



Patolli Help Contents: Version 1.0s

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Version Change Log:

Version 1.0s -- Initial Release, March 1996.

Prolog . . .



Late Afternoon. A tour bus from Mexico City pulls up to the ruins at Tula, which are the remains of Tollan, the center of the ancient Toltec empire . . .

"We've got exactly 2 hours here for free wandering of the ruins. The bus leaves promptly at 6:00 -- don't be late!", the tour guide intones as you pile out of the bus.

"Ah! Tollan, the old Toltec capital", you muse as you stroll over to the ruins. "To think that Montezuma himself came here to meditate among these same fallen stones even at the height of the Aztec empire . . . even he sought the ancient glory and wisdom here".

Your mind begins to wander, then your feet begin to wander and soon you are lost in scenes of ancient Toltec and Aztec cities. Of course along with this, you also lose track of the tour bus, the other tourists, and all common sense (which is typical!) . . .

Cr A C K!!! The deafening clash of thunder startles you from your 'trance' -- "Woah . . . This sky seems a little threatening . . . Where is that bus!?. . ."

Rain begins to fall, softly at first, then stronger, then in a pounding torrent. No bus in sight. "Dang! I've done it again. Daydreamed myself lost. Well . . . it's over there . . . somewhere . . . but I'm not going to make it in this rain" You slide quickly under an overhang on one of the ruins and crouch onto some dry ground. "This will quit in a bit", you comfort yourself.

And it does. But that you are not aware of its ceasing, for you have dozed-off and the creeping night envelops you in your hiding place.

Cr A C K!!! You awaken violently from your sleep. "Whatsa . ." You sit up, rub your eyes, and shrink in horror at the aberration that materializes out of the night air -- a grinning skeleton sitting in front of a wall of skulls! You scream uncontrollably . . . again, and again . . . then the thing screams at you instead:

"Put a lid on it will ya! You humans . . . always screaming . . . Do you feel better now? . . . I sure don't. What if I went around screaming in your ear? . . . Oh the noise . . ."

"W h h o o o are y - y -ou?!", you stutter as you interrupt the demon's mumblings.

"I am Tezcatlipoca, in your language 'Smoking Mirror', in the form of Mictlantecuhtli, the god of death."

"M .. m. . my d . . d ..death?" you squeak.

Smoking Mirror smiles cunningly.

"No, not exactly . . . now that my enemy Quetzalcoatl has returned, I have no such power".
"No, now I simply roam the earth at night blown by the Wind of Knives"

"Knives. . .," you query, "nn . . not that little rain?"

"No, No, Lower down!, Lower down!" Smoking Mirror replies "But enough of this. Now

just *who* are you?".

"Oh . . . nobody . . . just a silly tourist . . . you meekly reply. "B . . . u . . . but I need to go now. It's been nice meeting you, . . . err . . . Mr. Smoking Mirror, sir."

But you find you can't move. The Skeleton grins wider, only this time it is an icy grin, and those demon eyes take on a very menacing look.

"Well now, I can't kill you, but I could make you -very- uncomfortable until the dawn, when Quetzalcoatl's star rises in the east to save 'silly little tourists' like yourself. But hey, let's not get nasty and unpleasant here. Look, all I want is to play a few friendly games of Patolli -- it's been soooo long since I've had someone to play with".

"Patolli?? What's that?"

"Ahhhh! A novice" . . . the happy grin is back again, and even wider. "Don't worry, I'll teach you all *you* need to know. Now what have you got on you that you can bet?"

You pull the stuff out of your pockets and it falls on the ground . . . a pack of gum, a pocketknife, a library card, a few scattered coins, a couple of crumpled bills . . .

"Ah Well, not exactly a treasure . . .," Smoking Mirror sighs, "But It'll have to do. Hmm . . . is that a *Library Card*!!? . . . now there's something I'd love to relieve you of . . ."

Hey wait a minute here, didn't your mother teach you not to gamble with strangers? ;-)

What is Patolli?



One of the few illustrations of a Patolli game in progress recorded by (or for) the Spanish Fathers some 30 years after the conquest in 1521.

'Patolli' is an ancient Aztec board game that takes its name from the Aztec word for bean - 'patolli', meaning fava or kidney bean. The game is played on a curious diagonal cross-shaped board with red and blue markers and 5 beans (or sometimes four beans) as dice. It was played all over MesoAmerica: the Teotihuacanos (the builders of Teotihuacan, ca. 200 B.C. - 650 A.D.) played it as well as the Toltecs (ca. 750 - 1000 A.D.), the inhabitants of Chizen Itza (founded by refugee Toltec nobles, ca. 1100 - 1300 A.D.), the Aztecs (who claimed Toltec descent, 1168 - 1521 A.D.), and all of the people they conquered (practically all of MesoAmerica, including the Zaptotecs and the Mixtecs). The ancient Mayans also played a version of Patolli.* Patolli was very much a game of commoners and nobles alike and it was reported by the conquistadors that Montezuma often enjoyed watching his nobles play the game at court**.

Anciently, Patolli was associated with gambling and players often wagered vast treasures on its outcome. Even today versions of Patolli like games are still played by the peoples of MesoAmerica and although it is unclear just how these modern versions reflect the ancient methods of play, gambling is still very much associated with the game.

Patolli was connected, in still little understood ways, with the famous ball game of MesoAmerica -- Tlachtli (which was also a great occasion for gambling). It was also probably used in a religious and ritualistic sense for divination -- the throw of the beans was thought to be able to tell the future.***

This version of Patolli is an attempt to present the game in its ancient form as closely as possible and although we have no ancient Aztec account of the game the Spanish Fathers recorded much we can rely on.

Patolli was played in the Americas since at least 200 B.C. Now it is here again in the present, re-created through the magic of electrons and phosphorus, for you to play. Welcome to a game of the ancient Americans -- the Toltecs, the Aztecs, Montezuma, and now you!

