

The Camazotz Expedition

This is a good introduction adventure with which to begin an archaeology campaign. Some adventures are written with information all over the place (a Keeper's nightmare) so this is a compilation of information for easy reference. Also included is a description of the beginning of the campaign to get things started. The authors of the Mesoamerica supplement found this adventure to be deadly but I didn't find it that way. I played the final battle about ten times and only once was the party wiped out. One of the players should take the part of Dr. Emilio or Emiliana Santana (represented here as a female). She (or he) receives a copy of the section on Donald Stillbridge for reference, as well as access to the source book on Mayan beliefs.

Donald Stillbridge

While conducting routine research in the Archeology library in Merida, you (Dr. Santana) found some crudely bound notes of a late-nineteenth century explorer named Donald Stillbridge. His passion was Mesoamerica, particularly Mayan areas. He is known within archaeological circles as a kind of renegade who derides intellectuals ("deluded bookworms" was his pet name for them) and went out on his own to see first hand what the Mayan people were about. While his methods were criticized at the time, his results rarely were. Among the Mayan of the Yucatan, he could travel freely for he spoke their language and was well versed in their culture and recent history. His one and only formal publication was an article on the contemporary Mayan people that appeared in several archeological journals in the English speaking world in 1885.

The notes are on coarse paper with a string binding. The front and back covers are each composed of two sheets of heavier paper that are glued together. These show great wear and tear and significant water damage. The contents were written by hand in black ink. Throughout, Stillbridge employed short, incomplete sentences that efficiently convey information and ideas. On the other hand, the book is a chore to read and is certainly not an entertaining work. Readers who peruse the journal soon learn that Stillbridge was well-traveled. He visited most major Mayan sites and many minor ones. He was obviously well versed in native customs and culture and was fluent in English, Spanish, French, and Yucatec, and had a strong working knowledge of Portuguese and Italian.

In all his notes one site stands out above the rest. The site is Xamanik and according to the notes and a crude diagram, it is located in Quintana Roo near the coast across the stretch of water between the Yucatan shore line and the island of Cozumel. Once a thriving town and later a religious site, the ruins are now a collection of overgrown mounds and tumbled stones. Near the center is a large, overgrown cenote that, no doubt, was once the primary water source for the community. Stillbridge made a sketch of the area and also documents the presence of a large 'caracol' (astronomical observatory) much like the one at Chichen Itza. Long abandoned, even before the Spaniards arrived, the site has remained essentially undisturbed for centuries. Stillbridge reports stelae and monuments bearing crisp, clear, Mayan pictographs, scores of relics and artifacts, and much more. Furthermore, he briefly interviewed Mayans living in the region about the site and all insisted they avoided the area for it was 'bad land' and 'haunted.' Stillbridge dismissed this as the usual superstition, but concluded it was a positive sign. Since the natives obviously avoided the area, they didn't tamper with the site, and it was in pristine condition. He was there a short time, two days, the 8th and 9th of July in 1889. It is an ideal place for a dig.

The Situation

It is late May 1922. The current semester at MU is coming to a close and people are making plans for the summer. Dr. Santana, on loan from the Universidad de Yucatan, has been teaching an anthropology class based on the Maya of the Yucatan this semester. She has taught some folklore, bits of words in Yucatec (their native language), and some history of the region (including the main cities of Merida and Valladolid). And she has expounded on the history of archeology in the area. Her last lecture concerns Donald Stillbridge (have her read the selection to the others).

Dr. Santana and the head of the department have made a petition to the administration and they have accepted. Based on Donald Stillbridge's journal she has proposed that a picked group of staff and students go to find the site of Xamanic. The University of Yucatan has been trying to get a dig permit but the Mexican government is still too unstable since the revolution of 1910-11. However permission has been informally granted to survey the site and clear vegetation. They cannot dig though as a full permit cannot be processed yet. The truth is that the government is too distracted to care and since Dr. Daniella is accompanying the group they feel the site will not be abused. To them, she is responsible. The participants will receive a \$200 bonus each if valuable artifacts are found, studied, catalogued, researched, and turned in with documentation to the Archeology Department of the Universidad de Yucatan. Grad and undergrad students will receive credit for going on the trip.

Laborers, clearing tools, and burros, will be obtained in Merida. You will stay at Dr. Santana's hacienda while preparing for the trip. You will visit the site at Chichen Itza on your way to your own site, Xamanic. There are no excavations going on there but a man named Sylvanus G. Morley is surveying it off and on while petitioning the government to dig there. All the players must now select their equipment based on MU's budget of \$200 per person.

