

CHILDREN OF QOTAL

A Faction for 5th Edition

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For almost two centuries now, the strange and otherworldly cultures of Maztica have captured the imaginations of thousands along the length of the Sword Coast. All the while, the Children of Qotal keep silent, overseeing the True World's influence grow in Faerun. Their goal is simple: to make sure that Maztica's legacy in Faerûn is protected from those who wish to exploit it.

As a faction, the Children of Qotal are an understandably minor force among the Sword Coast's more influential players. Only when Maztican people, relics and creatures emerge to potentially alter the course of Faerûn's history does the faction emerge from the shadows and does what it sees as necessary.

History

Most Faerûnians don't know that the Children of Qotal exist, and the faction often desires it that way. Its history is known only either to those who are Children themselves, or to outsiders who delve deep enough into the lore to know that the faction exists at all.

As with many stories from the True World, the Children of Qotal has its origins in the arrival of Faerûnian explorers and their so-called "discovery" of Maztica. Opportunistic adventurers from Amn, in their zealous drive to plunder the immeasurable wealth of the lands that have been stretched out before them, captured a young aarakocra nomad priestess in the canyons of Payit and forcibly took her back to Faerûn as a living museum piece for curious onlookers.

The winged priestess was a devotee of Qotal, the famed Feathered Dragon who long ago had took her kind under His protection. Caged for two years and separated by an ocean away from the land blessed by her god, she mustered all her strength and eventually broke free from her tight bonds, fleeing to the edges of Anauroch where she tended to her scars and tattered feathers. A group of outcasts eventually took her in and nursed her back to a semblance of health; in turn, she told

them of her origins and her divine bond to her feathered god. It was sheer luck that the priestess had found a receptive audience; here in the dry plains that mirrored Payit, the Children of Qotal were thus born.

In its early days the faction never gained more than a handful of adherents, and it served little more than a roving venue for exchanging what most Faerûnians saw as novel ideas. But all this changed during the Spellplague, when the aarakocra priestess sensed the disappearance of Maztica in the patterns of blue fire that swept across the world. Despondent on the loss of her homeland, as well as the silence of her feathered god, she nevertheless swore an oath to keep the legacy of the True World alive in the land that had taken her in as a slave. The shadows of a more dangerous world allowed for more Faerûnians to find solace as Children of Qotal, though they each had to swear an oath to keep the culture they were to pass on as preserved as possible. Slowly, the faction thrived.

With Maztica's recent return to its proper place in the order of things, an interest in the ways of the True World has been renewed. The Children of Qotal today has never had so many adherents, and they continue to stand guard against the exploitation of what the True World owns in the name of the Feathered Dragon.

Membership

Surprisingly for such a faction rooted in the cultures of the True World, only a handful of the Children of Qotal are of true Maztican ancestry. The great majority of its members are from Faerûn itself, those who have proven to possess more than just a passing interest in the ways of the people from across the Trackless Sea. They have a thorough understanding of who the Feathered Dragon is, and subsequently, as their name suggests, uphold the god's ideals. They carefully impart knowledge of the True World to those who seek it, and make certain that it does not become corrupted in the process. The Children of Qotal also keep close tabs on evils from Maztica itself; when

such threats arise, members of the faction do whatever it deems necessary to contain or destroy them.

The Children of Qotal don't go out of their way to proclaim their existence; most Faerûnians are still understandably fearful of the unfamiliar and the "exotic." Only a multicolored glyph-like image tattooed on a member's arm would identify a Child of Qotal to another. It does help that the faction's leaders still encourage members to do good and defend the helpless, but manifesting oneself as a Child of Qotal is strongly discouraged if Maztican interests are not at play.

Renown

Just like the other great factions that exist in Faerûn, the Children of Qotal have their own system of initiation and promotion. These exclude various other benefits members see fit to give each other.

Scale of Qotal. An initiate of the Children of Qotal is seen by her peers as a defender of the faction. Food and other forms of basic nourishment provided by the faction carry no cost for her. Additionally, she can purchase light armor and simple weapons from any stockpile run by the faction for half its usual price.

Eye of Qotal. As a faction member's reputation increases, so do her responsibilities. She becomes part of the crude yet functional information network that the Children of Qotal have constructed to keep watch over Maztica's legacy in Faerûn. Light armor and simple weapons purchased from the faction are now free of charge for her, as well as lodgings in faction hideouts.

Talon of Qotal. Further up the ranks, a Child of Qotal becomes more than just an observer. She has trained long enough to take a more active role in protecting Maztican interests, and she gains a boon in the process. When confronted by any opponent that goes directly against any Child of Qotal (including herself), she gains advantage to the first attack roll she makes against that opponent; this boon only serves her once each encounter.

Breath of Qotal. Upon reaching this stage of her affiliation, a Child of Qotal's commitment to protecting the True World's legacies in Faerûn gives her the opportunity to call upon the wisdom of the land itself for healing. During any short rest immediately after taking damage, she can regain an additional number of hit points equal to her Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

Wing of Qotal. At the highest levels of renown within the faction, a Child of Qotal is revered almost as a literal offspring of the Feathered Dragon, and is accorded due respect and admiration by friend and foe alike. Unless she attacks first, she could not be the direct target of any attack made by an opponent.