*The Mayan version used a board with 11 squares around each edge and 11 squares through each arm of a center cross. (Thanks to Ernie Marc for pointing this out in conversations over the Internet).

** Another board game, called 'totoloque' was played that we know practically nothing about. It is recorded that Cortez and Montezuma played this game, for gold, during Montezuma captivity and that Cortez, or at least his score keeper, was caught cheating. (Clendinnen, p.144)

***An example of a game and divination: Montezuma played 'one-on-one' tlachtli with the ruler of Texcoco to determine the truthfulness of a series of dreams by some old women that predicted the fall of the Aztecs. Montezuma lost. This was a very bad sign and one of the great and ominous omens that preceded the arriving of Cortez.

How do you play the game?

Okay now, don't be intimidated by this game -- it is really pretty simple and easy to learn.

Just keep in mind that this version of Patolli is presented as a journey, a race; you (the intrepid Aztec Merchant) against 'Smoking Mirror' (the intrepid Aztec demon, sorcerer, and capricious god -- things are pretty even here aren't they ;-)), around the 68 'squares' of the cross-shaped board.

As with any journey in ancient times (and today), the path is full of danger and opportunities:

As you travel, be wary of the crossroads (the central 4 squares and the squares just before them) for in ancient times the Aztecs believe cross-roads to be places of magic and enchantment (if you get caught at the cross roads, your piece can be bumped back to the start of the game).

Don't land on the dark triangular 'squares' as it will cost you assets.

Do try to land on the rounded 'squares' at each of the cross's arms -- you'll get an extra turn.

Do try to be lucky with the dice :-). If you have at least two pieces on the board, but they are blocked and cannot move per your throw of the dice, you'll have to put an asset into the betting pool.

Do try to get all your pieces off the board first and you'll win the 'pot'. And whatever you do, no matter what, hang on to that library card! :-)

Okay, that's the 'broad brush' overview. Now for the details.

To learn the game, you need to know some things about the playing equipment (the board, the pieces, etc.) and something about the rules of the game.

These topics are discussed in some detail in the following two sections. You can learn about the equipment, if you want to, right now by clicking on the jump text below:

[The Equipment . . .](#)

The rules are pretty simple. You can explore the rules of the game by clicking on the jump text below (I hate reading rules too, but you might want to read them just once).

Note: Actually, this computerized Patolli version automatically enforces all the rules, so it's really not necessary to memorize them; you just need to be generally familiar with them so that you can understand why the game does what it does.

[What are the rules?](#)

The rules of Patolli say that at the beginning of every game each of the contestants throws the beans and the 'winner' (the player with the greater 'bean' score) roles again for the first move. This version of Patolli automates this process (saving time) through a facility called a 'Demon Cast'. By Demon cast, we mean an automated way (entirely fair, by the way) of determining the next mover (The term Demon Cast is taken from the term 'Demon

Dialer', a tool hackers use to search quickly and automatically for access numbers into networks).

Remember also that entering a piece on the board requires a throw of -1-. This means that at times (infrequently) neither player has any pieces on the board (all that *were* there have been borne off but some still are waiting 'in the wings' to enter) and each player is trying to roll a -1- so the next piece can enter. At these times also, Demon Cast takes over and quickly processes a series of bean throws until someone *can* move. Bottom line: Demon Cast saves a lot of frustration and time and let's you get quickly to the action.

Okay, to reiterate a bit, each player must throw a -1- before he or she can enter a piece in the race. The moral is: you'll need to use your -1- throws wisely and take every opportunity to get your pieces on the race track.

You are going to have to learn to bet when you play Patolli (I know your Mom told you not to, but she wasn't thinking of Patolli was she?).

At the beginning of each game of a contest, a bet must be made to replenish the pool (the stake). The lowest bet you can make is one asset -- a -0- bet is no bet at all. Since no contestant can be forced to bet more assets than he or she has, the lower asset count of you, or your opponent, will limit the bet amount. Sometimes this means that the only possible bet is a -1-. You place a bet via the 'What will you bet screen?'. At the appropriate time, the 'What will you bet?' screen will appear and you can choose the number of your assets you wish to put in the stake via the scroll bar. As you scroll the bet amount, you will see the resulting asset count change (given the current bet) for each contestant -- this helps you see the effect of various bets.

Now don't think that you will always be able to bet all of your assets in a sudden death, winner-take-all, maneuver. No . . . perhaps your opponent has a lower asset count than you and this will limit your bet also. This 'lower asset count' limitation is the only one and if you are playing a friend you'll have to 'haggle' (negotiate) the bet amount (which must be the same for each player at the beginning of each game) between yourselves.

When you play against 'Smoking Mirror', however, you will find that he is extremely confident and will allow you to bet anything, within the limits described above, that you want. He'll match your bet. (Yup, he's over confident sometimes but ya gotta love'im).

By the way, you don't have control of exactly which of your assets you bet. Each of the 20 assets in the game has a definite 'value' and Patolli always determines what is transferred to an opponent or bet. You don't care anyway, this is a winner takes all proposition -- your goal is to own everything. Of course, your library card has the greatest value of all to you, and it will be the last of any asset to be bet. 'Smoking Mirror' likes his jade mask in the same way and will try to keep it. Once you lose your library card, you are a goner. Yessiree Bub!

Get all of your pieces through the course and off of the board and you win the pot! Keep doing this, without giving up a lot in penalties to your opponent, and eventually you will bankrupt him or her.

The average Patolli contest will only take 15 minutes, so it's not a long process at all. Make sure you run the 'Tutorial' menu option if any of this confuses you. Don't be afraid to experiment -- the game isn't breakable (at least its not supposed to be).

I hope you enjoy your electronic Patolli game. It may not have the 'pizzazz' of a modern

arcade game nor the intellectual challenge of a strategy game like 'Chess', BUT Patolli WAS played and enjoyed for over a 1000 years by millions of ancient Americans -- there must be something to it.

