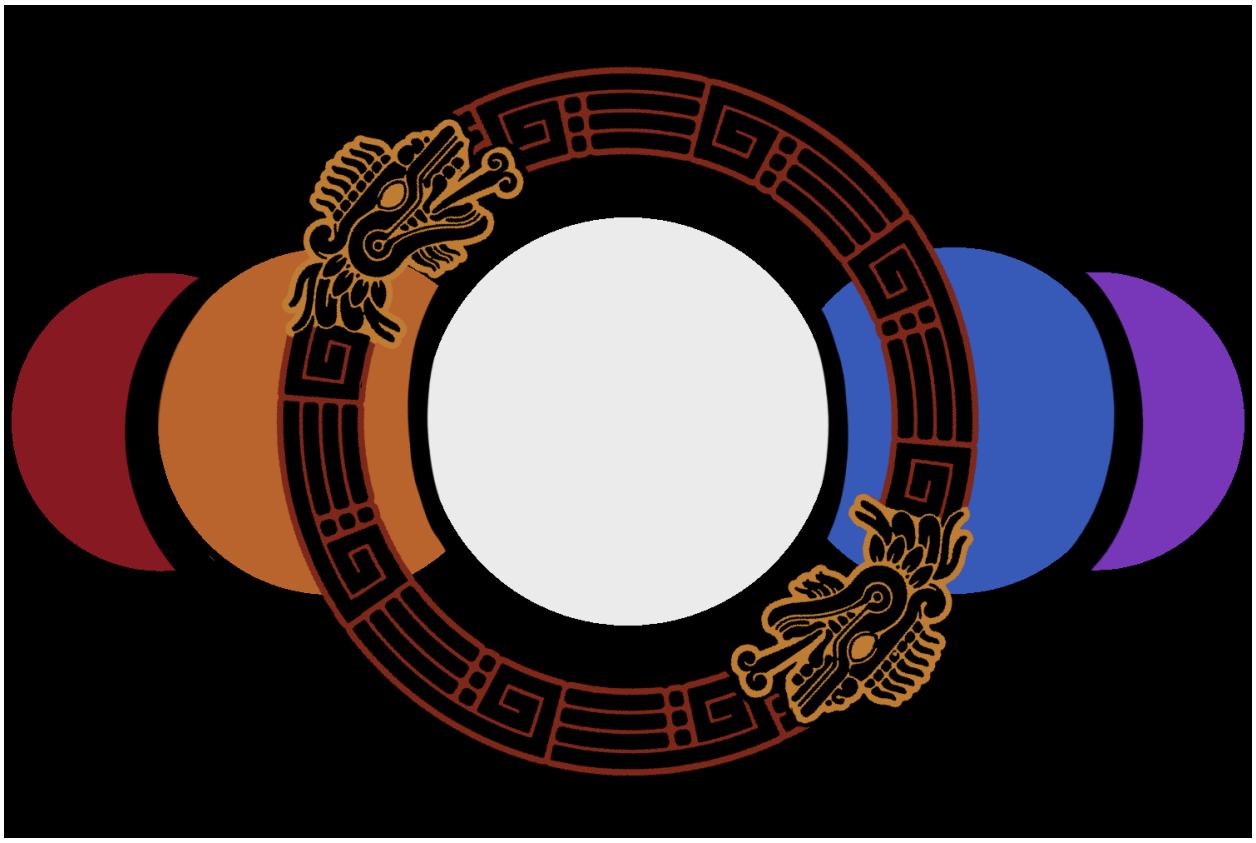
SPLINT & ITLAN-YOUALI

All Peoples' Chains Broken | Blood Runs Golden Under the Fifth Sun



The national flag of Itlan-Youali. Splint has no national flag.

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Splint and Itlan-Youali are often spoken of in the same breath, despite being separate nations. While the climate of Splint is mostly arid, only growing lush to the west where it meets Ruefang, the underground world of Itlan-Youali is a fertile rainforest. Splint is loosely inspired by Central America - particularly Mexico, and Itlan-Youali is inspired by ancient Mesoamerican cultures, particularly the Aztecs.