Tlali Payac and the Council of Feathers

At the highest levels of organization, the Council of Feathers serves as the leaders of the faction. There have been no more than five members on the Council, and at any given time there are no less than three who are actively overseeing the faction's affairs.

Above all of this structure is Tlali Payac, the faction's spiritual leader. She was the aarakocra priestess who was captured all those years ago by mercenaries from Amn; now, venerated in her old age (and she has lived much, much longer than most of her kind), she has become a sort of "great grandmother" to the faction. She has decided to cease drinking the fancy elixirs which many in the faction have lovingly offered to her and that have kept her alive for so long; Tlali has decided that, some time in the near future, when the stars are right and the tides are mellow, she would finally embark on that last journey across the Trackless Sea back to Payit. She envisions herself atop the canyons of her homeland, spreading her wings one last time and taking flight to the next world that Qotal Himself has assured her.

Lair

Early in its history the Children of Qotal saw no need to have a permanent base of operations. In the years after the Spellplague, the faction eventually found it necessary to create small safe houses, which they label as “shrines,” to accommodate the various needs of its steadily growing membership. These shrines are scattered all across Faerûn, though they are understandably more concentrated along the length of the cosmopolitan Sword Coast.

Somewhere on the highway between Waterdeep and Baldur’s Gate stands a traveler’s inn that is as nondescript as most others, save for its unusual architecture that incorporates almost no angles or corners. This inn is the main headquarters of the faction and its largest shrine, and on the tenday of Midsummer the place comes alive as Children from all over Faerûn gather to renew their oaths, and to celebrate Qotal’s blessings upon them.

Keeping Vigil

As Maztica’s influence increases in Faerûn, so too does the vigilance of the Children of Qotal. Various places, events, people and things keep the faction busy. Below are just a few of many others that have piqued the interest of the faction.

Couatls. The more mystically inclined among the faction believe that the celestial beings known as couatls are the physical manifestations of Qotal’s will. News of their appearance on Faerûn are seen as omens, and the faction never fails to dispatch Children to places where couatls have recently been sighted, finding hidden meaning in whatever events have transpired there.

The Smoky Mirror. This artifact is a disk made of the blackest of obsidian, polished to a near-flawless smoothness. The Council of Feathers believes that this artifact, plundered from Maztica more than a hundred years ago by Amnian explorers, manifests the will of Qotal’s nemesis, the evil god Zaltec. Dozens of murders recorded throughout the decades have been attributed

to the mirror, and all of the victims have had their hearts ritually eviscerated—a hallmark of Zaltec worship.

The mirror has so far evaded confiscation by the Children of Qotal, as if it knows it was being hunted down by them. Curiously, it has never been sighted more than a tenday beyond the northern Cloudpeak Mountains, as if it were guarding something within the vicinity.

The Cult of the Guardian by the Stairs. Among some of the more philosophical denizens of the Sword Coast, it is believed that the gods of Maztica are but aspects of those who already reside on Faerûn (or vice versa). Rightly or wrongly, some of the more religious among the Children of Qotal are understandably concerned about how the gods of the True World should be placated. In Waterdeep, a mystery cult known as the Guardian by the Stairs has grown around the worship of Helm as a manifestation of the lost Maztican god Kukul. That by itself poses little problems to the Children of Qotal; however, rumors have surfaced of greedy merchant patrons serving as priests, using the syncretistic religion to profit from donations for their own benefit.

Though news is hard to come by, the affluent cult is said to meet once a tenday somewhere in Sea Ward; money is offered in the guise of “offerings,” and rare Maztican relics are said to be traded and indiscriminately used as symbols of opulence. The Council of Feathers has deemed such worship as “exploitation,” and seeks to dismantle the Cult as quickly and as expeditiously as possible. So far, however, the Cult of the Guardian by the Stairs has remained an elusive target.

Maztican Magic. In recent years, some of the more traditional members of the Children of Qotal have become concerned with the inexplicable increase of Faerûnians who have shown proficiency in the art of *pluma* and *hishna* magic. A few have openly expressed their concern that these users of Maztican magic may be blending them with Faerûnian magic, thereby diluting their spiritual essences. Tlali Payac has so far

made no comment on this (considering that the Children of Qotal is almost entirely composed of Faerûnians), but it has nevertheless caused a philosophical divide within the faction. All members agree, however, that Faerûnians outside the faction who use the magic of feathers and the magic of fang, claw and venom must be closely watched.

The Helm of the Condor. This ornate wooden helm was once the headdress of a powerful Maztican warrior-priest who died defending his home; it was taken back to Faerûn as a spoil of war. The Zhentarim eventually came into possession of it, and it was then used indiscriminately by the faction's members as a tool to intimidate

those who opposed them. Though the Helm of the Condor has no magical abilities that anyone knows of, it took at least a decade and many lives before the Children of Qotal finally took a hold of it. The Helm of the Condor is now within the hands of the Council of Feathers—but the Zhentarim don't take stealing from their vaults lightly, and they never forget even just a minor slight. Time and again, Zhentarim agents have tried to take back the Helm; they have so far failed thanks to the vigilance of the Children of Qotal. However, the next attempt by the Zhentarim to take it back might not be as simple to thwart as those before.