

AZTEC ARCHITECTURE

by

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INTRODUCTION

Aztec architecture reflects the values and civilization of an empire, and studying Aztec architecture is instrumental in understanding the history of the Aztecs, including their migration across Mexico and their re-enactment of religious rituals. Aztec architecture can be best described as monumental. Its purpose was to manifest power, while at the same time adhering to strong religious beliefs. This is evident in the design of the temples, shrines, palaces, and everyday homes.

The capital city of the Aztec Empire was Tenochtitlán, located in present day Mexico City. Tenochtitlán was an overwhelming, monumental city that was built on top of small islands and marsh lands. It was the third largest city in the world, after Constantinople and Paris, housing 200,000 inhabitants at its height. Tenochtitlán was the city where the most impressive and monumental Aztec architecture was to be found. After the Spanish conquest, the city was looted, torn down, and its materials were used to build present day Mexico City. From archaeological and various historical documents, such as Spanish Chronicles and codices written by friars, Indians and other historians, the extent and significance of the Aztec architecture can be deciphered.

Although Tenochtitlán was the most impressive of the Aztec cities, there were other cities and archaeological sites that represented Aztec architecture, daily life and ritual. The Aztecs had a long migration history, during which time they split several times. The people who founded Tenochtitlán, however, remained united and devoted themselves to the worship of Huitzilopochtli, the sun and war god. Because the Aztecs migrated for several hundred years and split several times, they adopted various gods, customs, architectural styles, and techniques. The final migratory split occurred in Coatepec (near Tula), where Huitzilopochtli, one of the most important Aztec deities, was born. Half of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán was built in his honor.

The Great Temple of Tenochtitlán contains the history of Huitzilopochtli in sculpture (see section below: Great Temple for more details). The Great Temple was the sacred place where the Aztecs worshiped Huitzilopochtli and sacrificed human beings in order to appease him. To fully understand Aztec architecture, an extensive examination of Aztec cosmology, mythology and culture is required because most Aztec structures were religiously charged. This is evident in the various temples and shrines that were built in order to worship Aztec deities and offer human sacrifices. (See Chapter 6: Religion, Cosmology and Mythology for more details).

Aztec architecture was heavily influenced by the Toltecs of Colhuacan, the Tepanecs of Atzacapotzalco, and the Acolhuas of Tetzaco. Because the Aztec empire was built through conquest, the Aztecs had to find ways to integrate various dominated ethnic groups. Thus, the Aztecs relied on their architecture and artwork to promote their worldview. The massive structures reflected the military might of the empire.

The Aztecs were well organized and had strong infrastructures and systems that mobilized people and material resources in order to build large edifices that met the needs of their population. Tenochtitlán, the capital city, symbolized Aztec power. Aztec architecture, being similar to that of other Mesoamerican cultures, possessed an innate sense of order and symmetry. Geometric designs and sweeping lines were representations of religious tenets and the power of the state. In addition, the Aztecs used bas-reliefs, walls, plazas, and platforms, as media to represent their gods and ideals. During various epochs of their empire, the Aztecs added new techniques and materials to their structures. Examples of Aztec monumentality and grandeur are seen at the Great Temple, where 8,000 people could fit into its plaza, and the market of Tlatelolco that housed 20,000 people on market days. Aztec architectural adaptation and ingenuity can be seen at Malinalco (see section below), where a temple was cut out of the rock and was integrated into a mountain.

Symbolism

Aztec architecture is deeply embedded with symbolism. The cardinal points are

religious symbols for the four directions and corners of the earth. They are religious entities that have divine patrons, colors, days, and year signs which vary according to different historical versions. For the Aztecs, North was represented by the color black and ruled by Tezcatlipoca, god of fate, destiny and night; it was the region called Mictlampa, meaning the place of death, and its associated symbol was a flint knife. South was characterized by the color blue and ruled by Huitzilopochtli, the solar god and war deity; this was the region called Huitztlampa, the region of thorns, and its symbol was the rabbit. East was associated with the color red and ruled by Tonatiuh, the sun god, Xipe Totec, the god of fertility and vegetation, and Camaxtli-Mixcoatl, the god of hunting; it was the region called Tlapallan, meaning the place of red color and also Tlapcopa, the place of light; its symbol was a reed. West was represented by the color white and ruled by Quetzalcoatl, the god of wind, Venus, and wisdom. The West, where the sun goes down into the land of night and the dead, was the region called Cihuatlampa, meaning the place of the women, where the *Cihuateteo* (deified women who have died in childbirth) escorted the sun each evening after his journey across the sky; its symbol was a house. These gods of the four directions are responsible for fire, sun, the waters, earth, man, the place of the dead, and time. They maintain equilibrium on earth. The Aztecs were aware of the above significance, and for that reason, their City of Tenochtitlán and its structures, specifically the Great Temple, followed those cosmological patterns [Fig. 69]. It can be clearly seen in the *Codex Mendoza* with the Ceremonial Precinct of Tenochtitlán at the center with four sectors emanating from it oriented to the four cardinal points. The Aztecs wished to maintain equilibrium and appease their gods for fear that the earth would collapse like it did during the First to the Fourth Sun time periods (previous creations of the world). Thus, the city's orientation is a result of the belief that when the Fifth Sun was created in Teotihuacán, the diverse gods faced different directions to see from which direction the new sun would rise. According to the *Leyenda de los Soles* (Myth of the Suns), the Great Temple faces west because the first god to see the sun was Quetzalcoatl, whose temple faces east, following the path of the sun.