What do the items on the menu do?

The menu items of Patolli are very simple. The top-level menu consists of only three real menu items. See below:

O ptions	H elp	E xit	R ed
✓ G ame sounds?			
MIDI background music?			
AztecFacts?			
✓ P lay 'Smoking Mirror'?			
SwitchSides?			
N ew contest?			

'Options' allow you to control the game:

Help has three sub-menu options: 'Tutorial' lets you re-run the tutorial on Patolli whenever you wish, 'How do you play' lets you access the help file you're reading now, and 'About' lets you view the program copyright statements.

'Exit', of course, lets you leave the game. 'Exit' is the 'normal' method of leaving the game -- two others, the space bar and the 'Esc' key, act as Boss Keys for emergency shutdown. The areas on the menu to the right of the 'Exit' item are the game feedback area and the game score area. The feedback area offers instructions, comments, and advice as the game progresses; the score area, at far right, shows a running 'score' of the game displayed in 'Red Assets> Bet Assets< Blue Assets' format.

The Options sub-menu items are as below:

The first section of this sub-menu allows you to control some basic options of the game -- do you want game sounds?, do you want background music?, and do you want AztecFacts, from time to time, to pop-up in the upper center of the screen. AztecFacts are interesting facts about the ancient Aztecs that will pop-up every couple of minutes or so if this option is checked.

The 2nd section of this sub-menu lets you play the game on manual mode (play a friend, or play against yourself) or, more commonly, against the computer. If 'Play 'Smoking Mirror' is checked, you are playing against the computer. The computer always takes the current turn and piece type if this option is checked during a game in progress. In other words, if it's Reds turn to move at the time this option is checked, then the computer will play the Reds and vice versa. You can always click the 'SwitchSides' option anytime to turn the tables on the computer and play the other side -- of course the 'SwitchSides' option is only active when your playing against the 'Smoking Mirror' rather than yourself or a friend.

Clicking the 'New contest?' sub-menu option immediately resets the board and starts a new series of games.

The 'Game Sounds?' option turns on and off the games sounds.

Note: WAV sound file vs. MIDI sound file volume can be a problem. I've tried to set the relative volumes between the MIDI files and the WAV files at a good spot. Because of the maddening difference between the many sound cards out in the world, this might not be right for everyone. If you find your Music too loud compared to the Game Sounds, or the Game Sounds too loud compared

to the music, look for and use your 'Mixer' application (it came with your sound card for sure), before playing or even during play of Patolli, to adjust the relative volumes.

The Patolli.INI file.

Patolli uses the information in the PATOLLI.INI file in the Windows directory to record information for start-up. This is the only file that Patolli creates automatically on your system. If you ever want to delete Patolli from your system, you should also delete PATOLLI.INI in addition to the files in your Patolli directory.

Of course, I'd think twice about deleting Patolli from my system. What could be worse than having a god called 'Smoking Mirror', in the form of the Lord of Death, after you, and at the same time, The Lord of the Winds on your tail? Besides, don't you have to win back your Library card? ; -)

The 'Boss' Keys

I am sensitive to the fact that you might want to play Patolli in private at times.

To that end if you hit the 'Space Bar' or the 'Esc' anytime during play, Patolli will instantly end and clear itself from the screen.

How to contact the author.

If you have comments or suggestions, you can contact me by:

Internet: 74212.1123@compuserve.com

or

CompuServe E-Mail: 74212,1123

or by letter to:

**P. S. Neeley
248 W. 3325 N.
North Ogden, UT 84414**

Credits (or where did all this stuff come from anyway?).



Patolli was written in Microsoft's Visual Basic for Windows 3.0.

All the background information, the raw materials for the images, and the AztecFacts(tm), came from the following sources (all 'mined' at the local Library):

"Board and Table Games From Many Civilizations" by R.C. Bell, Oxford University Press, 1960.

"A Scattering of Jades -- Stories, Poems, and Prayers of the Aztecs" edited by Dr. T. J. Knab and translated by Thelma D. Sullivan, Simon and Schuster, 1994.

"The Aztecs -- Gods and Fate in Ancient Mexico" by Cottie Burland and Werner Forman, Orbis Publishing Limited, 1975.

"The Mighty Aztecs" by Gene S. Stuart, National Geographic Society, 1981.

"The Aztecs" by Pamela Odijk, Silver Burdett Press, 1989.

"The Aztecs" by Barbara L. Beck, Revised Edition, Franklin Watts, 1983.

"The Aztecs of Central Mexico (Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology)" by Frances F. Berdan, CBS College Publishing, 1982.

"The Aztecs" by Frances F. Berdan, Chelsea House Publishers, 1989.

"Aztecs" by Jill Hughes, Gloucester Press, 1980.

"The Aztecs" by Richard F. Townsend, Thames and Hudson, 1992.

"How Would You Survive as an Aztec?" by Fiona Macdonald, Franklin Watts, 1995.

"Aztecs -- an Interpretation" by Inga Clendinnen, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

"Mexico -- A History in Art" by Bradley Smith, Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York.

All these good people and their books have been my 'teachers of things Aztec ' -- I have tried to learn well. Any errors are, of course, my own.

Beauty and Art were breathed into this game through superlative tools -- my Microtek-II HR scanner, Adobe Photoshop 3.0, Kai Power Tools 2.0, Andromeda series I and II filters, and Paint Shop Pro v3.0. Some extremely smart people made these tools to empower the 'artistically challenged' of the world (like me) to create something worthwhile in spite of 'handicaps'.

All of the icons used here (some of which were subsequently converted to BMP files) were created using IconWorks -- an application furnished with Visual Basic.

This Help file was written with the aid of Craig Villalon's shareware help authoring system -- VB Automatic Help Author v.1.32 .