The history of these twin worlds stretches back centuries, and is defined by the ravaging of Cahyali by the expansion of the Dahabu Empire. While Itlan-Youali managed to seal itself off, Splint fell to Dahabi control, and has struggled to establish its freedom and sovereignty since, trading hands from one colonial power to another. While the underground nation is sympathetic to Splint's woes, and allows refugees on occasion, they are wary of invasion themselves and so do not throw their full backing behind their beleaguered neighbors.

Historical Timeline

In this document, the aboveground region will be referred to as Splint, regardless of the time period, and the underground region will be referred to as Itlan-Youali.

Dahabu's calendar is used in Splint, as it is in most places in the world. Itlan-Youali has its own ceremonial calendar, tracking years since the Tonatiu's move into their underground realm, but uses the Dahabu calendar when it comes to interactions with the outside world for the sake of convenience.

>6,525 BD: Settling of Splint
The first settlers of Splint were semi-aquatic lizards, migrating up from the oceans below to Splint's eastern archipelagos. These were followed by humans sailing eastward from the Ulosian islands, and finally by orcs arriving south from modern-day Ley'Ork.

3025 BD: Birth of Tonameyoti Atlaca
Naming themselves the "Sun People" in their native dialect of Breziak, the humans who had arrived from Ulos formed a strong empire, built on their knowledge of magic and bolstered by their belief in the divine. Within only a few centuries, the Tonatiu swept across Splint, conquering the lizard and orc communities. The new dominion spread their religion and way of life, integrating well with the communities who had been conquered.

Within a few centuries, Tonameyoti Atlaca ruled the entirety of modern-day Splint, in addition to some southwestern parts of Ley'Ork, and experienced an age of peace. During this age, the underground realm of Itlan-Youali, the "Land in the Dark" was discovered and slowly settled. To facilitate smooth functioning of the surface and cavern worlds, a diarchy was established: a ruler of Dawn on the surface in Quetzalcamina, and a ruler of Dusk below in Ozomatli.

3025-2524 BD: Dahabu Occupation
Pincered between invading forces from Ulos and Ley'Ork, Tonameyoti Atlaca found itself trapped and outgunned. Despite their skill in magic and their faith in the divine, they could not stand against the crushing might of imperial Dahabu. Fearing for their lives, many Tonatiu fled to Itlan-Youali. Over the course of the next few centuries, these Tonatiu retrieved other fleeing citizens in a long-running rescue project, gradually growing the burgeoning civilization in the caverns.

This system lasted for five hundred years, with the aboveground capital of Quetzalcamina even being sunken down into the caverns before the invasion could reach it. All good things would come to an end, though, when the Dahabi discovered this hidden world.

In the meantime, surface-dwellers suffered under Dahabi rule, their lands being exploited for natural resources and their people being taken as slaves. With Tonameyoti Atlaca fallen, these people had no name to call themselves. Some began to simply identify as Dahabi, while others found a cultural identity in quiet resistance and songs of perseverance. From these beginnings, the revolutionary values of Splint were born.

2524-0 BD: Hidden Age

No one knows exactly how the Dahabi found Itlan-Youali. Some believe it was a traitor on the underground networks delivering citizens down, while others think it was a stroke of Dahabu's luck or a careless crystalsmith that did it. Either way, Dahabu began a march on Itlan-Youali in about 2524 BD. Fearing the worst, the Tonatiu put up a brief defense, enough to hold the invaders off for a brief moment.

As fighting began, the Tonatiu called on everything they had to seal the caverns, sacrificing those who had left to battle the invaders to their fates - but ensuring that the cenotes would remain closed, separating Itlan-Youali from the outside world until the ruling priests deemed otherwise. From this act of sacrifice, the practice of sacrifice became commonplace, and revered in Tonatiu culture. Itlan-Youali would remain hidden until the Day of Solar Wrath, when the gold-obsidian shone a bloody red.