Other symbols seen in Aztec architecture are: the eagle representing the sun at the zenith as well as the warriors, serpents symbolizing water or fire serpents, each are

linked to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli, respectively, and the conch shell relating to fertility, life and creation. Representations of frogs as aquatic creature were reminiscent of Tlaloc symbols.

TYPES OF ARCHITECTURE

General Construction of Pyramid-Temples

Pyramid-temples were built to facilitate the Aztec religion and worldview. Building pyramid temples was one of the most important architectural duties for the Aztecs because of their religious significance. They were government sponsored public works designed to create a sense of religious piety and imperial power. They were believed to represent mountains that were the sources of water and fertility, and the home of the spirits of Aztec ancestors. Pyramid-temples, like mountains, also symbolized the concept of *altepetl*, meaning the heart of the city filled with fertilizing water. They also served as important sanctuaries where rituals were celebrated, and important people were sometimes buried within them. More importantly, they represented the celestial order where the cosmos was divided into 13 sections, each associated with a different superhuman phenomenon. For that reason, according to Van Zantwijk, many of the pyramids that followed the blueprint of the Great Temple consisted of four platforms built step like on top of each other, relating to the four cardinal directions. The three lower platforms multiplied by the four sides, consisted of 12 sections (3 X 4); the 13th section was the small top platform where the dual temples of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc were built [See [Fig. 70](#)].

Most pyramid-temples followed a general pattern that consisted of a platform, a long broad, steep double staircase rising from the center, with balustrades along the sides of the steps. Sculpted stone blocks and skulls were used to decorate the platform and the end of the balustrades. Constructed with cosmology in mind, pyramid-temples always faced west and were cardinally located on the eastern side of the town center/plaza border. The double staircase also faced west, where the sun descended into the

underworld.

The tops of the pyramids had small flat plateaus where a temple or a sacrificial block of a temple would be built. There was an adjoining back room that contained the idol to whom the temple was dedicated and an antechamber for a priest. Most temples' inside walls were ornamented with either sculpture or paint. Temples were also decorated with geometrically carved blocks of stone. Early Aztecs built pyramids in a style similar to the ones of earlier Classic and Post-Classic Mesoamerican people. However, it is important to note there were some differences. Some of the most common features found in Aztec pyramid-temples are: 13 steps along the stairway, staircases with two balustrades with changing slopes at the top, almost becoming vertical, and representations of an eagle that is the *nahual* (disguise or form) of Huitzilopochtli-Tonatiuh. The elements can be seen on temples at Tepoztlan, the Temple of the Feathered Serpent in Xochicalco, the round temple of Cempoala, and the temple of Ehecatl in Calixtlahuaca.

Temples

A temple was usually found on the top of a pyramid, though there were exceptions, located at the center of the city. Since many state related ceremonies were held inside temples, politics and religion could not be separate. This union of politics and religion increased the emperors' authority and legitimized their respective gods' power. Temples were provided with priests, adjoining residences, schools, and land (as seen with the Great Temple).

The empire's cosmological and religious ideals were manifested in temples. They were the center point for the four cardinal directions, the place where the vertical channel or axis led to heaven and the underworld and where the supreme ruler interacted with the gods [Fig. 70]. Many of the ceremonies held at the temples followed seasonal and festival calendars. According to Aztec beliefs, it was essential to provide the gods with nourishment in order to prevent the end of the world. The nourishment of the gods was the blood shed during human sacrifice. Not all temples were built for human sacrifice. The Aztecs were a polytheistic people who built various temples in honor of different

gods. For that reason, the offerings or honors presented to different deities varied. In addition, temples were places for the renewal of the empire, altars of rebirth and hope.

Temples were constructed in accordance to the four cardinal directions. Temples were normally erected on the eastern border of the town center or plaza, facing west. If a new temple was to replace an already existing temple, the older temple was not destroyed. Rather, builders would add a new structure over the existing edifice. The result would be a new temple that was larger, more extravagant, and more detailed. Enlarging preexisting structures meant adding more stairs and making the sacrificial area more spacious. According to the emperor, layering a preexisting temple was acceptable because the gods had already blessed the original temple. Building a more magnificent temple paid further tribute to the gods.

The appearance of most temples was similar. They resembled truncated pyramids. The outside of the temples had terraces and steps. Some of the most detailed and decorated parts of the temple were the staircases that pointed towards the heavens. Stone serpent heads were frequently placed at the end of the staircases. The serpent heads' signified the representation of Coatepec (Snake Mountain), as the place of birth of the Aztecs' main god Huitzilopochtli. Also, it is believed that by using poisonous or dangerous animals for décor, evil spirits would be warded away.

Types of Pyramids

ROUND PYRAMIDS

Round pyramids are predominantly found in Calixtlahuaca, in the Toluca Valley. They are dedicated to the god of the wind Ehecatl, one of the forms of god Quetzalcoatl. The structures were constructed in a circular fashion to facilitate wind flow thereby preventing the structure from acting as a barrier that could hinder the wind god's entrance. According to Aztec and other pre-Columbian beliefs, Ehecatl blew wind in the four cardinal directions so that the earth would be cleansed, enabling Tlaloc to send rain. Gentle wind would be sent to the east, where *Tlalocan* (paradise of god Tlaloc) lived. Wind with gales would be sent in the direction of *Mictlan* (the underworld). Gentle

cold wind blew to the west where the *Cihuapipiltin* (noble women who died while giving birth) stayed, and to the south where the Huitznahua gods (the stars of the south) resided, strong gusty winds were blown [[Fig. 160](#)].