The Journey

The journey begins on June 2nd 1922. You all report to the Arkham train station at 9:00 AM. Your equipment is crated and waiting for loading on the freight platform. There is a man standing by the crates. He is Alexandre Dumas. He will be the expedition cook and quartermaster. He is talking to some porters who will load the crates when the train pulls in. The expedition leader hands out train tickets to everyone. Your destination is Miami, Florida. The trip will take two days. You will have to sleep in Pullmans and eat in the Dining Car. The trip is swift and comfortable. You can read, eat and drink, talk, play cards etc.

You arrive at 5:15 PM June 4th at the Miami Depot. Mr. Dumas supervises the unloading of the equipment. It will be loaded onto trucks and taken to a harbor warehouse. You pile into a taxi and go to the Majestic Hotel to relax, eat dinner, etc. In the morning, everyone must be in the hotel lobby with their personal luggage at 7:00AM sharp. You take a cab to the harbor and find yourselves next to the Margaret S., a small steam ship that has been chartered to take you to Progreso, Yucatan. Your equipment is already being loaded into the ship's cargo hold. Mr. Dumas is already there watching the loading. The sea air is very refreshing and there is a light breeze blowing.

At 8:30 AM you are shown to your staterooms. They are sparse but comfortable enough. Each room has a port hole, bunkbeds bolted to the floor, a table and two chairs, a dresser for your clothes, and a place to hang large garments. At 9:00 AM on June 5th the ship departs. You all go out on deck to watch the tug take the ship out of the harbor. Then the ship goes under its own steam, heading SW towards the Yucatan. The voyage itself is uneventful. You meet the

Captain, a man named Jim Mayo at lunch in the Dining Hall. The food and drinks are good and the officers and stewards are very pleasant. The distance from Miami to Progreso, Yucatan, is very short and the trip takes less than two days. You arrive at Progreso at approximately noon on the fourth day of your trip, June 7th, 1922.

The ship docks and unloads cargo while you go to the Harbor custom house. (Have each investigator make a credit ratings roll; hassling will depend on the results for each individual). Finally everyone gets through customs and takes a taxi to the Casa Blanca Hotel. Progreso is a small, quiet community; nice and clean. The next morning, at 8:00 AM you take another taxi to the train station. Your equipment is already loaded and Mr. Dumas is waiting on the platform. The train leaves at 8:30. The trip to Merida is only 23 miles and takes only one hour. Along the way you pass an impressive ancient city. Dr. Santana explains that it is the city of Dxiilchaltun. It has been cleaned up a little but never surveyed or excavated. Dr. Santana also explains that the Yucatan covers an area of 15,989 square miles and has a population of 62,447, according to last year's census. You arrive at Merida at approximately 9:30. Your equipment is stored in a warehouse by the station. After that, Dr. Santana hails a taxi and takes you to her family's hacienda where you will stay while final preparations are made for the expedition. You are very impressed with Merida. It is very clean and pretty, and is often called "the white city."

Dr. Santana's hacienda is very old but very well-kept. It actually has indoor plumbing, the last you will see on this trip. Her family is very gracious and friendly and her father has already hired laborers and burros, and purchased provisions – beans, vegetables, dried beef, fruit and dried fruit, and bread. The hacienda is built roman style around a central plaza with many rooms opening out on it. The architecture is very Spanish, and in function not much different than Southwestern architecture. You each get a room but you have to double up. It is about noon now and you all gather for lunch in the Dining Room. Lunch is very good; roast chicken, rice and beans with unfamiliar spices and garnishes; drink is water, beer, or coffee.

One if by Land, Two if by Sea

There are two ways you can go, back to Progreso, and hire a boat, or overland on foot. On foot you will be able to hire burros to carry the equipment. The trip by boat is easier but the boats will not be able to take burros and you will have to carry all your equipment yourselves. What do you decide?

The Expedition (by sea)

As a matter of courtesy, diplomacy, and goodwill, the group must visit Governor Vasquez and get his unofficial endorsement. You apply for an appointment and receive an invitation to dinner at his residence the next day, on the 12th. The Governor's palace is a great experience; soldiers and servants all over the place. Dinner is a sumptuous affair. The food and drink are above average. Governor Emilio Vasquez is a well-bred, well-mannered gentleman who seems like he was born to position of authority. It is a great social event for him and he treats you with grace and courtesy. He knows relatively little about Mayan history but he is always eager to discuss it with visiting intellectuals. Also attending the affair are other dignitaries of the province... Major Aravista, the military commander in this province, Councilor Ducat who is the provincial minister of finance, Chief Andres Gonzalez, the Chief of police, Bishop Severino Marquez, prelate for the church in this district, and several other minor officials and their wives, etc. They are very gracious and interested in the work, but most of the conversation ends up in small talk. Their interest is in maintaining stability of the region, not

science or history. You get the impression they are actually checking you out; trying to decide if you are any kind of threat. Obviously, they decide you are not. The Governor's wife, Conchita, and their daughter who is a student at the University of Yucatan are a different matter. They make you feel very warm and welcome. Being very aware of the current cultural situation Major Aravista decides to send a small guard of soldiers with you, at least as far as Valladolid. His troops are spread thin but he thinks it is a good idea.