A number of the game sounds in this game are greatly shortened and modified versions of sound files found on Interactive's "1000 of the World's Greatest Sound Effects" CD-ROM. Some of the sounds are from those 'collected' over the years from various BBS's and On-Line services. The rest of the sounds were recorded using the Microsoft Windows Sound Recorder Applet and my trusty Radio Shack microphone.

The background music clips are mixed and shortened WAV files from BeachWare Inc.'s Music Tracks CD.

Patolli1.Mid was created with MidiSoft's Recording Studio software using 'HidnSeek', a sample MIDI piece that came with my Gravis UltraSound Card, as a starting point. Patolli2.Mid is Cambium's 'Serengeti' from Volume I of Sound Choice. Ancient Aztec music had no stringed instruments, but used a variety of flutes, bells, drums, whistles, clappers, cymbals, singing, chanting, etc. Both of these pieces represent music that perhaps could have been played by them albeit with some modern musical tastes. For myself, Patolli2.Mid represents a vibrant, primal dance of the Aztecs, while in Patolli1.Mid I find the enchanted flute of Tezcatlipoca playing in the night.

The knowledge and interest in Mathematics and programming is due to my father Pat's influence and the fine education I received from the many Math and Science teachers and professors who taught so very well (obligating a debt I can never repay).

The time to complete this programming project was largely 'stolen' during the late evening and wee morning hours when more normal people would be asleep. However, inevitably, some of the time was donated by my wife, Barbara and my children, Jon, Melissa, Christie, Patrick, Nick, and James.

Some day they may come to understand that while other fathers were tinkering with the family car, mowing the lawn, doing woodwork in the garage, etc. -- tending to normal business -- their father, high in the dark castle tower, and bathed in the soft glow of the electron's fire, was practicing modern-day sorcery. For he was building something that would never really grow old and decay, that could be copied exactly many times with almost no effort, that could be used and enjoyed by many, many people at the same time, and that could be scattered on the electronic winds to the ends of the Earth. Yet, this something was made out of nothing but an idea, diagrams in the air, and glowing bits of phosphorus. Can there be anything more magic than that?

The images -- what are they?

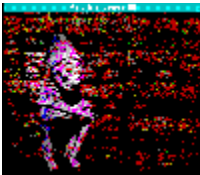
The images used in this game are as follows



The Patolli icon is made from a mask of Tlaloc, the ancient Aztec god of earth and rains, found on a ceramic vessel that was part of an offering unearthed on the side of the Great Pyramid at Tenochtitlan (in the center of Mexico City). There is probably no better symbol for the Aztecs. Although most things Aztec are scattered on the winds and forgotten (like our poor 'Smoking Mirror'), even today, as in ancient times, Tlaloc is addressed as 'Our Mother/Our Father' and "Even today in remote Aztec-speaking areas at planting time one can hear the name of Tlaloc whispered in prayers to the holy earth" (Knab, p. 36).



The Splash screen image is made of a picture of the Jaguar Temple at Teotihuacan. An 'unusual' storm threatens overhead and lightning strikes nearby. I think you'd better take cover . . . or should you? ;-)



The startling 'Patolli anyone?' lead-in sequence and screen consists of:

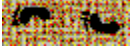
An image of a Totonac pottery figure of Mictlantecuhtli (The Aztec Lord of Death) 'dolled up' a little to make it even more sinister. The original is found in the Museo de Antropologia de la Universidad Veracruzana in Veracruz and dates from between 600 - 900 A.D.

This image is sitting in front of a panel of the altar, or skull rack, that has been unearthed on the north side of the Great Temple at Tenochtitlan. It was on this 'rack' that the skulls of sacrificial victims were displayed.

Both the 'Winning screen' and the 'Losing -- Aha! I've got your Library Card' screen are of this same Totonac pottery figure of Mictlantecuhtli, once again in front of the skull rack.



The beautiful Patolli playing mat was created from stock art and fringed with a border via Kai Power Tools. The rubber playing grid was 'layered' on the mat with Adobe Photoshop.



The 'Footprints' are there to give you a sense of direction but they are -very- Aztec. These footprints are found in many of the Codices and show a journey, or mean 'the people are traveling'.



At the top of the mat, where the 'bet' is kept, is an image of a Toltec back shield from Chichen Itza that was worn by a Toltec nobleman. The shield is finely made of turquoise, red lignite, and red shell. The symbol of Toltec royalty is found on the shield -- the Firebird, which to them was the symbol of the Feathered Serpent (Queztacoatl).



At the bottom of the mat, where the beans are thrown, is a double-headed serpent pendant that was worn by the high priest of Tlaloc. It is made of turquoise and red and white shell and is believed to be part of the treasure sent to Cortez as he approached Tenochtitlan by Montezuma when he still believed Cortez to be the returning Quetzalcoatl. Note: This image may seem pixelated, but is really not. The pixelated effect occurs because of the may fine pieces used in this unusual mosaic.

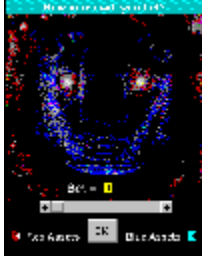


To the left of the mat, the Red position, is an image of an Aztec merchant (the closest thing to a 'tourist' in ancient Aztec society) from the Codex Fejervary-Mayer. He carries the fan and staff of the merchant and on his back is a load of precious quetzal birds.



To the right of the mat, the Blue position (the turquoise color is no accident, this was the color of Aztec royalty), is an image of Tezcatlipoca from the Codex Fejervary-Mayer. Here Tezcatlipoca has just tempted the Earth Monster to come to the surface of the great waters by using his foot as bait. The Earth Monster has taken his foot (you can see that his foot is gone) but in the fight that ensued he was able to tear-off the Earth Monster's jaw so that it was unable to flee into the depths of the water. Thus crippled, the earth itself was created from its body.

The images of the patolli (beans) were fashioned with PhotoShop and are an accurate representation of those used anciently. Duran describes them as large black beans with a 'pip' drilled in one side to form a white dot.