TWIN STAIRS PYRAMIDS

An example of a twin stairs pyramid is the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán. At its summit, it had two temples and a double staircase. The temples were dedicated to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. The temple on the left side honored Tlaloc. Tlaloc was responsible for providing a good rain season and an abundant harvest. If enough rain was not forthcoming, the result was famine. For that reason, Tlaloc was highly revered. His temple was decorated with blue and white, the colors that symbolized water and moisture. The temple on the right side was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli. It was painted in red and white in honor of war and sacrifice. The Great Temple was very steep and high in altitude. The temples on top of the pyramid could not be seen unless a person stood on the platform. Temples similar to the Great Temple were tall in height because the gods lived in the sky and above the people. Being at the summit of a pyramid was the closest a person could be to the gods [[Fig. 76a](#)]. Other examples of double staircase pyramids are found in Tenayuca and Tlatelolco.

SHRINES (ADORATORIOS)

Aztec shrines were important religious structures. Since the Aztecs were polytheistic, each shrine that was built was to honor a specific god. Since different shrines worshiped a specific god, their respective appearances were relatively diverse. Although shrines' exteriors varied, their internal structure was more uniform. The interior usually had a circular form with a round table in the middle of the room that was used to hold the offerings to the cult of the god to whom the shrine was built. Since the Aztecs were extremely devout and had many offerings, there usually was not enough room for all the offerings on the shrine. It was not uncommon for an additional building to be added. The adjoining structure consisted of a rectangular building that led to a smaller round room where there was a fire in the center to burn offerings. It was often the case that the second building would burn down because the roof was thatched of grass and

straw. It is believed that the above is the reason why large quantities of shrines were built, and why they were abundant throughout the Aztec empire. These shrines played an integral part in the religious lives of Aztecs who strongly believed that offerings were essential in pleasing the gods. Examples of these shrines are found in Mount Tlaloc and in the *Huixachtepetl* or Hill of the Star (presently Cerro de la Estrella) [\[Fig. 71\]](#).

Early Capital Cities

The general layout and architecture of Aztec capital cities was formally planned around a center with randomly scattered homes in the outskirts of town. Buildings were cosmologically oriented. At the heart of the city, there was a rectangular public plaza with civic and religious buildings at its borders. Most temples, shrines, and pyramid-temples were found in this area. Beyond the central area there were markets, dwellings, schools, and other randomly scattered buildings.

City-State Capitals

City-state capitals were cities that had control of provinces, and they were usually planned in a similar manner as the more local capital cities. Like capital cities, city-state capitals were also cosmologically oriented. They had a central plaza with adjoining civic and religious structures. Pyramid-temples were on the eastern side of the plaza facing west. Other important civic or religious buildings had a designated location according to the four cardinal directions. Since the Aztec empire was large and it dominated many cultures, most city-states had little or no contact with the imperial metropolis. As a result, the city-state capitals played a more important role in the daily lives of the people than did Tenochtitlán. City-state capitals were used by peasants to take care of personal, religious, and administrative obligations, like market days and other activities.

Ballcourts

Ball courts were used to play the famous Mesoamerican Ballgame, and they were generally constructed according to the traditional I-shape [\[Fig. 72\]](#), though there were some variations. The ballcourt was called *tlachco*, and the game played on the *tlachco* was *tlachtli* or *ullamaliztli*. The *tlachtli* was part of an overall early Mesoamerican

tradition that is still played today in some parts of Mexico. For the Aztecs, the ballgame was the main sport that embodied recreation and religious ritual, and whenever the Aztecs settled a site, their first act was to build a shrine for Huitzilopochtli and a ballcourt next to it. Ballcourts were associated to the myth of Huitzilopochtli at Coatepec, where he fought Coyolxauhqui (Moon goddess) and the Centzohuitznahua (the 400 stars), decapitated them, and ate their hearts at the center of the ballcourt called *itzompan* (place of the skull). The myth of Coatepec reflects the daily cosmic fight between the Sun (light and life) and the nocturnal celestial bodies (death and darkness) and the permanent victory of the Sun that allows the continuity of Life in the Universe. The movement of the ball was a metaphor for the cult drama of the moving sun across the sky, and was intended to reflect the celestial events on earth.

Aqueducts and Dams

The major cities of Tenochtitlán and Tlatelolco were erected on tiny marshy islands along Lake Tetzaco. Those swampy islands had a limited supply of drinking water, so an aqueduct was built to carry fresh water over the lake from springs at Chapultepec on the mainland [\[Fig. 73\]](#). The Aztecs also created long canals for irrigation of the fields, and in the times of the king Motecuzoma I, the Tezcocan king Netzahuacoyotl built a dyke or dam that protected Tenochtitlán from floods that were very destructive during heavy rainy seasons. These sophisticated hydraulic works were some of the most impressive accomplishments of Aztec technology.

Markets

All major cities had thriving markets located near or adjacent to the main temple at the center of the community [\[Fig. 74\]](#). According to Spanish chroniclers, Aztec law required that one goes to the market and bring supplies to town. Nothing could be sold on the way to the market for fear that of the Market god would punish the offender; this was enforced by strict penalties under the law. Markets were important not only for the economic prosperity of the city, but they also served as meeting places for gathering information such as rumors of rebellions or attacks by neighboring peoples, as was the case during the early years of the empire. Although markets and their respective plazas did not contain immense buildings like the Great Temple or palaces, they are important

to the architecture of the Aztecs in terms of their location, layout, and cosmological implications.