On the 13th you haul your gear to the train station – everyone choose what gear you can carry. The Laborers can only carry food, and clearing tools, no tents, camp furniture, or personal equipment. You take the train to Progreso and find a hotel near the harbor. It takes 3 days to find a boat captain who will take you there. Finally, on the 16th you depart, heading south along the coastline. The boat is old and very decrepit. The motor barely chugs along. On the plus side you get a grand tour of the coast line. In some places the trees come down to the water, in others there are swamps, and in still others, swamp lands. After two days you round a point of land and begin to turn southwest and eventually west, still following the coast. On the morning of the third day (the 19th) you pass opposite the head of the island of Cozumel. At midway the captain stops the boat and you take two rowboats to shore. It will take several passes to get everyone and all the gear to shore. Finally you're there. It is about 2:00 PM. The boat will remain here for up to three days, if your search fails. After that, you will have to walk back. (Make an idea roll – you must try and ask the natives like Stillbridge did.)

The Expedition (by land)

As a matter of courtesy, diplomacy, and goodwill, the group must visit Governor Vasquez and get his unofficial endorsement. You apply for an appointment and receive an invitation to dinner at his residence the next day, on the 8th. The Governor's palace is a great experience; soldiers and servants all over the place. Dinner is a sumptuous affair. The food and drink are above average. Governor Emilio Vasquez is a well-bred, well-mannered gentleman who seems like he was born to position of authority. It is a great social event for him and he treats you with grace and courtesy. He knows relatively little about Mayan history but he is always eager to discuss it with visiting intellectuals. Also attending the affair are other dignitaries of the province... Major Aravista, the military commander in this province, Councilor Ducat who is the provincial minister of finance, Chief Andres Gonzalez, the Chief of police, Bishop Severino Marquez, prelate for the church in this district, and several other minor officials and their wives, etc. They are very gracious and interested in the work, but most of the conversation ends up in small talk. Their interest is in maintaining stability of the region, not science or history. You get the impression they are actually checking you out; trying to decide if you are any kind of threat. Obviously, they decide you are not. The Governor's wife, Conchita, and their daughter who is a student at the University of Yucatan are a different matter. They make you feel very warm and welcome. Being very aware of the current cultural situation Major Aravista decides to send a small guard of soldiers with you, at least as far as Valladolid. His troops are spread thin but he thinks it is a good idea.

Setting Out

The next day, the 9th, you are ready to go. You gather at the hacienda stables at 6:00 AM. The laborers and four soldiers arrive, and you pack the animals. Then you set out, heading for Valladolid, a small Spanish town deep in the Yucatan. You travel through neighborhoods, then the central plaza, more neighborhoods, and then out onto a country road. The road is not maintained and it's obviously impassable during the rains. Luckily, the rainy season has just ended. The road is basically a trail for carts and burros. You pass country haciendas and open fields where henequen is grown. It is a yucca-like plant from which hemp for rope made. Valladolid is about 90 miles away, to the south. The jungle closes in on all sides and you wonder what is out there in the rainforest. You stop for lunch by the road for a while, eating fresh fruit, bread, nuts, and beef jerky. In the evening, before dusk you reach a cleared out flat spot which has a small stream nearby, a very unusual feature in this country. The soldiers explain that it is a Paraje, a campsite for travelers. You are currently about twenty miles out. You set up camp and Mr. Dumas makes the first campfire meal (make a cooking roll). That night is your first night, sleeping out among the stars. With all the excitement of the trip it is hard to sleep, but after walking twenty miles drowsiness soon sets in. The soldiers take turns standing guard. In the morning Mr. Dumas gets up early and makes breakfast (make a cooking roll).

In the morning (of the 10th), you and the laborers pack the animals and head out again. The trip is uneventful except that a small herd of tiny deer run across the path in front of you. The laborers and soldiers get very excited and try to take a shot at them (shots at half skill due to surprise and speed). Maybe there will be fresh venison tonight. You eat lunch again by the road. After about 20 more miles there is another campsite. You arrive early but the alternative of camping in the jungle is not very attractive. You will have to do that soon enough. This night is also uneventful. You eat and go to sleep. You are getting used to sleeping in the open.