On the surface, chaos reigned. However, Splint recovered from Solar Wrath far quicker than other nations; forever resisting against Dahabi control, they had come together under a common goal and recovered swiftly, forming the Zinaparo Kingdom.

0-1991 SD: Time of Zinaparo

Mostly ignorant of the world below their feet, the survivors of the Day of Solar Wrath swiftly took control back from the influence of Dahabu, building a nation of their own. This nation, dubbed Zinaparo, would span most of the borders of modern-day Splint. They would flourish for a long four millennia, eventually discovering the cenotes leading to Itlan-Youali.

During this time, Itlan-Youali reopened to the outside world, and Tonameyoti Atlaca would form a lasting bond with Zinaparo. Much of Zinaparo's culture became influenced by

Itlan-Youali, though they never quite converged again. Zinaparo was a proud, perhaps arrogant culture, believing that nothing could topple them. They would be proven wrong, when Ley'Ork arrived from the north bearing gifts of war and gunpowder.

1991-2006 SD: Ley-Zinaparense War

Taking place over a bloody fifteen years, the Ley-Zinaparense War decimated Splint and southwestern Ley'Ork. It's known as one of the bloodiest conflicts in southern Cahyali within the last half myria-annum. Believed to have started from mutual aggression between the two countries, the war blazed to life when Ley'Ork invaded Zinaparo's northeastern region and assassinated the local leader, a member of the royal family. Fearing the worst from a new invasion, Itlan-Youali cut off contact once again and retreated into isolationism.

Zinaparo seemed to have the upper hand until the last few months of the war, when Ley'Ork unleashed one of its newest technological marvels, in the form of a series of arcane dirty bombs. Dropped by flying platoons of Avian soldiers, these bombs, each containing destructive deferred spells, wreaked havoc on the Zinaparense landscape. Fields were destroyed, towns leveled, and even the Zinaparo palace fared no better. Still, Zinaparo refused to yield, and the bombings continued until there was no one left to resist. The last Zinaparan regent surrendered in 2006 SD, and was summarily executed.

2006-2476 SF: Ley'Orkian Occupation

For centuries after the conclusion of the Ley-Zinaparense War, Ley'Ork maintained strict control over former Zinaparo territory. Persistent propaganda all but wiped out Zinaparense culture, with the accent coming to be considered uneducated and vulgar, and holidays being considered heretical or immoral, vice-filled celebrations. Magical tradition became a unifying force for the occupied, and in the early 2000s, a rebellion led by mages sparked and nearly succeeded, with revolutionaries going as far as to launch an attack on the Ley'Orkian president during their visit to the region.

Following this, Ley'Ork instituted a strict policy within its borders banning all use of magic, which persists to this day. They tightened their hold on Splint after this, making sure to stamp out any indication of organization.

2476 SD-Today: Splintered Era

Despite persistent Ley'Orkian oppression, what remains of organized resistance in Splint still fights. Refugees from other places have arrived in the area, resisting Ley'Ork with all they have from the shadows. Groups such as Nuevo Zinera seek to restore the old

Zinaparense order, while others like the Seaseekers are proponents of gathering cultural identity into something cohesive above all else. Regardless, the various splinters that give Splint its name are united only in their resistance against their colonization. Itlan-Youali remains unerringly silent.

CULTURE

The population of Splint is cosmopolitan, with a great diversity of species and races. The downtrodden from many places in the world have gathered here. Itlan-Youali is populated by about 40% humans, 30% semi-aquatic lizards, 20% orcs, and 10% elementals. Splint has no national language, and most simply speak Saedic, while Itlan-Youali speaks a dialect of Breziak.

In Splint, being barefoot in the house is normally quite strange, while it is considered rude to *not* be barefoot within an Itlan-Youali household.