Gardens

Many Aztec gardens were modeled after an old garden discovered by Motecuhzoma I in Huaxtepec that once belonged to “the ancestors.” The emperor decided to restore and rebuild the garden and a variety of plants and fauna were brought from other regions and planted. There after, other gardens flourished in cities such as the one founded by Netzahuacoyotl in Tetzcotzinco, several in Itztapalapa, Tetzco, Tlatelolco, and in the palaces of future emperors (See Tetzcotzinco gardens later in this section). They were well organized and incorporated into the architectural plan of palaces. The gardens were primarily kept for pleasure, but they also held medicinal plants. Most gardens were very similar and can be compared to that of the palace of Itztapalapa that was described by Hernán Cortés (1986) as spaces with many trees and sweet-scented flowers. Bathing places of fresh water with well constructed steps leading down to the bottom allowed rulers a peaceful resting place. There was also a large orchard tree near the house, overlooked by a high terrace with many beautiful corridors and rooms. Within the orchard was a great square pool of fresh water, very well constructed, with sides of handsome masonry, around which runs a walk with a well-laid pavement of tiles, so wide that four persons can walk abreast on it, and 400 paces square, making it all 600 paces. On the other side of the promenade toward the wall of the garden were hedges of lattice work made of cane, behind which were all sorts of plantations of trees and aromatic herbs. The pool contained many fish and different kinds of waterfowl.

BUILDING MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

The Aztecs were adept builders and craftsmen who used chisels, hard stones, and obsidian blades as tools. Many of the materials used were the same as those used for about two thousand years in the Mexican central valley. However, in Tenochtitlán’s most recent constructions, the Aztec began to focus on the solidity of buildings due to the ever sinking subsoil. As a result, *tezontle*, a strong and light volcanic stone was extensively used. *Tezontle* was very popular because it was easy to cut and its texture

and color was appealing. It was used in the construction of monumental buildings, filling in walls and roofing. Aztecs attributed the large quantities of *tezontle* stone to the destruction of the world according to the *Legend of Suns*, which explains that during the era of the third sun (*tletonatiuh*) there was a rain of fire that destroyed the world leaving the *tezontle* on the surface. Another popular technique used to prevent the city's sinking was to use platforms as foundations or to drive wooden piles into the earth in close-packed formations. This has been revealed in excavations.

Metal (except copper) was unknown to the Aztecs. Cords, wedges, or other means would be used to cut stone, and sand and water were popular abrasives. Most building materials used by the Aztecs were found in the region or acquired through trade. In Tenochtitlán swamp delicacies such as frogs, fish, and algae were traded for building materials such as rock and fill. Rock and fill were used to expand and stabilize the marshy *chinampas* (land plots that were used for agriculture) [Fig. 75]. Rubble, plaster, adobe, and lime to make stucco were also commonly used. Loose stone and rubble was imported from coastal regions. Outside of Tenochtitlán people used wood from uninhabited forests. Pine and oak were popular for making support beams and door jambs.

The Aztecs were so adept in working and carving stone that the Spaniards, in a later epoch, utilized and combined the Indian artists with their own artists who used metal tools in the construction of colonial edifices, resulting in the *tequitqui* or *mestizo* art of Mexico [Figs. 47 and 48].

THE PRECINCT OF TENOCHTITLAN

Introduction

Tenochtitlán was a monumental city that stood for power and endurance, as well as a living metaphor for the Aztec story of migration and the supremacy of their Sun god, Huitzilopochtli. It was an urban island settlement that housed approximately 200,000 inhabitants at the time of the Spanish conquest. Its name is derived from *tetl*, rock;

nochtli, cactus; and *tlán*, a suffix signifying location. It is also believed that the city was named after Tenoch, a priest-king that ruled the Mexica when the city was founded in 1325 C.E. Tenoch had led his people through years of hardship in the Mexican central valley, during which time he devoutly followed Huitzilopochtli's signs that led to founding Tenochtitlán. Tenoch predicted that the land where the Mexica should settle would be found *vis-à-vis* an eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus devouring a serpent, a white field, a white frog, and a white willow (some of the same foundational elements that appeared in previous cultural stories, such as those from Tula and Cholula). The heart of Copil, nephew of Huitzilopochtli, would determine the exact location of where the city would be founded. Copil was the son of Malinalxochitl, the goddess sister of Huitzilopochtli. Malinalxochitl was a mischievous sorceress who was abandoned by the Mexica in Malinalco due to her evil witchcraft activities. Malinalxochitl encouraged animosity between her son and brother. When Copil and Huitzilopochtli fought, Copil was defeated and his heart was thrown over the lake of Tetzaco. It landed on the island that would become Tenochtitlán.

When the sacred city was founded, a temple in honor of Huitzilopochtli was immediately erected. The temple was constructed of reeds and straw with a foundation of swamp grass. According to Aztec history, that evening Huitzilopochtli spoke to a priest and advised him to divide the city into four *campan* (major *barrios* or quarters) with a temple dedicated to him at the center [Fig. 76b]. This nucleus became the ceremonial precinct of Tenochtitlán, with the Great Temple in the center surrounded by other temples and shrines that were later erected. The complex was enclosed by a wall and could only be entered through four gates oriented towards the cardinal directions, like the causeways that led outside of the city [Fig. 76a].