The next morning (the 11th) you eat breakfast (cooking roll), pack up, and set out. You travel about a mile when a few men step out of the bushes on the trail in front of you. They do not appear to be merely traveling. They are short and thickset, with very brown skin and black hair. Most of them are wearing un-dyed cotton pants and shirts, and straw hats. They carry machetes and one has a gun. They stop the soldiers and ask them something but they soldiers do not speak Yucatec (make Yucatec rolls). They want to know where you are going (Yucatec roll). (If answer is Valladolid, they will look suspicious but will let you pass.) The rest of the day is uneventful except for sighting a jaguar – this is very rare and special. The laborers consider it a very good omen. After making another 20 miles you camp at another paraje.

The following day is pretty much the same (the 12th).

Then next morning you pack and head out again on the last leg of your journey to Valladolid. You travel about 12 miles and the trail forks, one fork leading west is the one you take; the other leads south. After about a mile you come to an archeological site. It's about 2:00 PM on the 13th. A man in jungle fatigues and a fedora comes out to meet you. "Welcome to Chichen Itza," he says. It is Sylvanus Morley. You unpack the animals and make camp. After lunch Morley leads you on a tour of Chichen Itza, at least the part that has been thus far uncovered. You view the great temple of Kukulcan, the great ball court, and then he takes you on a mile hike to the famous caracol. He tells you that he and a man named Lothrop (also at the site) will leave for Tulum very soon. The rest of the site still remains hidden in the jungle. (show pics)

The next morning (14th) you leave for Valladolid. It is 23 miles away. You reach there without incident at night, bone tired and ready to drop, and check into an inn with a stable. The soldiers will take turns watching the stables where the animals and equipment are stored. The inn is very old-fashioned with wooden tables and benches in the main room. The food is simple but good, mostly beans and corn tortillas with chile. The rooms are not quite up to snuff but after camping no one objects. The rooms are common rooms, one for men, and one for women, with separate outhouses too. The 'bathroom' is a room with buckets of water and sinks to wash in. The towels are dirty. You decide to rest all day.

The next morning you pack and leave. It is the 15th of June.

From here on, there will be no soldier escort. They are to report to the local officer at the small Valladolid barracks. You eat a breakfast of oatmeal, bread, and coffee. Then you pack up and leave. The road south is only a burro track, a single path where even carts cannot follow. The next morning (on the 16th) for the next 15 or so miles and camp in the Mayan village of Chemax. From there you plunge straight into the rainforest. You travel about 15 miles SSW and camp again (on the 17th). The next morning, on the 18th, you travel approximately another 15-16 miles and camp again in the jungle. You think you can feel the wind from the sea, but it's probably your imaginations. On the 19th you travel another 15 miles and come out onto a rocky coast (tracking or land navigation roll - if 20 or less you are within 1D6 miles of Xamanic; 40 or less 1D6 +6; 40+ 1D6+20 – roll N or S of the island of Cozumel). You camp on the coast; really enjoying the soft sea breezes. You know the site is about a mile inland, but where? (Make an idea roll – you must try and ask the natives like Stillbridge did.)

Jungle Encounters

Every day in the rain forest, players should make luck rolls. Those who fail have a jungle encounter (1D12).

1) A Mayan hunter comes along. Roll 1D6: 1-2 = he is shy and disappears immediately; 3-4 = he is friendly and wants to trade; 5-6 = he is hostile and makes loud threats and warnings then runs away.

2) A player has a close encounter with a poisonous tarantula make a luck roll' if fail the character is bitten. See the poison section.

3) A player sees a deer D100 yards away.

4) An iguana is encountered; he is not happy.

5) A tapir is encountered at D100 yards away.

6) A snake is encountered (odd=poisonous; even=not) make another luck roll; if fail character is bitten.

7) A Mayan village is encountered. They are 1D6: 1=hostile, 2=cautious, 3=ignore you, 4=hide from you, 5=want to trade, 6=friendly and welcome you (if you talk Yucatec), otherwise shy.

8) See a jaguar D100 yards away.

9) See a wolf D100 yards away.

10) Find a small site of stellae and mounds.

11) A group of tamarind monkeys are playing overhead.

12) The guide has lost his bearings; make land navigation rolls.

Interviews with the locals (1D10) Whenever locals are encountered roll on this chart.

- 1) Do not go there. Go back to where you came from.
 - 2) There are spirits there that haunt the forest, seeking the souls of those who are sinful.
 - 3) The ghosts of the ancestors of the abused and exploited victims are looking for revenge.
 - 4) We don't want you here. If you know what's good for you, you will leave.
 - 5) Our ancestors haunt that area and sometimes want justice and sometimes revenge.
 - 6) Demons fly the skies at night on swift and silent wings, seeking the life blood of those who break taboo or are sinful.
 - 7) My grandfather went there and he never returned.
 - 8) If you stay here no one can guarantee your safety.
 - 9) Camazotz will kill you.
 - 10) Do not disturb the ancestors or they will haunt you. Children go missing there.
- After giving you some advice, they all mostly point in the general direction of the site.