The 'What will you bet' screen is an image of a crouching stone jaguar (a little more than 7 feet long) found at Tenochtitlan. On the back of this jaguar was a circular bowl that served as a receptacle for the hearts of sacrificial victims. I've added lens flares to the eyes to give it a demonic look (which is appropriate since the eyes of this figure witnessed much ancient bloodshed and carnage).

The 'Assets' of the game are arrayed below -- The tourist's on the left, 'Smoking Mirror's' on the right.



They are:

- (A) some quarters and dimes -- small change.
- (B) a pack of 'Extra' gum -- my daughter's favorite ;-)
- (C) a couple of U.S. dollars.
- (D) your trusty Swiss Army Officer's knife.
- (E) your Weber County, Utah, library card -- everyone should have one.
- (F) three cacao beans. These were used as a kind of money in Aztec markets.
- (G) a pottery stamp that the Aztecs used to dip in paint and press patterns on their faces -- an important accessory for celebrations and ceremony.
- (H) three precious stones and a gold nugget.
- (I) an obsidian mask representing the god Ixtilton, 'Little Black One', who was Huitzilopochtli's servant and the god that brought darkness and peaceful sleep to the Aztec children.
- (J) a jade head, worn as a pendant by an Aztec noble -- an extremely valuable item to the Aztecs. To the Aztecs, jade and quetzal feathers were of the highest value, gold was of lesser worth (something that the Spanish conquerors never understood).



The 'farewell' screen is an image of the coming of dawn at Tula. The silhouettes of the Toltec statues can be seen and in the sky, Venus, the Morning Star, and the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, rises with the coming sun, to "rescue silly little tourists like yourself" from the Patolli playing clutches of 'Smoking Mirror'. Ahhhh . . . rescued at last!

. . . or is the image something else . . . ?

It may be the image of twilight at Tula, the silhouettes of the Toltec statues can be seen and in the sky, the setting Venus, symbol of Quetzacoatl's dual, the evil twin, Xolotl, sets with the sun. This was the approximate configuration of the sky on April 21st, 1519, on the Aztec day that was the Birthday of Quetzalcoatl in the year of Quetzalcoatl, the day foretold for his return, and 'uncannily', the day Cortez disembarked his ships and stepped on Aztec lands. This is the scene that Motezuma would have seen had he been meditating at Tula late that day -- the day of the beginning of the end of the ancient Aztec empire.

Either mental image will do -- you decide. In any case, faintly, around Venus can be seen an image of the 'Wind Jewel', the amulet of Quetzalcoatl worn by his priests*.

Also, there will be one of a set of 10 short stanzas from the extremely beautiful 'Prayer to Tlaloc' from the Florentine Codex, as translated by Thelma D. Sullivan (Knab p. 152), which is displayed over this image on exiting the game. This prayer is "a jewel of Classic Aztec literature". Father Sahagun's own heading for the text, as found in the Florentine Codex, reads "The prayer they delivered with great feeling when they invoked Tlaloc to whom they attributed rain . . . The fire priests made this supplication when there was drought and they asked for rain."

As a final example of the words of the ancient Aztecs, a few lines from the midwife's words to a newly born baby boy, as she cuts the umbilical cord, are below. These words as translated from the ancient Aztec by Thelma D. Sullivan (Knab, p. 136).

My beloved child, my precious one . . .

. . . Know this, understand this:
Your home is not here.
You are the Eagle, you are the Jaguar,
you are the precious scarlet bird,
you are the precious golden bird of Tloque Nahuaque;
you are his serpent, you are his bird.
Only your nest is here.
Here you only break out of your shell,
here you only arrive, you only alight,
here you only come into the world.
Here like a plant, you sprout, you burst into bloom, you blossom.
Here like a fragment struck from a stone, chipped from a stone, you are born.
Here you only have your cradle, your blanket, your pillow where you lay your head.
This is only the place of arrival.

Where you belong is elsewhere:
You are pledged, you are promised, you are sent to the field of battle.
War is your destiny, your calling.
You shall provide drink,
you shall provide food,
you shall provide nourishment for the Sun, for the Lord of the Earth.
Your true home, your domain, your patrimony is the House of the Sun in heaven
where you shall shout the praises of, where you shall amuse, the Everlastingly
Resplendent One.

* The 'Wind Jewel' was an amulet worn by the priests of Quetzalcoatl that celebrated his designation as 'The Lord of the Winds'. Temples dedicated to him were round to show that he was not restricted to any one direction. The 'Wind Jewel' itself was made from a cross-section of a conch shell.

What are the rules?



A patolli game in progress. From the Codex Magliabenchiano.

No rules for Patolli survived the conquest. As Bell explains:

"Unfortunately, the Christian priests with misplaced zeal destroyed the native records and manuscripts and no Aztec description of the game has survived. The earliest Spanish account is Gomara's (1552) written thirty-one years after the conquest in 1521 but unfortunately it is very short. He mentions that the Emperor Montezuma sometimes watched his nobles playing at Court."

We do, however, have accounts of other early Spanish fathers. Bell (p. 6) writes:

"Duran describes these Mexican gamblers walking about with a patolliztli mat rolled up under an arm and carrying a little basket containing colored stones used as markers. Before a game they called for a bowl of fire and threw incense into it, or sacrificed offerings of food to their dice and then they would gamble with all the confidence in the world. The nobility played for high stakes in precious stones, gold beads, and very fine turquoises.

The Mexican God of Sport and Gambling was Macuilxochitl, the God of Five Flowers, and as they played the gamblers invoked his aid by rubbing the five beans between their hands, and then, as they threw them on the mat, they shouted 'Macuilxochitl!' and clapped their hands together, craning forward to see their score."