Initially, Tenochtitlán was structured in the same manner as other city-state capitals with a planned central area and an unorganized region on the outskirts of the precinct. The above layout changed when Tenochtitlán's population began to grow exponentially. When it was determined that Tenochtitlán would become the capital of the Aztec civilization, it was renovated. The architects of Tenochtitlán borrowed many stylistic attributes (such as the urban grid) from Teotihuacán and Tula. When

the city was reconstructed, the Toltec city of Tula was looted. Many Toltec monuments were incorporated into Tenochtitlán. One of the defining features of Aztec architecture in Tenochtitlán was the massive edifices. Since the structures were massive and on top of a marshy, muddy island, they continuously sank. As a result, new layers were added to pre-existing structures. This is particularly true of the Great Temple located in the central plaza. The early Spanish edifices suffered from the same problem. To assert their dominion the Spaniards built present day Mexico City over Tenochtitlán. In some parts of Mexico City, Aztec structures are literally eight meters below the city streets.

Tenochtitlán was said to have been a magnificent city, the Venice of the New World. According to the Spanish chroniclers, it was the most impressive and beautiful city that they had seen. Shortly after the conquest, plans of the city showing the precinct of Tenochtitlán were drawn. One of them is known as *Map of Mexico-Tenochtitlán of 1550* (Map of Uppsala) and the other was drawn up by Hernán Cortés in his second letter to the Emperor Charles V and published in Nuremberg in 1524 [\[Fig. 77\]](#). These plans as well as Spanish chronicles and archeological data have been instrumental in documenting Aztec architecture and urbanization. Due to the Conquistadors' systematic destruction and the missionaries' religious zeal, the precinct of Tenochtitlán no longer exists. However, its glory can be retrieved from data archeologists have gathered and the descriptions of the Spanish chroniclers. Each is usually consistent with the other, though there are some discrepancies. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1963), a Spanish eye witness, wrote that the Spaniards were astounded by the sight of villages built in the water, an enchanted vision like that of *Amadis of Gaul*, a Spanish romance of chivalry published in 1508, of a town rising from the water. Believing it to be a dream, they were surprised when they found friendly lodging in the palace of Itztapalapa. The palaces were very spacious and well built, of magnificent stone, cedar-wood, and wood of other sweet-smelling trees, with great rooms and courts, and all covered with awning of woven cotton." When describing the gardens, Díaz del Castillo continues to recount of a marvelous place both to see and walk in. He was never tired of noticing the diversity of trees and the various scents given off by each, and the paths choked with

roses and other flowers, and the many local fruit-trees and rose-bushes, and the pond of fresh water. Then there were a variety of birds which came to the pond. Another remarkable thing he wrote about was that large canoes could come into the garden from the lake, through a channel they had cut, and their crews did not have to disembark.

When describing the Great Temple, Díaz del Castillo added that to reach it, one must pass through a series of large courts. These courts were surrounded by a double wall masonry wall and paved, like the whole temple, with a very large smooth floor with flagstones. Where these stones were absent, everything was whitened and polished. The temple was so clean that there was not a straw or a grain of dust to be found there. When Díaz del Castillo arrived at the Great Temple, he observed six priest and two chieftains walk down from the top of the temple, where they were making sacrifices; they climbed the one hundred and fourteen steps to the top of the temple, which formed an open square on which stood a platform where the great stones stood on which they placed the poor Indians for sacrifice. On that platform, Díaz del Castillo also saw a massive image like a dragon, and other hideous figures, and a great deal of blood that had been spilled that day.

From the top of the temple, one could see, a great number of canoes, some coming with provisions and others returning with cargo and merchandise. Díaz del Castillo observed that no one could pass from one house to another of that great city and the other cities that were built on the water except over wooded drawbridges or by canoe. All the houses had flat roofs, and on the causeways were other small towers and shrines built like fortresses. The market swarmed of people buying and selling; some of the Spanish soldiers had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople, in Rome, and all over Italy, and they proclaimed that they had never seen a market so well laid out, so large, so orderly, and so full of people.

Urbanism

The Aztecs built their capital on a tiny island in the lake Tetzcoco that was enlarged by filling in surrounding marshy areas [\[Fig. 76a\]](#). It was divided into four large quarters (*campan*) symbolizing the four cardinal directions and a ceremonial center considered

to be the heart or the fifth direction (Mesoamericans thought that the center, the fifth direction, held the sky and earth together). The quarters were then subdivided into smaller *barrios* or neighborhoods called *calpultin* (sing. *calpulli*). Each *calpulli* had its own central plaza, shrines, patron deities, and administrative buildings, but the major temples were in the ceremonial precinct of Tenochtitlán.

The city was joined by three main causeways and a double aqueduct that brought fresh water from Chapultepec because the lake was salty. To the north lay the road to Tepeyacac (Tepeyac), to the south lay Itztapalapa and Coyoacan, and to the west lay the road to Tlacopan (Tacuba) and Chapultepec [Figs. 76b and 77]. In addition, there was a network of canals that crossed each other at right angles, dividing the city into four quadrants, plus the center that was the sacred precinct (symbolizing the Mesoamerican cosmogram of the four cardinal directions and the center). Each quadrant was further subdivided into the four directions, with a center and its own ceremonial precinct. The city followed the ancient city of Teotihuacán's urban grid-plan system. The pyramids and plazas were a metaphor for the surrounding mountainous volcanic shapes and the plateau of the lake.

Tenochtitlán had three types of streets: dirt roads for walking, water canals that required a canoe, and dirt-water streets which could be walked or canoed. Because the city was on top of a lake, many streets intersected with deep water canals flanked by bridges made of wood beams.

