

MGPO

# THE GREAT PYRAMID

An Overview of the Cosmology of Maztica





# THE GREAT PYRAMID

From Arcadia to Ysgard, the cosmology of Faerûn is well known to be the home of the gods, celestials, slaad, demons, devils, modrons and many others. What few understand is that the Great Wheel is not the only cosmology for the inhabitants of Toril. The Great Pyramid is an example of one of these alternate cosmologies.

## THE MGP SERIES

Welcome to the Great Pyramid - where the tonalli (souls) of the inhabitants of Maztica are ushered into the afterlife by the skeletal beings known as zizimime. It is not part of the Great Wheel, but its Temenos consist of heavens that would delight a solar and hells that would disturb the cruelest of pit fiends.

This product is intended to be the first in a line tagged with the letters **MGP** which stands for the *Maztican Great Pyramid*. With the exception of this introductory product, each will be a resource that defines the inhabitants, locations and supernatural beings of one particular Temeno.

This particular product will give an overview of the Great Pyramid itself and the start of a Maztican's afterlife.

## THE TEMENOS

TWC1 The Maztica Campaign Guide briefly spoke of the *Seventeen Temenos* (or Sacred Places) of the Maztican cosmology. Each temeno is essentially an infinite plane arranged around the platform, sides and corners of a metaphysical ziggurat.

These temenos are similar to the outer planes of the Great Wheel, and are in fact connected by gateways and portals in the hidden corners of each temeno to an outer plane of similar nature. Xibalba for example, connects to the Nine Hells in a number of locations, but they are either hidden, well guarded, or both.

## THE TONALLI

Tonalli is the word for "soul" in nearly all languages found in the True World. There are not many conditions necessary in order for a tonalli to be brought to the Great Pyramid upon death. Humans, halflings, dwarves - even the orcs, ogres and trolls of the Viperhand are guided by the soul herding zizimime upon death. Though many traditionalists may believe otherwise, a creature neither has to be born in the True World, nor die on the physical land itself. There are tonalli of many foreign born men and women of Amn (along with their ancestors) that are now found in Catlampa, Xipetlan, or other temenos.

In order to be ushered into the Maztican afterlife after death, one simply needed to have paid at least lip service to one of the Maztican deities above all others. Being Faithless of False is foolish or impossible in the True World. Denying the existence of the gods would be akin to denying the sun or land itself.

Unlike Faerûn with its cosmological Great Wheel, the final destination of a tonalli is not based on the patron deity of a tonalli.

Earthly behaviors, actions and deeds determine whether you spend an eternity tossed around in the tempestuous storms of Mayel or partake of the delights of Xilen, the Heaven of Milk Trees. The gods themselves are mobile, and tend to visit all of the temenos at some point or another. The devout need not fear never meeting their god face to face.

## FOREIGN IDEAS

Native Mazticans knew the temenos were the eventual destinations since the Immortal Era, but they knew only fleeting details and scant actual facts.

Today, Mazticans are in possession of far greater power than they once had, and when the Amnians landed on the shores of Payit long ago they inadvertently brought their ideas as well.

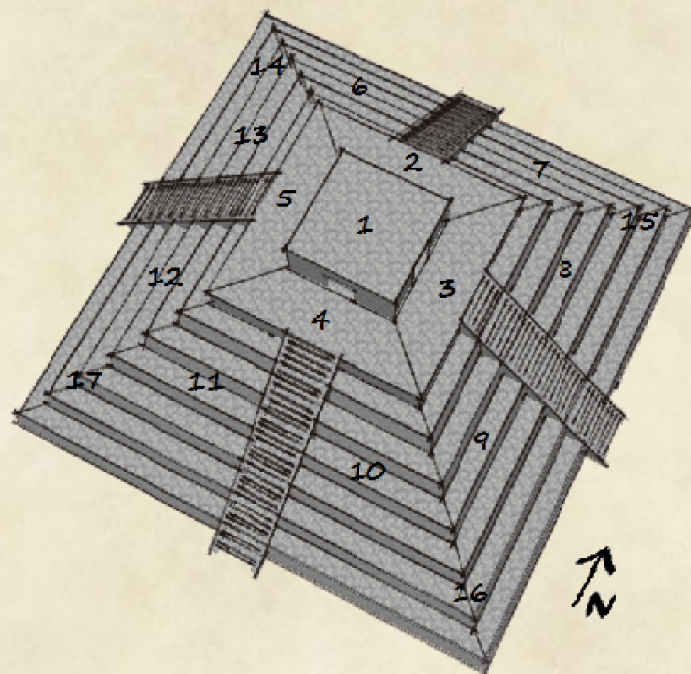
Now, there are Mazticans who wish to observe or even plunder the planes before their stay becomes one that is more permanent. Due to the vast and terrible dangers of these planes, their stay often becomes permanent anyway.