Berden (p.179) notes that:

"Patolli was an extremely popular game and was played much like pachisi. Beans, which served as dice, were marked with white dots to indicate numbers. Each player had six pebble counters which were moved on a board according to the throws of the dice. Some persons were apparently addicted to the game and to the gambling which usually accompanied it:

"The gamblers dedicated to this game always went about with the mats under their armpits and with the dice tied up in small cloths . . . it was believed that they [the dice] were mighty . . . they spoke to them and begged them to be favorable, to come to their aid in that game . . ." (Duran 1971:318)

It is understandable that Patolli players would encourage the dice for, as in the ball game, very costly goods were wagered on this game: fine stones, feathers, elaborately worked clothing, fields, houses, and slaves. For extra luck, a serious player might turn his household grinding stone and griddle upside down and hang his pestle in a corner of the house. (Sahagun 1950-1969, book 5:109)"

Bell pulled all these early descriptions together into the following:

"The following description is based on four early works; Sahagun (c. 1545), Gomara (1553), Duran (c. 1560), and Torquemada (1615). Father Sahagun prepared his 'Historia universal de Nueva-Espana about 1545, but it was suppressed by the ecclesiastical authorities for nearly 300 years, finally being published in 1829 by Bustamente in Mexico. Father Diego Duran (1538 - 1588) wrote his history 'Antiquallas e Historia de los mejicanos' in about 1560. It was first published under the title 'Historia de las Indias de Nueva-Espana & Islas de Tierra Firme' in Mexico (1867 - 1880)

The board was a thin mat and painted on it in liquid rubber was a great diagonal cross reaching to the corners. Each limb was divided into sixteen compartments. Some mats were decorated with the figure of fortune as a lucky device or with its symbols, two clubs.

Twelve small stones were used as pieces, six red and six blue, and if two played each took six. (This remark suggests that more than two could play, but it is not recorded if the players formed partnerships or were independent, and if they shared the twelve pieces or increased the total number).

Five large black beans, called patolli, each with a hole drilled in one side to act as a white pip, were rubbed between the player's hands and then thrown on to the mat to make the cast.

Scoring (Duran)

1 pips up	.....	1
2 pips up	....	2
3 pips up	.....	3
4 pips up	.....	4
5 pips up	.....	10

The stones were moved along the divisions according to the throws. "

This provides the board, piece, and dice configuration but no rules of play. Bell, drawing on other known North American native games, came up with suggested rules. These are essentially his rules below with some exceptions, which are noted at the bottom.

The 'object' of the game . . . How do you win?

Patolli is about gambling (sorry Mom!). The object of this version of Patolli is to 'bankrupt' your opponent using luck, strategy, and shrewd betting.

There are 10 items in each player's possession at the beginning of a contest. A contest consists of a series of games played one after another until there is a winner.

At the beginning of each new game in a contest, the players put an agreed amount into a pool. This is the bet. No player, however, can be constrained to bet more than they have in possession at the beginning of the game (of course, if they bet all, then the contest takes on an aspect of 'sudden death').

A player goes 'bankrupt' and loses to their opponent when he or she has (1) nothing to bet at the beginning of a game, or (2) during the game is required to contribute a forfeit (assets) to the pool, or to the opponent, but has no assets to do so.

Starting a contest . . . Starting a game . . .

At the beginning of a contest, one player takes control of the six red pieces, the other player takes control of the 6 blues pieces.

At the beginning of each game of a contest, a series of casts, ensues (Red first, then Blue) until one player has thrown a -1- and is able to enter a piece on the board.*

Scoring . . .

Each player moves his or her pieces the number of positions indicated by the patolli (the beans).

Scoring takes place as Duran noted above except that -0- pips (not mentioned by Duran) means that the player casts again until he or she gets a non-zero throw.**

Entering a piece on the board . . .

Entry onto the board occurs at the central square nearest a given player. You can only enter a piece on the board on a cast of -1-.

Moving pieces . . .

Pieces move only -clockwise- traveling around the cross (or x) shaped board.***

Only one piece, of either color, is allowed on a given board position. Most of the time this means that you are blocked from moving to a square already occupied. But, when a piece occupies one of the four central squares, or the square just before each of these squares, it can be 'bumped back' by an opponent's piece if the opponent lands on top of it. The 'bumped' piece must start back at the beginning (off the board).****

A player always has a choice of which of his or her pieces to move, but if only one piece can be moved, it -must- be moved even if it is to the player's disadvantage.

If a player cannot move any piece, and has a least two pieces on the board, he or she pays -one- forfeit (1 asset) into the pool and the turn passes to the opponent.*****

A player landing on a black, triangle shaped position pays -two- forfeits (2 assets) to the opponent. Bottom line: Try not to land on one of these.

A player moving a piece onto one of the rounded positions at the end of the limbs of the cross is awarded another turn (to be taken immediately!).

Bearing off . . .

Pieces travel around the cross and are borne off on the side of the forth limb nearest the player with *exact* throws. The four central squares, which have already been traversed, are excluded in this bearing off. Thus you must land exactly on the last square of your journey.

As each player's pieces are borne off, the opponent must pay him or her one forfeit (1 asset).

The player removing all of his or her pieces from the board first, wins the stake in the pool. Play then begins again (albeit with one player richer and one poorer) and continues through a series of such games until one player is bankrupt.

That's It! Pretty simple Huh?

* Bell has the players throwing once each at the start of every new game and the winner throwing again for the first entry. He also allows the first move, and only the first, in a game to violate the 'only entry on -1-' rule and move on any throw. Because of 'Demon Cast' these types of rule were not needed to assure a quick start to a game.

** I agonized over this. I could have assumed some arbitrary value or assumed that a -0- throw meant that the turn passed to the opponent, but it seemed best to assume that Duran mentioned the only possible throws. This would mean that a player cast the beans again on a -0- throw as in the rules above. Actually to save time and frustration, this computerized Patolli game makes sure that a -0- throw just isn't a possibility.

*** Bell's suggested rules allow each player to determine at the start of the game, on the first throw, which direction, clockwise or counterclockwise, they will move. It simplified the game to 'fix' this rather than have it either way.