The Aztecs sought to acquire prestige by incorporating stylistic features of past great cultures, as seen in the Red Temples and ceremonial banquettes. The Red Temples were located on the north and south sides of the Great Temple proper. The temples were named after their color of decoration, having dull-red murals painted inside and out. They were raised on low bases and their styles were reminiscent of Teotihuacán. The ceremonial banquettes were identical to those constructed in the Charred Palace of Tula, illustrating a Toltec influence.

There were many sculptures, such as *Coatlicue*, systematically distributed in patios and

temples. Many were destroyed during the Conquest. The ones that remain are at the National Museum of Anthropology (for more information on the stone sculptures, see the section of Aztec Art).

Ceremonial Plaza (Interior of the Sacred Precinct)

The central ceremonial plaza was the religious and administrative center of Tenochtitlán. The core of the city was the Great Temple which rose at the intersection of the three causeways. It was surrounded by a ceremonial center that formed a quadrangular 400 meter square that was symmetrical in plan. It consisted of 78 religious structures, all painted in brilliant symbolic colors and surrounded by secondary complexes and rows of residencies [Fig. 78a, b, and c]. This sacred area was bounded by the *coatepantli* (serpent wall) and was dedicated to the religious ceremonies celebrated throughout the year. The ceremonial center was placed on a raised quadrangular platform that formed a square where ritual buildings were symmetrically arranged. The area consisted of recurring stairways, platforms, and house like temples laid out in a hierarchy that faced the four directions in a prevalent east-west axis. The ceremonial precinct included diverse pyramid-sanctuaries like the Templo Mayor (Great Temple) dedicated to the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc, the circular Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the Temple of Tonatiuh, the temple-palaces of the eagle and jaguar warriors, as well as the ballcourt, a *temalacatl* (gladiatorial-stone), the *calmecac* (school), libraries, the *tzompantli* (skull rack), ponds for ritual ablutions, and residences for priests. In the patio of the temple of Xipe Totec or *Yopico* there was an elevated base platform that had a *temalacatl*, a round stone where prisoners were tied during the gladiatorial sacrifice.

The ceremonial plaza was surrounded by the royal palace and the houses of nobles, which were located immediately outside of the *coatepantli*. The homes of the lower class stood at the periphery of the precinct. The major market of Tenochtitlán was adjacent to the south of the central plaza. There were also small markets that served the smaller wards far from the precinct. Some sections of Tenochtitlán's outskirts consisted of cultivated *chinampa* plots that extended on to the lake. Crops were grown on these small marshy floating islands. Their layout is illustrated in the *Plano*

en *Papel Maguey*, an early colonial document [\[Fig. 75\]](#). The architecture of Tenochtitlán is not to be understood in terms of the design or style of its buildings. Rather, its plans, monuments, and natural settings are expressions of the daily lives and religious beliefs of the people.

Tenochtitlán was a large city with multiple structures. Due to the fact that Mexico City is literally on top of the Aztec buildings and the subsoil is fragile, excavations are limited. In addition, many of Mexico City's structures are colonial in nature, and thus are considered historic. For those reasons, there are limited areas designated for archaeological research. For example, some important structures are believed to be beneath the historic and colonial cathedral of Mexico City. Due to its historic and religious nature, the cathedral cannot be destroyed, although limited excavations are being practiced rescuing interesting materials. Nevertheless, these edifices were an integral part of the architecture and urbanization of Tenochtitlán. For example, the temple of Tezcatlipoca lies beneath the modern archbishop's headquarters. It is believed that it may have been important because it was 20 meters high and it had an 80 step stairway.

On the west side of the precinct was the *tozpalatl*, a structure surrounding the sacred spring used for ritual bathing. This area also contained the *teutlalpan*, a token wooded area for hunting rituals enclosed by four walls. Also there was the tall pole that was adorned during festivals of *Xocotl Huetzi* (Falling of the Fruit) when the sacrifice by fire was performed in honor of the fire god Xiutecuhtli, and prisoners were thrown alive into the flames of a ceremonial fire.

The *coateocalli*, a temple where the captured gods and religious paraphernalia of conquered communities were held, was located directly below the corner of present day Donceles and Argentina Street in the Northwest part of the precinct. Near that area there were other buildings that functioned as lodgings for priests, penance houses, and preparation homes for the youth in service of the temple. The circular temple of Quetzalcóatl was located directly in front of the Great Temple. Behind the temple of Quetzalcóatl, on the western end of the ceremonial center lay the ballcourt for the ritual

ballgame. The Temple of the Sun appears to have been located on the southwest corner of the precinct, and it faced the stone for gladiatorial sacrifices. Other temples in the ceremonial center were: the temple of the goddess Cihuacóatl, the House of Eagle Warriors, which formed one of the most important military orders (this one was found in the excavations of the Templo Mayor Project), the Temple of Chicomecoatl, the goddess of vegetation and corn, and the Temple of Xochiquetzal, the goddess of beauty and love associated with artisans and artists.