Splint: Broken Chains and Unerring Spirit

The factions of Splint have various goals, ideologies, and methods. They hail from many places in the world, from remnants of Zinaparo to disconcerted Ley'Orkian mideasterners to Ulosian proponents of Moku'pele independence. Though many of these factions fight amongst each other, there is an undercurrent belief that this vast diversity lends Splint, as a whole, some measure of strength.

Of course, there is also the great unifier of Splint: pure hatred of Ley'Ork and colonization. This sentiment has trickled down into daily life, with any form of tyranny quickly being put down, usually by force. Splinters are wise to those who might seek to take advantage of them, and are quick to remedy these threats; usually with a fireball to the face or an arrow in the back. People are slow to trust in Splint, but once trust is earned it stays steadfast.

The arts of Splint are focused on performance. While it is impossible to destroy all traces of culture, Ley'Ork has certainly done its best with stamping out permanent or visual indicators of Splinter national identity. Music has mainly developed from work songs, many of which have secret messages woven into them. Common instruments used include light percussion, such as maracas or other shaken instruments, as well as guitars and trumpets. Much Splinter clothing is bright in color and loose-fitting, though many dress more drab when attempting to avoid the colonizer's gaze.

In Splint, it isn't unheard of to have a pet alebrije, though their vibrant colors and otherworldly appearance makes them common targets for poachers, leading many of them to shun the attention of the sentient races.

Another key part of Splint society is the celebration known as La Migración, or The Migration. This is a day in which people celebrate the lives of those who have died. La Migración is celebrated not on a specific day, but is instead celebrated when the monarch butterflies travel from Ruefang back to Splint in the warmer months. It is a commonly held belief that the butterflies are the spirits of the departed and return home to visit their loved ones during the summer. It is typical in this time to share stories of those who had passed, make food, and create paper butterflies to hang around the house. During this time, it seems as if butterflies take over the nation as it is shown in clothing, jewelry, and decor. Similarly, it's incredibly disrespectful to kill a butterfly, especially during La Migración.

Itlan-Youali: Venerators of Cycles and Keepers of History

Itlan-Youali refers to the caverns themselves, while Tonameyoti Atlaca is the official name of the civilization. The people call themselves the Tonatiu, or more informally the Tlaca.

Having escaped underground and avoided the bloody history of Splint, Itlan-Youali has lived mostly undisturbed for millennia upon millennia. With limited space, their society has had little room to grow, but neither is infinite growth an objective of Tonatiu culture. As one of the few nations that escaped Dahabi dominion, Tonatiu religion is quite different than the usual. They do not worship Vormaxia, Zepherin, Aremakh, or Almar.

While they acknowledge the other gods' existence and give each of them a requisite place in their society, the main gods they worship are the Dawn, Dusk, Anpu, Aset, and Seherine, who they see as a single deity with a domain of cycles, Tlayahucoatl. Itlan-Youali is one of the few places where Priests of the Dusk exist, and are known without being chased out of polite society. Some religious rituals involve sacrifice of a willing participant, with the promise that the cycle of reincarnation will carry them into a new life. Sacrifice of an unwilling Tonatiu citizen is considered high heresy by the ruling priests.

The Tonatiu greatly value history and the perseverance of past knowledge, with vast libraries in their larger cities dedicated to archival of the years. They also put value on coexistence with nature, believing in the existence of reincarnation. The dead in Itlan-Youali are buried without embalming in Anpuan temples, left for nature to reclaim as part of the world's great cycle. Hibiscus plants are often grown over these graves, later harvested to brew tea. In coming of age ceremonies, it is traditional to drink tea made with the hibiscus flower of one's previous life to represent the cycle of life and death continuing in a new body.

Tonatiu aesthetics are quite geometric, with large chunky elements on their clothing and accessories, as well as feathers incorporated into ceremonial dress. Their art is large, bold, and iconic, taking the form of large carvings and murals. A popular sport in Itlan-Youali is a game called ollamalitzli, played on a stone court with the objective of shooting a ball through a high-up goal post.

