

FINDING THE HIDDEN SECRET IN AN ANCIENT TEMPLE OUT FROM THE RUINS

In the upper reaches of the Amazon River, in a region long abandoned by humans, there is a series of fluvial islands. These 'Ilha Tupinambarana' were once inhabited: the people who lived there had travelled far from home. This tribe had first fled from the Aztecs, with their lust for sacrifice, and then from the Conquistadores, with their demonic weapons and nightmarish creatures, and moved south into the jungles of the Amazon. Assailed by some of the native tribes, these people found a group of islands in the river, at a junction where the mother and father of all rivers are joined in congress, and these islands offered sanctuary.

Settling on the islands, the Tribe gave thanks for their deliverance and raised up a great mound, and upon it they built a temple – offering itself up to the sky. But over time, something corrupted the place and the servants of the temple burrowed downwards and turned their gaze away from the sky. Eventually, the People departed and abandoned the place. They felt the corruption of the soil and the waters and they wanted no more to be a part of it. Fleeing down the river, they soon found another haven, one which saw them secure and safe. This haven was also an island, and having brought their wealth with them, they established their new city and brought their legends with them too. The Maya, or rather the remains of the once mighty Maya, had found safety upon Ilha Santana...

It is the late 1880's and the world is being explored by all the powers, or rather those powers with the money and manpower to throw behind such expeditions. As Africa is gobbled up by the key European powers of Britain, France and Germany, a few scraps remain for the likes of Belgium and Portugal (amongst others), but for the rest, pickings are poor. And so, their attention turns towards the New World. Huge tracts of land are claimed by the Latin American states, but these claims are hard to enforce and almost impossible to police, as there are promises of rewards and riches yet to be 'discovered'.

The Hapsburgs too started to look towards the Americas. With the failure of the Maximilian Expedition, the Austro-Hungarian Empire decided to send an expedition to Brazil, to see what could be carved out of the interior. Unbeknownst to them, other powers were also looking at this vast expanse of unexplored land.

In 1850, after a series of rebellions, the Brazilian Emperor created the state of Amazonas and ordered it



A map of the area to explore.

to be brought up to modern standards – for the only truly safe way to travel in the state was on the river. At the mouth of the river itself, the Mayan stories and legends, living on in the city of Macapá, told of a city left behind, a city full of gold and gems, and more, spirited away from the Conquistadores and kept safe until the time was right. However, listening to these stories one could hear more: of the tainting of men, the death of hope and of faith, and of something or

someone terrifying, who could not be contained and should not be unleashed. However, to most listeners any words spoken after the mention of gold and gems were merely background noise.

And so several rival groups found themselves setting out to try and achieve some remarkably similar goals – to make themselves rich at this apparent modern El Dorado or Drogas do Sertão...

THE GAME

This is a game for 2 – 5 players. The more the merrier, but it can be a straight up fight between two. While set in the 1880's, any period from the 16th century to the modern day would work (there are still undiscovered tribes and unmapped areas). I have not written this for a specific set of rules, but *In Her Majesty's Name*, *Strange Aeons* or *The Chicago Way* could all easily be used. With a bit of work, it could also be adapted to *Project Z*, *Skirmish Sangin/Outbreak*, *Black Ops* or maybe one of the other skirmish level systems out there.

Equipment for the game

- One standard deck of cards
- One set of counters – ideally some poker chips for ease of use. Have 52 without any mark on the back – these are drawn for keys or treasure. Additionally, add 6 per player which are marked with a T or similar – these are encounters with local tribesmen. These involve d3 figures and are always hostile. They are armed with crude hand weapons and short bows.

Spread the counters randomly across the table (but not on the island with the temple or in a water site). Once a figure (either a leader or scientist) comes into contact with a counter, they draw and retain a card – if it is a 2 – 10 then they find that amount of money. This money only counts if players have a figure to take it off the map. The figure must have either been at the unveiling of a counter or been handed it by someone who was. Treasure can also be recovered from dead bodies.

If the card is a face card (Jack, Queen or King) then this is a key. Only a Chief Scientist can decode the key. Place a d10 where the key is and set it to 10 (or 0 depending on your die). Once per turn the Scientist can try to reduce this value. If using *IHMN*, then use the Scientist's pluck value (or equivalent) and test. If unsuccessful, then the value stays as is – if successful, then the value is reduced by d6 points. Once it has been reduced to 0, the key is deciphered and is now usable. If it is an Ace, then this is worth two keys (but only needs to be decoded once).

Once a player has acquired 6 keys they can travel to the Temple Complex.

On entering the Temple, go to the **Final Act** (below). Once there, then the final game begins.

SET UP

The factions all start on the two main islands that surround the small island with the temple on it. They must start no more than 6" from the board edge.

Jungle reduces player movement by 50% and the ruined cities by 25%. Maximum visibility in the Jungle is 6". The cities are stone ruins and provide hard cover. Each side has a collapsible boat that can carry a maximum of 4 figures, one of whom is the rower. If a player wishes to bring more, then the rower must make a return journey to pick them up.

All Leaders are equipped with a whip and pistol (obviously). Chief Scientists carry a sword and rifle and arcane equipment. Rank and file carry rifles and knives.

Each village has a small number of tribesmen – the twisted and insane remnants of the original inhabitants. They do not like interlopers and are normally not that welcoming. The total number available in each village is 2d6 x the number of players. As a tribesman is killed, he is placed back on the board in a village – this represents warriors returning from hunting to join in the fray.

Each time a player or players enter a village, roll a d6 to see what the tribesmen do.

1 – 2 Sticking with the Old Ways. Tribesmen attack but won't pursue more than 12" from the village

3 – 4 Cannibal Cult – and the players' men look tasty!