The Great Temple

The Great Temple was one of the finest testaments of Aztec monumental architecture and power. The temple's architectural layout, organization, location, and art work represented the social, religious, and geographical center of the Aztec universe. According to Aztec thought, the central point where the temple stood was where the celestial and sub-terrestrial levels (vertical dimensions) intersect with the terrestrial realm (horizontal dimension). The celestial realm consisted of 13 heavens (where celestial bodies lie and gods live), the terrestrial consisted of the four world directions, and the sub-terrestrial realms consisted of nine levels that the deceased must pass through to get to the underworld [\[Fig. 70\]](#). The temple was built on the conceptual spot where the vertical channel met with the horizontal. In addition, the Great Temple was built in a city surrounded by water. Aztlan, the Aztec homeland, called *Cemanahuac*, meaning the place in a circle of water, was also in the middle of a lake. Metaphorically, all shores and seas can be called *Cemanahuac*. Thus *Cemanahuac* or *Anahuac* was, by extension, the name that the Aztecs used to refer to the Valley of Mexico and in general to the world. In addition, it was prophesized that the god Huitzilopochtli would lead the Aztecs to a place where they would have power and grandeur. Thus, the Aztecs claimed to be in the center of the universe as the chosen people.

The ceremonial center of Tenochtitlán developed around the temple of Huitzilopochtli. Over time, the temple followed the tradition of other Mesoamerican pyramids as it was rebuilt in enveloping layers. Thus, the original temple with its offerings, sculptures, and related artifacts was completely enclosed by a new superimposed structure, evolving from a humble dwelling to the center of the Aztec Universe.

During the excavations of the Great Temple, its architecture revealed some interesting facts. The first is that the growth of the temple during consecutive imperial reigns was a result of the state patronage, in particular that of Motecuhzoma Ihuilcamina and his son Axayacatl [Fig. 79a, b, c]. The second is that the pyramid was organized as a symbolic man-made mountain. The third is that the pyramid-temple was organized as a dual stage where religious and mythological rites related to the *Tonacatepetl* (Mount of Sustenance associated with god Tlaloc and its shrine on Mount Tlaloc) and the Mount of *Coatepec* (Snake Mountain, place of birth of Huitzilopochtli) were reenacted [Fig. 80b].

The Great Temple is a microcosm for the Aztec worldview. According to Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, the platform that supports the temple corresponds to the terrestrial level due to the fact that sculptures of serpents, symbols of the earth, are located there. There are two large braziers on each side of the serpent-head sculptures at the center of the north and south façades and on the east side on the axis with the central line of the Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli shrines. The braziers indicate that perishable offerings were given, further evidencing that the platform was the terrestrial level. Four slightly tapering tiers of the pyramid that rise to the summit of the two shrines of the chief gods represent the celestial level. The sub-terrestrial realm (underworld) lies beneath the earthly platform. Many offerings have been found below this floor. Lastly, Nezahualpilli's words to Ahuitzotl, an Aztec emperor, during the commemoration of the completion of one of the temple's construction phases, affirmed its sacredness. He stated that Tenochtitlán was a powerful kingdom, the root, the navel and the heart of the entire world.

Myths Symbolized in the Great Temple

The Great Temple is a dual pyramid with twin temples on its top platform, representing two sacred mountains: *Coatepec* on the south side dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, and *Tonacatepetl* on the north side dedicated to Tlaloc [Fig. 80a]. The south side of the temple is an architectural representation of the myth of the birth of Huitzilopochtli on the mount of Coatepec (or Hill of the Serpents), symbolizing the Aztecs' rise to power.

Coatepec is a Toltec site near Tula and was visited by the Aztecs in 1163 C.E. during their long migration. It was at Coatepec that Huitzilopochtli, the child of a virginal conception, was born from the womb of Coatlicue and where he fought and killed his jealous sister, Coyolxauhqui (the moon goddess), and his brothers, the Centzohuitznahua (the 400 hundreds stars from the south) [Fig. 81]. The temple is filled with sculptures of serpents, representations that are in accordance with the name of Coatepec that means Snake Mountain. The myth of Coatepec probably had a historical foundation related to a conflict between two Aztec factions trying to gain control over the entire group and seeking to impose leadership during the migration. It is apparent that one group wanted to stay in Coatepec and the other group wanted to continue in pursuit of the Promised Land that Huitzilopochtli had offered to them. The myth was important because it represented the daily cosmic battle between the sun (Huitzilopochtli) and the deities of the night (moon and stars) and his triumph at dawn in the East. It was also a theological justification for the Aztecs settling in the area of Lake Tetzaco and for their practices of warfare and human sacrifice.

According to the myth, after his victory against Coyolxauhqui, Huitzilopochtli remained on the hill of Coatepec. His shrine on the top of the Great Temple is a symbol of his reign. In the same myth Coyolxauhqui was decapitated by her brother and her dismembered body rolled to the bottom of the hill. On the platform of the base of the temple, a large bas-relief sculpture representing the decapitated goddess was discovered [Fig. 27a, b]. The Coyolxauhqui sculpture was found in several of the construction stages/layers, illustrating the continuity of this myth. Some scholars believe that the sacrificial stone at the entrance of Huitzilopochtli's shrine indicates the immolation of his sister and was used in re-enactment rites of human sacrifice. There were decapitation rites that involved female victims during the festival of *Ochpaniztli*, and archaeologists have found female skulls placed as offerings related to the Coyolxauhqui sculpture. In addition to excavation results, the Spanish chroniclers, through their descriptions of rites conducted during festivals, provide data suggesting that the temple was used to recreate the myth of the birth Huitzilopochtli. During festivals, tribute was offered and people were sacrificed at the top of a scaffold, thrown

to the ground, beheaded, and rolled down the stairways ending at the bottom of the pyramid. This ritual reenacted the mythic events at Coatepec Hill.