Regardless of the danger, wonders and treasures abound in the temenos. The only certainty is that mortals will encounter the immortals with far greater frequency in the coming years. How the gods will respond is unknown.

## THE AFTERLIFE

When a creature dies and its tonalli leaves the Material Plane, it first becomes aware of itself in center of a large stone building lit by torchlight. Vision is hazy, almost dreamlike in quality and the tonalli is surrounded by a circle of skeletal beings that display neither malice nor compassion. These are the sould herders of myth known as the zizimime. In the Immortal Era they were tasked with shepherding tonalli to their proper place in the afterlife.

A tonalli cannot plea with the zizimime nor can they affect their fate in any way. Time for redemption has now past.





## TEMENOS MAP

Map #	Temeno	Alignment
1	Maztlan	N
2	Itzli	LN
3	Mictlan	NE
4	Mayel	CN
5	Xilen	NG
6	Tlalocan	LN(G)
7	Tlatocalli	LN(E)
8	Exbal Ken	NE(L)
9	Zompantli	NE(C)
10	Xipetlan	CN(E)
11	Tochitl	CN(G)
12	Xitonco	NG(C)
13	Catlampa	NG(L)
14	Tlaxcautli	LG
15	Xibalba	LE
16	Teotli Itic	CE
17	Teotecan	CG

## ALIGNMENT AND DIRECTION

When the zizimime first address a tonalli, they either direct it in one of the four cardinal directions - north, south, east or west; or command it to stay put. Each direction corresponds to an extreme alignment. North leads to to lawfulness, south to chaos, west leads to goodness, and east to evil. Remaining where they arrived occurs for the truest of neutrality only.

## AWAKENING IN MAZTLAN

The journey to a tonalli's final destination is a process that begins in **Maztlan**. The very building that all souls arrive in is in fact a manifestation of Maztlan itself, and neutral beings are directed to remain. Soon afterward, the building and its accompanying haze begin to fade away and are replaced by a verdant island upon a vast ocean. This is Maztlan, where the spirit of Maztica herself once resided in one of the *Seven Caves of Chicomoztoc*. Legends state that mankind first emerged from these caves after they sprung from the wriggling severed fingers of Kukul.

## THE PLATFORM WORLDS

Tonalli of the alignment extremes are first directed north, south, east or west onto one of what is known as the Platform Worlds. These temenos are **Itzli** (*lawful neutral*), **Mictlan** (*neutral evil*), **Mayel** (*chaotic neutral*) and **Xilen** (*neutral good*). Whether or not the final destination lies further, all tonalli spend a "day" within one of these four platform worlds along with their associated tortures and delights. At this point they are accompanied by a single zizimime who continues to guide them in the Great Pyramid.

## THE WORLDS ON THE SIDES

After a day spent on a Platform World, tonalli are directed once again by the zizimime to remain (if they are of a corresponding alignment) or move onto one of what is known as a "World on the Side." These temenos are **Tlalocan** (*lawful neutral with good tendencies*), **Tlatocalli** (*lawful neutral with evil tendencies*), **Exbal Ken** (*neutral evil with lawful tendencies*), **Zompantli** (*neutral evil with chaotic tendencies*), **Xipetlan** (*chaotic neutral with evil tendencies*), **Tochitl** (*chaotic neutral with good tendencies*), **Xitonco** (*neutral good with chaotic tendencies*), and **Catlampa** (*neutral good with lawful tendencies*).

## THE SHADOW WORLDS

After a day on the Platform Worlds and now one on the Worlds on the Sides, a tonalli of the appropriate alignment might be directed to move along further still into the very corners of the temenos. These souls eventually reach what is known as one of the Shadow Worlds - temenos of the extreme alignments. These temenos are **Tlaxcautli** (*lawful good*), **Xibalba** (*lawful evil*), **Teotli Itic** (*chaotic evil*), and **Teotecan** (*chaotic good*).

This is the final step of the journey for any tonalli, and at this point all zizimime bid their charges farewell as they fade into mist.

### THE REAL WORLD CONNECTION

Since the **Maztica Campaign Set** was first introduced in 1991 by author *Douglas Niles*, it was known for its name changes of real world mythological locations and deities. Qotal is obviously Quetzalcoatl, Azul is Tlaloc, etc. This product will continue that tradition to some extent, but the original names will be used far more often for new gods and supernatural beings when they are available. Some locations, deities and creatures will come directly from mythology, but there are always at least minor changes.