The Tonatiu also keep populations of various tame dinosaurs as livestock and companion animals, mostly consisting of raptors. These range from dog-sized velociraptors, to larger beasts used as transportation. Alebrijes are far less common, but not unheard of housepets as well.

The document linked below is an overview of the religious practice of Itlan-Youali, though some traditions also are mainstays in Splint, albeit without the religious implication.

The Deities of Itlan-Youali

GOVERNANCE

Factions of Splint

Splint has no singular governing body, with various small factions being the majority of ruling power in the region. There are tens of these factions, but some of the biggest and most influential include:

- *Nuevo Zinera:* Led by a leader claiming to be a scion of the old Zinaparense royal family, this group seeks to restore the kingdom from before the Ley-Zinaparense War, and is known for its violent methods. Nuevo Zinera controls the most territory within Splint, mostly in the northern regions. While some see them as a legitimate organization, many see them as nothing more than a gang of brutes operating under the simple illusion of royalty.
- *The Seaseeker Group:* Made up of mages and scholars and backed by Ruefang, this small, humanistic coalition of librarians seeks to promote and restore cultural artifacts of Splint, and unify the region under a single cultural identity. They believe this will be the start of successful retaliation against Ley'Ork.
- *Dominion Del Sol (Melauak Tonatiu):* Led by exiles from Itlan-Youali kicked out for warmongering ways, this group controls much of the territory around Blake's Cove and has the objective of not only defeating Ley'Ork, but bringing Itlan-Youali to the surface and reestablishing its sole hold over the region. They believe that the Tonatiu are the true inheritors of Splint.
- *Kainoa Front:* Consisting of revolutionaries from Ulos, the Kainoa Front is known to ally with whichever other faction best suits them, with the end goal of driving Ley'Ork out of Moku'pele, a recently annexed Ulosian island, without involving the Ulosian government. Their leadership changes often, and they can't seem to decide whether to go about matters with peace or war.
- *Splint People's Union:* A communist group made up of workers, mostly from Pike and immigrants from other Ley'Ork cities. They fight mostly for the power of workers and believe that the future of Splint is in a new national identity. They hold relatively little sway, given that their goals conflict not only with Ley'Ork, but with many of the other powerful factions. However, their ideology has become increasingly popular in recent years, as the violence of Nuevo Zinera and the Dominion Del Sol ramps up.

Splint has no overarching laws, with punishable offenses varying too greatly between factions to accurately represent. However, one thing is common between all of them: slavers, businessmen, and cops will probably be beaten to death in the streets.

Itlan-Youali's Governance

Despite its relatively small size, Itlan-Youali has two capitals: Ozomatli, the Moon Capital, and Quetzalcamina, the Sun Capital. As a diarchy, two rulers are chosen: one in each capital city, usually appointed by "divine right" and decided by the priesthoods. Most of these decisions hinge on declarations of past life. These priesthoods are primarily worshipers of the Cycle, a deity who includes the Dawn, Dusk, Anpu, Aset, and Seherine. (Mechanically speaking, a priest of the Cycle could follow any single one of these priesthoods. Different aspects of the Cycle belief manifest as different powers, and attending to more than one "aspect" of the Cycle at once is considered overstepping your duty as a mortal, and borderline heretical.)

Also holding immense political sway in Itlan-Youali is the Crystalsmiths' Guild, responsible for constant maintenance of the gold-obsidian that refracts and delivers light to the underground realms, allowing for the growth of crops.

Following is a non-exhaustive list of major crimes and their punishments in Itlan-Youali:

- Theft, of personal or public property: Fine equal to double the stolen item's worth
- Tampering with gold-obsidian constructs: Incarceration for 1-5 years
- Assault: Incarceration for 4-7 years and an additional consequence chosen by the victim
- Murder or rape: Incarceration for at least 15 years, or execution depending on degree
- Heretical religious ritual, including open worship of demons, fey entities, or eldritch beings: Exile
- Ownership of another intelligent humanoid being: Execution
- Treason: Execution

Itlan-Youali policy has always been aggressively isolationist, refusing to take direct involvement in foreign affairs, especially considering the tumultuous conditions above. This is driven mostly by a fear of invasion. The Tonatiu have evaded destruction many times, and are not open to risking this again. Those who disregard this policy and expose Itlan-Youali to outside threats are considered traitors. Some evade this punishment, escaping to the surface. Many of these escapees have formed the Dominion Del Sol.