**** Bell's suggested rules did not allow 'bumping'. But you can't say the only entry is by throwing a -1- unless you provide some scheme to disallow a player from blocking his opponent's entry entirely while racing to the finish. By the same token, you need to prevent a player from simply blocking an opponent's ability to take pieces off the board -- allowing bumping on the last square of each side's journey takes care of this. Besides, bumping was a very likely part of many ancient games (e.g. the ancient Egyptian games 'Senet' and '20-Squares) and -could- easily have been a part of Aztec Patolli. In any case, it livens the game up a bit and makes for exciting, and sometimes somewhat 'rowdy', play.

***** I've modified this somewhat from Bell's rules. Bell suggested that -anytime- one cannot move, a forfeit be given. But this gets very unfair at the very end of the game as a player tries to get his or her last piece off of the board -- one can easily go bankrupt on the very verge of victory. Hence I've changed the rules to state "and has at least two pieces on the board . . .".

The Equipment . . .



The equipment for Patolli is as follows:

There are 6 red and 6 blue jewels (stones, pebbles, etc.) that are used as markers. Each game of a contest is a race between the red and the blue.

The 'board' these pieces race around is a curious diagonal cross (as Duran called it but it is what we would call X-shaped). Each team enters its pieces onto the nearest Central Square of the cross (marked with a sharp turn of the footprints) and then races in a clockwise direction around the cross. In order to be borne-off, a piece must complete the circuit and land exactly one past (just off) the last square.

The object of the contest is, first and foremost, to bankrupt the opponent, but the object of each game is twofold: (1) win the stake in the betting pool by racing all of your pieces off the board before your opponent and (2) try not to give up too many assets to your opponent in penalties while you are doing it.

There are 8 special positions on the X shaped course that when landed on give an extra turn (immediately). These are the two rounded cells at the end of each arm of the 'X'. In addition there are 8 special positions that when landed on require you give a two asset penalty to your opponent. These are the 8 black, triangular shaped cells -- try not to land on them.

The four central squares and the squares (there are four in total) immediately in front of these (assuming a clockwise orientation) are danger zones where 'bumping' can occur. Watch yourself here. 'Smoking Mirror' is cunningly predatory. On the other hand, 'What is good for the goose, is good for the gander' and you can 'prey' on him too. :-)

Each side starts a game with their pieces lined up at the boarder of the playing mat, enters each piece according to the throw of the beans (the dice), and then races around the 'X' shaped board. When a piece is borne-off, it turns to sold gold (Sure, why not?. This is a magic Patolli mat isn't it?!), and returns to its original position. A piece borne-off takes no further part in a game.

5 beans (patolli) serve as dice. Each has one surface marked with a white dot. Each throw is scored as follows:

0	Dots showing	=0	
1	"		=1
2	"		=2
3	"		=3
4	"		=4
5	"		=10

Each player at the beginning of a contest has 10 assets that he or she can bet on the outcome of the beginning game. After that first game, each contestant will be richer or poorer depending on the whims of the dice and skill in playing and betting until, at last, after a series of games, one player is bankrupt.

AztecFacts? . . .

If the 'AztecFacts?' menu item is checked, every 2 or 3 minutes, interesting facts about the ancient Aztecs will appear over the game screen. All these 'facts' were mined from the references noted in the 'Credits' section of this help file. They only appear during a game while waiting for someone to roll the beans, and they will disappear as soon as the 'dice' are rolled. Stop and read them once in a while.

These facts are intended to educate as well as entertain -- few people really know much about the Aztecs, beyond human sacrifice and pyramids, even though the knowledge may be readily available at the local library. If you grow tired of this feature, simply un-check the 'AztecFacts?' menu item and they will no longer bother you.

You control the Beans . . . !

Let me just say, up front, right here: The Beans are not rigged! 'Smoking Mirror' may be a demon and a sorcerer, but he is no cheat. The computer logic *does not* 'mess with' the bean throws in any way. You roll'em and you weep -- just like in real life.

Then again, you, the human player, actually have full control over the Beans. But we had to provide that capability for you. Let me explain:

Patolli uses a random number generator to obtain 'random' throws of the Beans. Random number generators use a 'seed' number to get them started and then a complicated algorithm to generate a sequence of random numbers. These are often called 'pseudo-random' numbers because given the seed number, the same sequence of 'random' numbers will always be generated. Also, the algorithm eventually loops back on itself so that you'll start-over generating the same numbers in the same sequence again at some point. This is called the 'period' of the random number generating algorithm. A typical period may be in the 40,000 range, so you have to go through a lot of random numbers before you loop back on yourself.

Okay, sorry about the dry, overly complicated explanation above, but here's why we went through it:

Patolli uses a random seed number. In other words, each time you start up Patolli, it uses a random seed number to 'seed' the algorithm, and thus you should never really notice the same sequence of throws -- unless you watch and correlate for a long, long time.

This means that the sequence of throws generated from Patolli is as random as possible.

Now I personally believe that one random number is as good as the next, but you may not. You may be uncomfortable with just accepting the next 'random' throw that Patolli generates as YOUR throw. After all, you are the thrower of the dice, right? Patolli has been programmed so that if you hold the mouse button down over the dice, they 'roll' and 'rattle' in your hands (you'll be able to hear them if you have a sound card) for as long as you hold the mouse button down. All during this 'rolling' process, Patolli is going through the next, and the next, and the next, etc., etc., random numbers at the clip of 150 per second or more (depending on your processor). When you release the mouse button, Patolli uses the random number from wherever it stopped in the 'rolling' process as the throw amount.

Bottom line: You actually have as much control over the 'dice' as you would in real life.

If you are blessed with ESP, or are just an extremely lucky person, you can really make a killing here because if you release at just the right millisecond you'll have the 1, or the 10, or whatever it was you wanted. So if you don't trust the Patolli program, or don't want to just accept the next random number Patolli happens upon, roll those 'beans' before you throw.