Please note that the author has the utmost respect for Mesoamerican cultures that this product mines for inspiration. It is meant to be as accurate for the Aztecs, Maya, Toltecs and others as *Lord of the Rings* accurately portrays European history and myth.

On the following page, you will find updated statistics for the sould herders known as zizimime. Original statistics for these creatures can be found in [TWC7 True World Bestiary III - Monsters I-Z](#).



# ZIZIMIME

Zizimime are the skeletal shepherds of the dead who guide a soul to their final destination in the afterlife of Maztica. Some have evolved to prefer one temeno over others and slowly change in appearance, attitude and abilities, but most remain at the entrance of Maztlan to greet the newly dead.

## ZIZIMIME

*Medium celestial, neutral*

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 126(23d8 + 23)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
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12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)	19 (+4)
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**Saving Throws** Int+6, Wis+7, Cha+7

**Skills** Arcana +6, Deception +7, Perception +7, Religion +6

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Damage Resistances** piercing

**Damage Vulnerabilities** bludgeoning

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Maztican

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

## Actions

**Multiattack.** The zizimime makes two attacks with its claws.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 14 (3d8 + 1)

**Soul Shepherds.** When a mortal dies, its tonalli reaches the top of a great pyramid, where it is greeted by the skeletal zizimime. The zizimime never judges or confronts the soul no matter what life the being led, and the souls are compelled to follow their commands. A zizimime answers any questions the soul might have and soon after guides them off to other temenos of the Great Pyramid which correspond to the tonalli's alignment. Tonalli are incapable of disobeying a zizimime's direction, even if they know they are headed for an eternity of torment.

**Mutable Forms.** Zizimime take their eternal duties seriously and know they are responsible for the order of the afterlife. However, some do begin to find an affinity for one particular plane. Over time, the zizimime might shirk its duties and spend more and more of its time on its plane of choice. Its form will eventually come to more closely resemble an inhabitant of its particular plane. New abilities and features invariably develop, but they always retain their skeletal features.



**Servants of the Pantheon.** Zizimime are accepted and respected by all of the inhabitants of the Great Pyramid, including the gods. It is forbidden for beings of a supernatural nature to destroy zizimime and even the most vile demon adheres to this law. Killing a zizimime in the presence of such beings by a mortal being will elicit an immediate and merciless attack. Without the service that the zizimime perform, the immortals are aware that the Great Pyramid would eventually fall into pure chaos.



## THE TEMENOS DETAILED

The temenos, their wondrous locations, angelic and demonic inhabitants, treasures and magic will be detailed in their individual products. Below is the basic overview of each plane that was originally provided in *TWC1 The Maztica Campaign Guide*.

### MAZTLAN

Maztlan is the central plane of the Great Pyramid and starting point for the all tonalli upon the moment of death. It is simultaneously a massive stone building and a verdant isle surrounded by a vast ocean.

### ITZLI

Itzli is a plane of endless outcroppings of obsidian and plumastone. Spirits live here in echoes of their mortal existence. Regimented an organized wars between the tonalli are relatively common and those who break rank are said to be devoured by some foul being of chaos as punishment. Upon each new morning (a yellow-red sun rises and sets over the glassy fields), the souls are reborn, no matter their fate on the previous day.

### MICTLAN

Also known as the true "Land of the Dead," Mictlan was long thought the final destination for all souls. It is a hell of nine levels that must be traversed over many years of travel. The levels range from fields with winds of flesh scraping knives to rivers of blood packed with swimming jaguar-spirits. The first level, however, is rather plain and only inhabited by spider and owl-like beings.

It is unknown what becomes of tonalli who complete the journey, but a demon-being is known to occasionally assist stranded spirits. This spirit is known by the name Xolotl. There is also said to be a king and queen of Mictlan known as King Mictlantecuhltli ("Lord of the Underworld") and his wife, Mictecacihuatl ("Lady of the Underworld").

### MAYEL

Mayel is a plane of swirling winds and tempestuous storms. A spirit can spend an eternity here being thrown around in permanent cyclones that only rarely fluctuate in strength. Eha maintains a zone of calm here where those faithful to her in life can spend eternity without fear of the powerful winds.

Mayel himself is the name of a once human consort of Eha who holds significant sway among the spirits.

### XILEN

This heavenly paradise consists of endless fields of mayz on an island of abundance. Children who have yet to form their own morality before death end up here and are tended by angelic zizimime known as Ihualcacpatlani. Xilen has plant life seen nowhere else in the multiverse, some of it highly magical. There are fruits that bear milk for the children and others that calm minds infected with madness. It is because of the former that Xilen has also been given the name, "The Heaven of Milk Trees."