LOCATIONS & REGIONS

Splint

Splint geographically is split up into jungles, deserts, mountains, and tropical regions with various deposits of gold obsidian and cenotes scattered across the landscape

La Sepultura

A vast jungle with a myriad of species and peoples within. Sure you can find your normal creatures like monkeys, exotic birds, and plenty of insects, but in the hidden reaches of the trees the fabled alebrijes dwell, a true sight to behold with their numerous appearances and colors, no two alebrijes are the same. La Sepultura is also the home of the local butterfly population during the colder months, migrating to Los Circulos during the warmer months.

- Ciudad de Fuentes - The largest single settlement in Splint located on the border between La Sepultura and the mountains to the east.

Volcan Tletzintli

The tallest peak in Splint, located right on the waterfront. In the tales of the Tonatiu, Volcan Tletzintli was the first gift of Tlayahucoatl to the Tonatiu, granting the early settlers the gifts of fire and light from the remains of the Sun that came before this one. Today, Volcan Tletzintli is a dormant volcano and a popular destination for Ley'Ork tourists.

Los Circulos

The name for the vast islands dotted off the coast of mainland Splint. The most common methods of transport about these islands is by use of personal boats, though some travelers do rent out places on commercial ships to travel or hire local Earth Mages to construct temporary bridges.

- Pike - This city is the home of the central base of the Dominion del Sol located to the south of La Sepultura
- Altepetl - One of the last independent settlements that practice Tonatiu culture, albeit in secrecy.
- Calezaro - A thriving trade city with wares and peoples from all over the world coming to trade their goods in a place without taxes

Desierto de los Leones

A vast stretch of deserts, badlands, and arid plains stretching all the way to Ley'Ork. There are a multitude of nomadic communities throughout the deserts surviving off the land. There is also a surprisingly large population of giant bees that live within the flowers of local cactuses.

- Yabona - One of the few permanent settlements in the desert. This is where the local nomadic tribes pass through to do trade with traders from La Sepultura. This is also the home of the central base for the Seaseekers.
- Rio Xochitl - A natural barrier between Splint and Ley'Ork. This is generally considered to be the edge of Splint's influence.

Itlan-Youali

Itlan-Youali sits atop the barrier between the plane of Cahyali and the Kurago, and is generally considered the "lowest point" of the plane of Cahyali. The islands of Itlan-Youali are anchored by their cenotes, though are still prone to some drifting, especially in the case of islands without any ties to a cenote. Otherwise, Itlan-Youali is nearly identical geographically to Splint, and is incredibly biodiverse, harboring various species of alebrije and dinosaur as their main fauna. Traveling across the Seas of Mist has been made much easier with recent advancements in gold obsidian technology, with large rafts outfitted with gold obsidian being able to hover on the sea as if it were a normal raft.

Solar Isle

The largest landmass on Splint which is home to the most cenotes in all of Itlan-Youali. The Solar Isle can be split into two parts, the Tlamati Jungle, which is to the north of the isle, and the Ixtlahuaca Plains to the south.

- Coatlpetl - The largest settlement on the Solar Isle and the home of Tonatiu commerce

Twilit Isle

An island off the northwestern coast of the Solar Isle that is composed entirely of jungles

- Quetzalcamina - The Sun Capital of Itlan-Youali hidden within the jungles

Umbral Isle

A smaller island south of the Cocolihui Islands and southeast of the Solar Isle. This island is predominantly made up of plains, though there are some forests on the southern half.

