcatlipoca**, the Smoking Mirror. Other major deities are **Tlaloc** who governs rain, fertility, and water, and **Huitzilopochtli**, who governs war. Each deity has many names and aspects, including a *nagual*, an animal counterpart. For example, Tezcatlipoca's *nagual* is the jaguar, and his jaguar aspect is the deity *Tepoyollotl*, which is the patron of Aztechnology's Jaguar guards.

The priests have resurrected the bloody sacrifices of the Aztecs. Each day, millions awaken at dawn and pierce their ear with a thorn, and send their prayers by e-mail to the Great Temple of Quetzacoatl. Criminals are beheaded atop the *teocallis* as just punishment for their crimes, and among the criminal underclass the use of fetishes and charms powered by a magician's lifeblood are quietly traded. These practices have their roots in dangerous magical techniques, which all of you should be on guard against.

> Man-of-Many-Names

> Many cultures practice such sacrificial magic, from the Celtic druids of my native Britain to the Australian koradji, all centered on the giving of blood to power strong magic. There is no reason to believe that the Aztlaner curanderos have access to any particular malificum that the rest of the world does not possess. Some of them do, undoubtedly, kill to empower their arts, but how many of us here do not have blood on our hands?

> Winterhawk

> I do not speak of the curanderos, the healer-magicians of the sprawls and neighborhoods. There are darker forces at work behind Aztlan and Aztechnology, though their names and faces have been hidden from me. Surely you have noticed the tides of conflict between the feathered serpents there? The parallel with the Amazonian/Aztlan and Aztlan/Yucatán conflicts are obvious.

> Man-of-Many-Names

> I'm coming at this from a different perspective, but while there are undertones of some sort of cultural conflict, I think the whole A-A cold war heating up around Caracas is just two expansionist, nationalist powers butting heads. Saying that it's all the work of secret behind-the-scenes magical claptrap is like saying World War II was a pissing match between the Thule Society and British Freemasons.

> Snopes

> While we're talking about Aztlan's astral space—it's a mess. The *teocalli* pyramid-temples generally have some potency, especially the older ones, but the priests didn't know jack about geomancy until they partnered up with Wuxing digging the Nicaragua Canal and wised up to a few things. Before that, the Azzies were trying to link all the temples up to the Great Pyramid in Tenochtitlán somehow—I'm not sure how they did it, but it was the magical equivalent of using a hammer instead of a screwdriver. In many places, especially in old Mexico, astral space is really thin and twisted—we're talking mana ebbs and even a couple mana warps in really bad spots. The Great Temple itself is a horror to look at—there's more power there than anyplace I've seen, but it's conflicting with itself, aspect layering upon aspect. I hear the priests are trying to clean it up, but I wouldn't bet on their chances. In the meantime, if you're a magician, keep your distance from that place. Whatever unnatural crap they've been up to, trying to work any mojo in there is like putting your hand in a blender.

> Haze

> In case anyone is wondering about this "direct democracy" business, every Aztlaner citizen has the right to vote in every election for every position in the Aztlaner government, which is all handled through the Matrix. No electoral college, no run-offs, no tail wagging the dog. Of course, Aztechnology built the whole system and no candidate that doesn't keep in step with AZT's agenda has ever been elected since it was installed.

> Marcos