### TLALOCAN

This heaven was oddly created by the cruel god Azul to please his wife before her name was lost to the ages and he became bitter and cruel. The realm rains constantly, but it is a warm and gentle rain that often continues even when bright sunshine fills the sky. Tonalli here rest well, but are eternally drenched by the rains.

### TLATOCALLI

Tlatocalli could be confused for an obsidian-free extension of Itzli for the endless wars that rage across its surface. The battles here, however, tend to be crueler but no less organized. Spirits who slay their enemies here enjoy making them suffer beforehand. Frequent and powerful earthquakes are common and can change the outcome of a battle in moments.

### EXBAL KEN

This terrible plane is a realm of gore and sacrifice. Exbal Ken was in fact, the name of the first antihero to sacrifice another human being to placate the gods. Spirits here continue on without their hearts and frequently without their heads, but they feel the pain of their sacrifice eternally. When new spirits arrive on this hellish plane, they rarely last a day without being brought to the altar.

### ZOMPANTLI

This is a realm inhabited by as many evil undead as there are tonalli. Walls, homes, and even the flora and fauna all seems to be composed of disembodied skulls. Most are silent but many scream eternally or speak forever in maddening riddles.

### XIPETLAN

Also known as the Flayed Land, this realm is a desert which lies in eternal darkness. Sandstorms powerful enough to rip the skin from flesh tear through the desert and give this realm its common moniker.

Tezca is said to dwell here often when he is not attending his duties. The lack of sun and fire discomforts him, but he is said to reside here anyway in recompense for some long past transgression.

### TOCHITL

This is the primary home of the goddess Nula and she enjoys her time here more than in any of the other planes. It is full of animals and the tonalli that come here eventually become animals themselves, though they have the capabilities of awakened beasts. There are many powerful predators here, including giant sized versions of common creatures. When she is here, Nula is tended by the largest of these specimens.

### XITONCO

Xitonco is a pure pastoral wilderness full of game and gentle weather. With the exception of the occasional roc, there is little to fear on this plane. The spirits too are generous and welcoming. They are often blissfully unaware of their own existence as spirits and cannot be convinced otherwise, despite evidence to the contrary.



## CATLAMPA

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The most honored dead of the Maztican continent, even beyond the greatest of warriors, are women who die in childbirth. Even the darker and cruel gods respect the sacrifice they have given. By the decree of the entire pantheon, women who pass in such a way may forgo their eternal fate and be brought to Catlampa.

Catlampa is a desert, but it is not barren, nor is it overly uncomfortable. In fact, massive lakes split the desert with oases of pastoral heaven. The mothers and any other tonalli whose disposition earned them a place in this heaven are allowed to occupy the vast swaths of land alone. They are also given the powerful wings of an eagle so that they might fly the vast distances to greet their neighbors.

## TLAXCAUTLI

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This favored home of Qotal stands as a massive pyramid of its own. Spirits who come here are often visited by angelic beings in the form of giant eagles. They enjoy frolicking with children on the steps of the pyramid despite their lawful and often regimented nature.

There is eternal peace here among the masses and the spirits only ever show eternal love for each other.

## XIBALBA

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A massive ball game similar to the one popular among Mazticans is played here eternally by both spirits and the occasional deity. The penalty for failure is sacrifice and eternal oblivion. Victors are consigned to one of ten demon lords who then hideously transform the victors. These unique creatures come in pairs and are known as Xiquiripat (Flying Scab) and Cuchumaquic (Gathered Blood), who sicken a tonalli's blood; Ahalpuh (Pus Demon) and Ahalgana (Jaundice Demon), who cause a tonalli's body to swell up; Chamiabac (Bone Staff) and Chamiabolom (Skull Staff), who transform their spirits into skeletons; Ahalmez (Sweepings Demon) and Ahaltoab (Stabbing Demon), who repeatedly stab their spirits until they are naught but a bloody mess. Finally there is Xic (Wing) and Patan (Packstrap), who caused spirits to cough up blood for the remainder of eternity. Xibalba is a terrible place of no hope.

## TEOTLI ITIC

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Similar to Mictlan, Teotli Itic consists of nine layers of hellish landscapes. Pits of fire, acid and burning blood are unavoidable in a spirits eternal journey on this plane. Many are grabbed by demonic zizimime and buried up to their necks while swarms of ants bite at their faces for years on end.

## TEOTECAN

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Teotecan is a vast mountain where Kiltzi, the goddess of love frequently resides. It is a pleasant realm of gentle mountain forests, few predators, and little cruelty. There are rumors of something terrible living in the forests however; a devourer of souls that does not venture far from the place where Qotal once violated his sister's trust. Kiltzi herself does not speak of the darkness, but the spirits believe it is a disease that can affect the whole of the plane if left unchecked.

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## LEGAL

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