- Tlailotlacan - Home and school of the elemental mages and caretakers of the isle

Lunar Isle

The second largest island in Itlan-Youali with plains to the southeastern tip and forests to the northwest. There is also a large lake in the center of the island.

- Ozomatli - The Moon Capital of Itlan-Youali, bordering a lake and the northern forests
- Tototl - A smaller city tucked away in the forests that is home to famed velociraptor riders and alebrije tamers

Cocolihui Islands

A chain of five islands that lack a nearby cenote to bind them to any one defined space. Instead, the five islands circle around each other as if caught in a vortex, with each island holding the main headquarters for one Dominion of Tlayahucoatl. It is traditional for new priests and rulers to make a pilgrimage to each of these islands before going to their stationed village.

GOLD OBSIDIAN

Geology

Gold Obsidian is a unique form of obsidian found within the ground of Splint and Itlan-Youali. Gold Obsidian typically forms in veins of glass crystals that travel all the way from the sun in Splint down to the caverns of Itlan-Youali. Above ground, gold obsidian is easily identified by the large crystals jutting out of the ground, and it is considered bad form to obscure these crystals from the light of the sun or the moon given its cultural significance, though it's not uncommon for those aboveground to take pieces of gold obsidian crystals for use in appliances or decorations.

When exposed to sunlight, the obsidian will shine a golden hue and give off its own light, actually absorbing the sun's energy. Moreover, when exposed to moonlight, the obsidian will instead shine silvery white, though it cannot actually absorb energy from the moon.

This energy can then be tapped into by individuals attuned to their specific crystals, though crystals will ambiently let off sun energy if it is not specifically attuned.

Cultural Ties

Gold Obsidian is the lifeblood of both Splint and Itlan-Youali's culture, and can commonly be found in art, jewelry, and even appliances such as flashlights or streetlamps. It is believed that gold obsidian was given to the people of Tomameyoti Atlaca by Tlayahucoatl as a reminder of the cycle of the sun and moon, and how even in the face of night, day will always come again.

Gold Obsidian is doubly important for those in Itlan-Youali as it is the main source of light during the day and night in the underground caverns, with the light traveling down the veins of gold obsidian into the caverns, releasing daylight during the day and reflecting moonlight at night.

CENOTES

Geography

Cenotes are a geographical feature unique to the Splint area. Cenotes are large holes in the ground with incredibly deep pools of water below. In ancient times, cenotes were considered holy sites and temples to Tlayahucoatl were built on top of them, some of which still remain to this day.

Magical Traits

Cenotes are not all that they appear to be. They may seem like a nice place to take a swim, and to most that's all they are. However, to those aware of the existence of Itlan-Youali, they know that the water is actually magically suspended above a large cave, and if someone swam to the bottom of the water then they would fall into Itlan-Youali.

Cenotes function on a cycle of 52 minute intervals, during which the 'flow' of the cave is changed. For 52 minutes, the gravity in the cave acts as normal, and allows individuals within it to fall into Itlan-Youali. Then, for another 52 minutes, the gravity in the cave reverses, allowing individuals already in Itlan-Youali to exit. While this shift in the cave's gravity doesn't affect the water, it does affect things that hit the bottom of the water during the gravitational shift, sending them flying upwards back to the top of the cenote. This shift in gravity is also what gives Itlan-Youali weather patterns, as the water suspended in the cenotes drip when the gravity shifts, creating condensation and weather in the caves. However, the water levels in the cenotes themselves are replenished by the rain in the region, so changes in water level are minute at worst.

If someone is unsure as to what part of the cycle the cenote is in Splint-side, the most common way is to drop a large rock in. If the rock flies back up, then it's in reverse fall, and if it doesn't then it's in standard fall. In Itlan-Youali, Tlayahucoatl Priests of the Domain of Fate (Seherites) are tasked with keeping track of the flow of the cenote.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Below is a link to the pronunciation guide! Be sure to click on the sound buttons if you want to hear the words sounded out!

Splint & Itlan-Youali Pronunciation Guide