5 – 6 Dark Ritual (Roll on next table in 2 turns time)

If Cannibal Cult is rolled, then add 2d6 figures to the tribesmen as a one-off reinforcement.

Dark Ritual

1 – 2 The Villagers are no longer fully human – probably interbreeding with Deep Ones. Increase their speed and their toughness/resilience.

3 – 4 Beasts awake. Jaguars and other predators emerge from the jungle looking to attack the interlopers. Add d3 creatures per player to emerge onto pathways. These creatures will attack everyone – tribesmen included

5 – 6 the Temple starts to shake and shudder. Players may move to the Temple without the minimum number of keys if they wish.

THE SIDES

Austrians

(Ok actually Austro-Hungarians but that's just too long to keep writing! For a modern game, make them Australians!)



Expedition Leader: Teobert Maler

Chief Scientist: Heinrich Freiherr von Ferstel

Rank and File: Hermann Ginari, Janos Fehrenvaros, Wulf Taler, Petr Smid

Goals: To explore the ruins of the city and find the hard bullion that must still be there. Let nothing stand in your way – you have a divine right to these lands and their resources. It is also essential to justify the expedition by returning with a significant artefact. This will be displayed in the Künstlerhaus in Wien and is vital for the success of the mission.

Special Rules: *Greed is Good.* Austrians draw two cards when searching and can pick the best one.

British

Expedition Leader: Henry Walter Bates

Chief Scientist: Duncan, Lord Strange

Rank and File: Walter Pole, Graham Smith, Cornelius Hogsblood, Brian Player

Goals: To map the area and if the opportunity arises to stop the Austrians from enriching themselves – but without killing Europeans (if possible). Additionally, a unique item for the British Museum – maybe one which matches the fetching marbles Lord Elgin has acquired – would be most rewarding in the eyes of the Queen.

Special Rules: *We Come in Peace.* May not fire upon Europeans unless the British have been fired upon first (By other Europeans)

Dutch

Expedition Leader: Cees van Oeveren

Chief Scientist: Johannes François Snelleman

Rank and File: Bert Eenhoorn, Patrick de Pauw, Wim Fortuna, Piet Sittard

Goals: To explore the art and architecture and see what can be brought back to the new Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam – the main hall of Pierre Cuypers creation needs to have that ‘unique’ item.

Special Rules: *Water, Water Everywhere.* The Dutch familiarity with water means they can move at 50% faster while in their boat

Americans

(Count as Europeans for game purposes)

Expedition Leader: Frederick Russell Burnham

Chief Scientist: Howard Phillips

Rank and File: Robert Bloch, August Delerth, Anthony W Duke, J. P. Robinson

Goals: To gain objects and riches that belong to the peoples of the Americas. These must be transported to the Smithsonian so that visitors can marvel at these items.

Special Rules: *Gung Ho!* May fire upon any melee even if their own troops are involved. There is a 25% chance that all the successful shots will only hit friendly figures – and a 25% chance they will only hit hostile figures. Otherwise allocate shots randomly amongst engaged models.

Brazilian

Optional Extra (only if 4 players already)

Expedition Leader: Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon

Chief Scientist: Orlando Villas Bôas

Rank and File: Luis Felipe, Hernando Sanchis, Leonardo Gonzago, Pedro Ruis

Goals: To prevent the pillaging of Brazilian property by interfering outsiders. Arrest all concerned and also check out why these interlopers are so interested in these long abandoned ruins.

Special Rules: *Jungle Savvy.* Ignore terrain penalties

FINAL ACT

Players enter the complex. There will be 2d6 Tribesmen guarding the inner sanctum. Once these are defeated, the players will find a sealed tomb covered in disturbing mystical symbols (these contain warning as to the contents!). The creature contained within then stirs, waking its minions. These horrific beings attack the player characters within the temple. These count as terror inducing creatures. There will be d3 monsters x the number of players released each round that players are within the complex – so beware – one player entering alone with 4 other players in the game can release up to 15 monsters. These monsters are the fearsome Mi-Go, which use close combat only and no ranged weapons. If there are no living Mi-Go at the end of a round, then their attacks stop. At this point any player may attempt to open the tomb. Doing so will show a sarcophagus of warped and twisted metals and gems.

At this point, the creature within starts to emerge. The beast can only be harmed with the physical keys collected by the players – these act as a sort of psychic hand grenade, damaging the creature's link to our reality. These have to be used as a missile weapon and can miss – so don't try to use them at long range! The beast causes terror, but each individual must test every single round they have a line of sight to the beast. The monster engages in physical attacks. Players must inflict 10 wounds on the creature using tokens in order to beat it back into the sarcophagus and reseal it. Failure to do so will see Nyarlathotep 'The Crawling Chaos' unleashed upon the World.....

WINNING (AND LOSING)

If Nyarlathotep is not defeated then there are NO winners – unless there is a player controlling the monsters. If Nyarlathotep is defeated, then the side with the most loot will win – if the Brazilians have arrested at least half the Expedition Leaders and/or Scientists, then they will win, regardless of loot gathered.

For game balance, players may want a 'Monster' player who controls corrupted tribesmen. These folk are not at all advanced and are also quite unhinged. These tribesmen are in addition to the Mi-Go. The tribesmen are set up on the board before any other players deploy and are armed with crude hand weapons and weak bows. The player controlling these will also control the Mi-Go when they appear.

I'll leave it up to you to find/design stats for the Mi-Go and the Ancient One. You'll have to tailor these as best you can to the system you use to play this type of skirmish game. Good luck and good gaming! **WS&S**