The Ruins

Based on directions of natives it takes only 1 day to find the site. You arrive there and confirm the location with Stillbridge's map on the 20th of June. When you enter the area you find it to be strangely quiet as if all the creatures of the forest were fearful. Show map.

Low, vegetation-covered mounds are found here in abundance. Each conceals the broken remains of a stone building, monument, or hut. Most of the area is covered with plantlife but stonework including stelae can be observed almost immediately. The town was apparently oriented around a large cenote. It was probably their main water source but it is now dry and overgrown. The depths are in shadow so the height cannot be determined by eye. The caracol is still partially standing and looks very much like the one at Chichen Itza.

Ask the players what their characters are doing. They should set up camp just outside the town and begin making plans to survey and clear the site. It is only a few hours before dark when they finish and set down to supper (cooking roll). That night, about midnight, Mr. Dumas starts ranting about something. He is obviously drunk. Do you get up? He says he saw a giant white thing floating in the trees. That day, the 21st, you begin to explore the site and make plans to begin clearing and surveying.

That night, one PC is attacked by a large white bat – make luck rolls. The following night, on the 22nd, spring equinox, the PCs are attacked by 2D6 white bats. If the PCs are very successful another wave attacks at 3 in the morning. In the morning one of the burros is found dead (spot hidden) with several pairs of large punctures two inches apart on its neck. After that, only 1D6 bats will attack each night until 24 are destroyed. Then no more attacks. If the PCs are all killed Camazotz has won.

Eureka!

The first great discovery on the first day (the 21st) is a fallen stela that one of the investigators stumbles over (roll luck). It was fallen and once cleared (ten minutes of machete work), three sides can be seen. Lead Arch make an Arch'y roll – the glyphs and pictographs are definitely genuine.

Top Side - an epigraphy roll vaguely identifies that the images on the top level depict a human sacrifice in which the heart is removed and the body skinned. A second panel shows a priest who is dancing and wearing the victim's skin. The next level down translates that people are eating the raw corpse. Make a sanity roll 1/1D3. A fourth panel indicates that it is spring

time as people are shown planting. Idea roll: this is stunning since it is currently believed that the Maya did not practice human sacrifice.

Left side - make a second Arch'y roll – the glyphs on the right side are in the same style as those on the right. Make an Epi roll - the top level shows another heart removal. The next level shows priests eating the heart. The third level down shows the ashes being scattered. A fourth panel shows that it is spring (the people appear to be planting).

Right side – Arch'y roll – this depiction also appears to be related to the other events. Epi roll - the top level shows another heart removal. The next level down shows the heart being burned in an urn. The third level shows that the ashes are being spilled onto the earth. The next level down shows it is autumn as the people are harvesting.

Turn the stella over. Five people make strength x5 rolls using ropes (two people) and levers (three people). Arch'y roll this is the fourth depiction of the series – must be winter. Epi roll – the top level shows a priest with captives. The second level shows a priest throwing objects into a cenote – probably gold or jade. The next level down shows them throwing victims into the cenote. The fourth level shows it is winter as the fields are fallow.

It appears that the Maya definitely practiced human sacrifice. Ramirez was right.

Daily Digsite Routine

Lead Archaeologist – skills: archaeology (study of ancient artifacts), epigraphy, anthropology, history, legal, persuade, and spot hidden. Function: direct site activities, dole out responsibilities, supervise ongoing work, catalogue all artifacts found. He or she represents the University and may have to sign a contract with a local government and therefore must oversee the legality of the group's activities. Once per day of active work make an archeology roll (describe 1D6 objects per day). May need to make periodic legal rolls depending on diplomatic situation.

Anthropologist – skills: anthropology (study of cultures), history, epigraphy, occult, library use. Function: derive an interpretation of the culture of the civilization being studied; study living descendants if opportunity presents itself. Once per day of active work make an anthropology roll (process 2D6 pictographs per day).

Linguist – skills: ancient and modern local languages, epigraphy. Function: interpret instructions to local guides or laborers if necessary; analyze written ancient alphabets and glyphs. Once per day of active interpretation make a linguistics roll in the specific language used (sometimes for more than one language), or in epigraphic translation.

Surveyor – skills: surveying, navigation. Function: locate the trail and site location on a map; accurately survey the layout of artifacts and ruins. Draw a plan view of site to scale; draw exterior and interior elevations of buildings. Once per day of active work make a surveying roll. Progress is four small buildings or one large structure per day. Someone is required to hold the other end of the transit or tape measure.