Tips, Tricks, and Trouble Shooting . . .

[I don't want to go through the 'The Lord of Death cometh . . . ' prolog screen anymore . . .](#)
If you click on the prolog screen when it first comes up (or anytime really) you will quit the prolog and go right to the game.

[I don't want to wait 8 seconds for the 'farewell' screen to disappear . . .](#)
Sheesh! Its only 8 seconds! Okay, Okay. If you click on the 'farewell' screen it will immediately disappear and you will be out -- finished as it were.

[I can't get the AztecFacts to show up . . .](#)
First, make sure you have the AztecFacts menu option checked, otherwise you won't get any AztecFacts.

However, If you find that the AztecFacts menu option is 'grayed-out' then that's another matter. This means that Patolli could not find the AZTECFAC.TXT file that holds all of the AztecFacts. The most likely cause of this is that AZTECFAC.TXT is not in the working directory, and let me tell you from personal experience, it's very easy in Windows to get yourself mixed up as to what the working directory is. Here's how you make sure that Patolli is never mixed up about it.

1st: Activate the Patolli icon by clicking on it once from Program Manager (This will highlight its title).

2nd: Choose 'File|Properties' from the Program Manager menu and make sure the Properties box for the Patolli icon reads:

Command Line: RPatolli..exe

Working Directory: C:\RPatolli (or whatever is your directory)

3rd: Make sure that AZTECFAC.TXT exists in the C:\RPatolli directory.

Do these three things, and everything should work fine.

[I can't get any MIDI music to play . . .](#)

You have to have a sound card that supports MIDI 'Extended' format to get the music to play -- 99.9% of them do.

First, make sure you have the 'MIDI background music?' menu option checked, otherwise you won't get any MIDI music.

Next, make sure it isn't a simple volume problem. Turn-up the volume on the speakers and see if that helps at all.

Didn't help? Okay then maybe the relative sound volumes of the WAV and MIDI files are 'out of whack'. I've tried to set the relative volumes between the MIDI file and the WAV files at a good spot. Because of the maddening difference between the many sound cards out in the world, this might not be right for everyone. Look for and adjust your 'Mixer' application (it came with your sound card for sure), to adjust the relative volume of MIDI files upward a little to see if that helps.

Still not working? Dang! This calls for drastic measures. I hate to inform you of this,

BUT, you are most likely suffering from what the MIDI people call 'The MIDI problem from Hell!' (their words, not mine). Not to worry though -- here's what to do:

Since Patolli.MID is in extended MIDI format you have to make sure that channels 1 - 10 are active. Go to the Windows Control Panel, MIDI mapper section, and choose edit on your MIDI mapper. Then make sure that channels 1 through 10 are active. If one of these channels (that hold the extended MIDI sequences) is not active, then you are essentially mapping that sequence into 'oblivion'.

Please consider registering . . .

Please consider registering. Patolli is not freeware, it's shareware; even though it is not 'hobbled' in any way, nor are there pesky 'nag' screens to bother you.

If you want to continue to legally use this software, you must register this program after 21 days. To register, send \$15 to:

**P. S. Neeley
248 W. 3325 N.
North Ogden, UT 84414**

This shareware version of Patolli was meant to be distributed on the 'electronic winds' of the Internet, BBSs, on-line services, etc., and so it was important to keep the file sizes as small as possible. In a practical sense, you do this by cutting back on color depth (16 color images instead of 256 color images) and eliminating as many game sound files as possible (.WAV files are large and not very compressible). I hated to do this but it was the only way.

However, extra bytes add nothing to the weight of a diskette.

I will send registered users of Patolli the 256 color, registered version in the mail. The 16 color images you see in this shareware version are good, but the 256 color images of the registered version are breathtakingly beautiful. The registered version also features lots more sounds and many more AztecFacts (tm).

In addition, the registered version saves a game exited during play and allows you to resume where you left off later. This feature can be very handy when your contest with 'Smoking Mirror' proves to be a drawn-out battle. You wouldn't want to give up your library card just because someone has stopped-up the plumbing and calling for your help now would you? :-)

If you enjoy Patolli at all, or have interest in the ancient Aztecs, you'll want the registered version.

Tezcatlipoca vs. Quetzalcoatl -- What is going on here?

Tezcatlipoca means 'Smoking Mirror' or 'The Mirror that Smokes', but he was known by many names: 'Night Wind', 'Warrior of Darkness', 'The Sorcerer', 'The Keeper of Men', 'He by Whom We Live', 'The Lord of the Close and Near', and tellingly, 'The Enemy on Both Sides'. He was both capricious and all powerful and the Aztec kings acted in surrogate for him.

Quetzalcoatl means 'Feathered Serpent' or alternately, 'Precious Twin'. He was also known as 'The Lord of the Morning Star', 'The Lord of the Winds', 'Lord of Life', 'Lord of Healing', and the 'Lord of Hope'.

He appears to have actually been a real person in Toltec history. In the legends he came from heaven to live a devout life on earth and brought the people wisdom and knowledge of all the arts. But he was plagued by sorcerers, Tezcatlipoca being the chief among them, who wanted him to perform human sacrifice. He refused and, angered, they brought his downfall by trickery, deception, and a potion of magic mushrooms. In sorrow, Quetzalcoatl traveled across Mexico to the coast, leaving his many palaces, and shedding his royal garments as he traveled until, naked, he reached the shore. There he boarded a raft of serpent skins and sailed toward the rising sun. As the raft drifted nearer and nearer to the sun, the heat ignited the boat and from the flames his heart rose up to join the sun in its journeys. But legend held that he was to return one day to reclaim his kingdom . . . and even to save 'silly little tourists like yourself' from the clutches of an ancient, and dark, enemy :-)

There is much more to tell. If you'd like to know more, visit your library -- that is if you still -have- a library card. ;-)