Photographer – skills: photography. Function: take pictures of artifacts in situ; develop film onsite in a makeshift dark room. Once per day of active work make a photography roll. A good day's progress is about 20 good shots per day (developing takes one day).

Sketch Artist – skills: art. Function: draw buildings, inscriptions, stelae, and other stone artwork. Use an image projector for more accurate work. Once per day of active work make an art roll. Progress in pencil drawing is one small building or stele (4 sides), or one panoramic view in one day (triple the time if painting).

Guide – skills: track, navigate, weapons, and melee. Function: take the group out to the site and back; take charge of laborers; advise groups as to native flora and fauna. Maintain security watch while group is working. Once per day of trailblazing make a tracking roll, may need to make astronomy or navigation rolls to find a trail at night. Once per day of security watch make a Spot Hidden roll.

Journalist – skills: journalism, English, typing (base skill 10%), sketching. Function: to record the journey and the dig in general terms, describe the experience of the expedition members. Once per day of writing make an English roll.

Cook – skills: cooking, first aid. Function: prepare meals for group; oversee the packing of gear; usually also acts as a medic. Once per day in camp make a cooking roll. Cooking takes about 1 hour for the fire to build up and preparations made for food, 1-2 hours of cooking, and 1 hour for washing up and putting food away; 3-4 hours per meal. Coffee and hot water for tea are always on the fire. Equipment: portable field stove \$5.85, kettles, pots, and pans kit \$8.48, heavy duty utensil kit: spatula, serving fork, large spoon, ladle \$2.95, iron spit \$2.10, hand axe \$1.59. Pay: monthly pay plus \$50/month.

Bearers/Diggers – skills: strong backs. Function: a pack of mongrels to haul gear and do major digging.

The Cenote

The walls are sheer and lack hand holds but descending into the cenote can be done with ropes and climbing gear; block and tackle will make the job even easier. It takes 2 hours to set up the pulley and ropes (climbing skill). With these any reasonably strong person can hoist another up or down in to the cenote. For safety use two people manning the ropes; that way, if a strength roll fails another will hold. The cenote turns out to be 95-100 feet deep depending on where you drop the line. Descent takes twenty feet per minute and ascension takes twice that.

Once on the floor the individual is in the shade because the vegetation inside stands up to fifteen feet high. Movement is difficult because of all the brambles. It will take six hours for six men cutting and tying the vegetation with two men hoisting and stacking it to clean the bottom of the well enough to see anything. Another two days would be required to clear out completely. Have the cutters make a spot hidden roll. An upright stellae is standing in the middle of the cenote floor. It is ten feet high. Make an archy roll – it is from the early Mayan ‘Olmec’ period. Make Epi rolls – one panel shows giant winged devils – difficult to make out. The next panel shows priest making living human sacrifices to the winged creatures. The next panel shows animal sacrifices to the creatures. Another Epi roll – one side is dedicated to a giant winged god – it could be Camazotz. The depiction of winged devils is confusing to the archeologists and anthropologists in the group. The pictures are too large and appear to be some kind of deities.

The stella is enchanted. Anyone touching it with bare skin feels a strange itching sensation. The person feels strangely reluctant to remove the contact. And when they remove their hand there is blood on the stone which seeps slowly into the rock. When the skin is examined it is also covered in blood. The pain is slight, more of an itching than anything else. Sanity loss of 0/1 to observers and 1/1D4 to victims. No wounds are visible. Blood is lost a 1 hit point per minute.

But no items or artifacts are seen on the dirt-packed floor. However there is a strange, pungent, fecal smell. Make knowledge, zoology, or biology rolls – it is bat guano. Now the investigators can see that the walls are honey-combed with crevices and caves of all sizes. Geology rolls tell that they were probably eroded out by ground water through the limestone. They are definitely of natural origin. Make spot hidden rolls – several of the caves will fit a man and one is big enough to ride a horse into.

Large Tunnel

Torches or flashlights are needed here. This tunnel is only about 20’ long and opens out into a large, empty cave. Bat guano lines the floor, so it is probably used a lot by bats. Bats are

not easily disturbed during the day. If the players chose to scrape aside some of the guano (spot hidden rolls) they will notice that the entrance is flanked by two clay pottery censers (incense burners). When cleaned up each is a small, Mayan style (arch'y roll) statue of a bat-like demon (Camazotz). Each is twenty inches tall and a bowl shaped depression in the top of the head is where incense or charcoal was burned. If the guano is not cleaned allow spot hidden at 20%.

The First Cave

Inside the cave the stench of bat guano is nauseating (roll Conx5): succeed = OK; fail = leave cave to catch their breaths). The cave is large and empty. Most of the far end is flooded and to reach the other side, you must walk through some murky water. The depth turns out to be knee deep in most places and waist deep at the center. The bottom is smooth stone and slippery, but other wise easy to walk on (make Dext x5 rolls not to slip and fall). Two tunnels extend out of the opposite side of the cave. The larger of the two is also covered with bat guano while a few yards to the left there is a tunnel through which a man (size 15 or less) can crawl on hands and knees (without a back pack). Both tunnels run roughly parallel and exit in a second cave.

The Second Cave

This cave is also covered with bat guano. It had obviously been altered by the ancient Maya. A successful spot hidden roll reveals that the floor has been smoothed and covered with fine flagstones. A great altar stone is in the center of the cave and appears to be a (Arch'y roll) sacrificial block of some sort, suitable for butchering humans or animals. (Spot Hidden) clinging to the ceiling are two score huge, albino bats, the 'winged devils' of legend. It is impossible to tell exactly how big they are from this angle, but they are definitely something to reckon with. (Another spot hidden) there is a 6 x 5 tunnel opposite the entrance. You now have the option to sneak across the cave to investigate this cave or the other tunnel, or retreat quietly. What do you want to do? (if the investigators peer into the cave and leave there is no danger of one of the bats waking).

Investigating this cave determines (arch'y roll) that there are Mayan carvings. Failing a (sneak roll twice) will wake one of the bats – then you have to run or fight. In two rounds the others will wake and they are out for blood. You will be safe if you can make it back to the cenote (providing it is daytime). (Spot hidden) the walls are decorated with colorful, painted plaster frescoes. (arch'y roll) they are ancient Mayan depictions. Some of the plaster is missing but most of it gets the point across. These are the first Mayan frescoes found. (Epi roll) These depict many traditional scenes of sacrifice over which presides the ever present bat-god, Camazotz, an obviously feared Mayan monster or god. (Spot Hidden) lining the walls are a variety of small, guano-covered artifacts that blend into the stone and are hard to notice. A deliberate search will be rewarded with fifty artifacts in very good condition. They can be cleaned and identified (mostly) back at camp. (Make sneak rolls to get out of the cave without waking them.)

The Vault

The next tunnel is tall and wide and comfortable to walk in; it has obviously been carved out. After ten feet it opens onto another cave which is small, about 20' square and 10 feet high. (Arch'y roll) it looks like a storeroom because it contains a dozen pottery vases containing artifacts. (spot hidden) One vase has codices in fairly good condition in it – most have pages fused together but a couple of them are dry and can be read A second vase has religious statues.

The third, fourth, and fifth vases have unworked jade (Archy or Anthro roll – jade was very valuable to the ancient Maya). The sixth has sacrificial knives with gold handles (geology roll – the blades are obsidian). Most are broken but a few are not. The seventh contains more codices with the pages fused together. The eighth is full of gold artifacts. The rest are full of unworked obsidian or jade; but the final one contains clay pipes. Most of them are broken but two are not. (They are used in the spell Summon Winged Devil.)

The Sacrificial Codice

Arch'y roll and Epi roll – One of the codices, bound in gold, describes the rites used to summon the winged devils and to summon Camazotz. It would take six months of uninterrupted study to decode this book, and many passages are undecipherable because of the lack of an understanding of ancient Mayan language and writing.

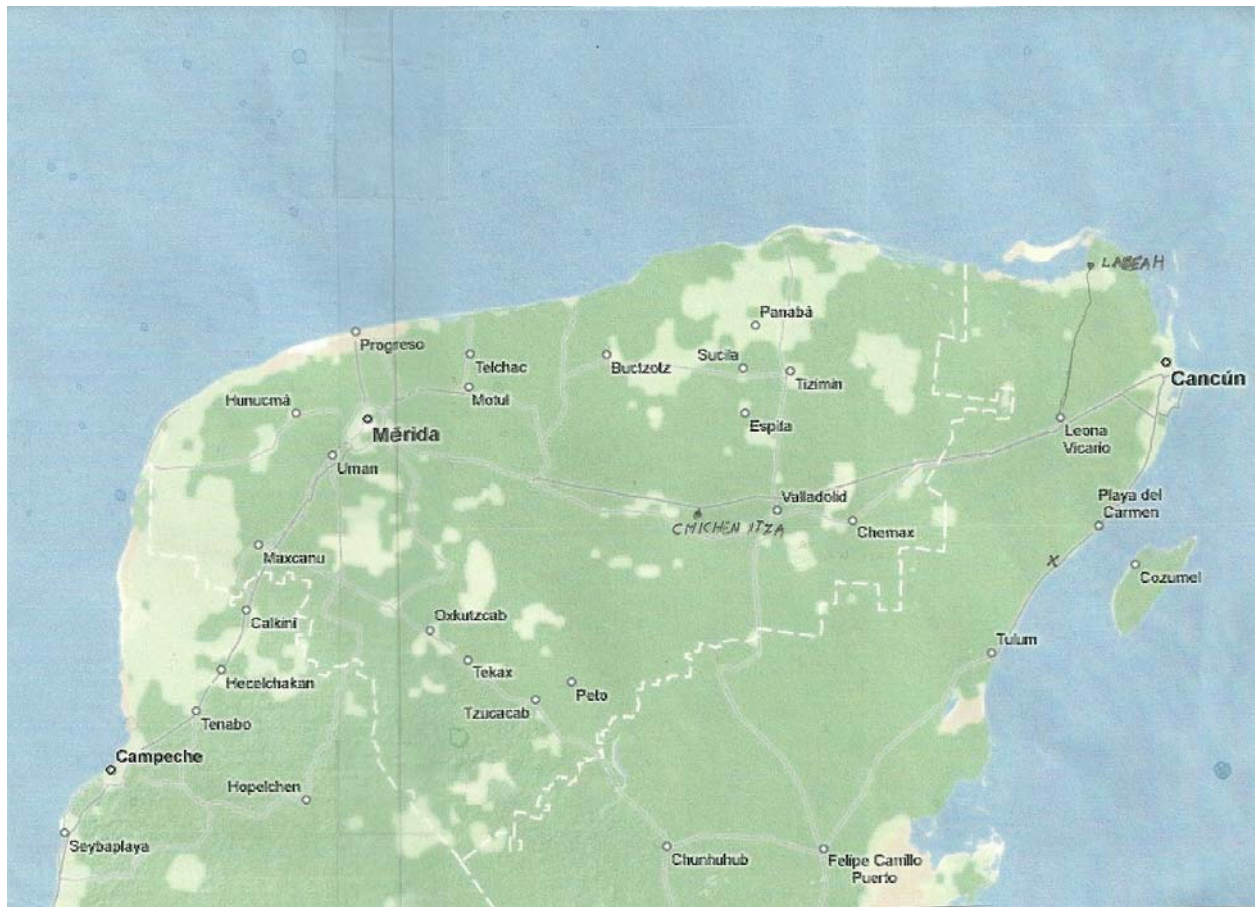
The Mayan codice recovered from the priests' storeroom (cave) tells the story of Xamanic. The book is in very delicate shape and must be copied (Art skill) before it can be used. This book is too delicate for ordinary wear and tear. Copying it will take about eight weeks (roll once per week). Then the book must be stored in a specially built cabinet and placed in the museum at Merida. Many passages are undecipherable due to a lack of understanding of the language but the few parts that can be understood, mostly through interpretation of the illustrations (Epigraph skill), are shown in a special section.

Explanation of Xamanic's History

Xamanic was established by migrating Mayans (calendar dates shown can be traced to circa 1200 AD, making it a contemporary of Tulum. It was built around a great cenote that served as a primary water source. It also became a center of culture and religion. As the community grew and prospered, monuments were erected and sacrifices began. First animals, but somehow it was determined that the gods mostly wanted humans. One night, the area was shaken by a mild earth tremor, a common occurrence that the people were accustomed to; but when they went to draw water the next morning the cenote was dry. Obviously this was an act of the gods. Without the well the community could not thrive. The site was quickly abandoned.

Years passed, then the priests of nearby Tulum decided the site was ideal for a religious center. They had learned through spells and training techniques how to tame the winged white devils, which were becoming rare. They set up a special cave for them in the cenote. Camazotz was raised to be a major god in the area. The giant bats are completely nocturnal, like other bats. Their food source is humans and large animals. The bats guarded the priests' treasure and took part in sacrificial ceremonies. Within the cenote the priest erected a single stela, inscribed it, and enchanted it with powerful spells, primed with human blood.

The stela served as a gate through which Camazotz can enter the world. He fed on many victims for a time (date figures indicate about a week). The people rebelled and killed every priest and religious servant they could find in a blood bath lasting 5 days. They hid from Camazotz by night, sealed in caves. Each day Camazotz got weaker. Then the survivors fled the region. One priest survived and continued the codice. Without sacrifices, he wrote, Camazotz was forced to go back through the gate. He waits for more victims. He can communicate with the bats and they will bring blood on a special night (date symbols indicating equinoxes or solstices) to release him once again into the world. Only on this date can he come forth. Then the priest killed himself via the bats, who placed his blood on the stela.



Map of eastern Yucatan