The northern side of the Great Temple symbolizes the mountain *Tonacatepetl* (Mount of Sustenance) and is dedicated to Tláloc, the god of fertility that provided food through his beneficial waters that form rain clouds on mountain tops. This mountain is also related to the myth of the creation of Aztec man and the discovery of maize. There are two beliefs concerning the association of this structure with Tlaloc. The first is that the temple represents Mount Tlaloc, a hill nearby located between the cities of Tetzaco and Cholula where nobles and rulers from central Mexico made offerings of jewels, valuables, and food to the deity so that he would provide the necessary rain for a good harvest season [Fig. 132a]. The second belief according to another myth, is that it was at the Hill of Sustenance where Quetzalcoatl discovered maize and brought it to the gods, so that they could give it to human beings as primordial foodstuff. But then the Tlaloques, rain deities, assistants to god Tlaloc, seized the maize. However, Tlaloc and the Tlaloques provided the maize and other foods by fertilizing the earth and making the plants grow. This myth shows how the fertility of the earth is controlled by the power of water. Several Spanish chronicles describe the elaborate ceremonies conducted at Tlaloc's temple.

Archaeology and historical accounts show how the temple was the *axis mundi* of the Aztecs, the place where some of their main myths came alive as they were reenacted through ritual. According to Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (1988), Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli are joined together in architecture, myth and ritual, and these two gods represent water and war, life and death, food and tribute, all fundamental to the very existence of the Aztec people. And so it is appropriate that they are connected to the Great Temple.

Construction Stages Found In the Archeological Excavations of the Great Temple

The Great Temple was enlarged at relatively short periods, seven times completely and four times partially [Fig. 79a, b, and c]. Each subsequent superimposition was more grandiose because of a need to improve and to surpass the previous construction, as

well as to project a prestige and sense of power of the ruler in position. They reflect the emperors' ambition and personality, which are imprinted in the overwhelming monumentality of Aztec art to create a sense of imperial domination and religious transcendence [\[Fig. 82\]](#).

Construction Phase I

Phase I is related to the first humble temple erected by the Aztecs when they arrived in Tenochtitlán in 1325 C.E. This temple is known only from historical accounts because it is not possible to excavate below Phase II due to the fragile watery subsoil.

Construction Phase II

This phase is consistent with historical accounts of Phase VII that the Spaniards witnessed [\[Fig. 83\]](#). At the summit, in front of the entrance to Huitzilopochtli's shrine, there is a sacrificial stone (*techcatl*) similar to the one described by the chroniclers [\[Fig. 84\]](#). Its building material was *tezontle* (volcanic stone). The entrance to the Tlaloc shrine has a colorful *chacmool* used as a divine messenger that took sacrifices of children performed here and offerings from the priest to gods [\[Figs. 85 and 32\]](#). Some interior murals of both shrines have survived. Representations and colors corresponded to the specific deity. Pine and wood, used for pillars and doorjambs, were also found.

Archeologists believe that Phase II corresponds to the period between 1325 and 1428 C.E. when the early emperors Acamapichtli, Huitzilihuitl, and Chimalpopoca reigned.

Construction Phase III

Not much has survived of Phase III except for the plain pyramidal base with the double stairways. Eight *tezontle* sculptures of life-size standard-bearers were found leaning near the base of the stairs that led to the Huitzilopochtli shrine. They perhaps represent the *Centzohuitznahua* (Huitzilopochtli's 400 brothers) [\[Fig. 86\]](#). This phase, according to a date carved at the base of the temple may correspond to 1431 C.E. during the reign of Itzcoatl.

Construction Phase IV

Phase IV of construction is considered to be one of the most spectacular because

considerable material and data have been found. During this phase, the pyramidal base was enlarged and adorned with braziers and serpent heads on all four sides [Fig. 87]. Oversized braziers at the rear of the Tlaloc side bear his visage, and the braziers on Huitzilopochtli's side have a large bow, a symbol of the Sun deity. Traces of offerings have been found. Phase IV also included an additional partial enlargement. The west side of the main façade was amplified and adorned. The temple lay on a vast platform with a single stairway. There were large, undulating serpent bodies around the corners [Fig. 88]. Each serpent had an individualized face and traces of paint. The Stairway was broken by a little altar near the base of Tlaloc's shrine that has two frogs (symbols of water). In addition, the middle of the stairway on the platform side of Huitzilopochtli's shrine has a two meter long tablet that is part of the fourth stair and has a serpent engraved on the rise. The base of the platform formed the stairs. Four serpent heads mark the place where the two structures dedicated to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli meet. At the foot of the stairway, in the middle of Huitzilopochtli's side, the Coyolxauhqui Stone showing the dismembered body of the moon goddess was found; it is a magnificent carving in low relief [Figs. 87 and 27a]. Many offerings were found beneath this platform [Fig. 89]. It appears that this phase corresponds to the year 1454 C.E. and 1469 C.E. during the reigns of Motecuhzoma I and Axayacatl.

Construction Phase V

Little has survived of Phase V. However, stucco plaster on the Temple platform and part of the floor of the ceremonial precinct was found [Fig. 90]. This phase is associated to the reign of Tizoc (1481-1486 C.E.)

Construction Phase VI

The little of what remains of Phase VI includes the great platform underlying the entire temple structure [Fig. 90]. Part of the stairway is still visible. The principal façade was adorned by three serpent heads and a balustrade. Three small temples designated with the letters A [Fig. 91], B (tzompantli or skull-rack altar) [Fig. 92], and C (Red Temple of Teotihuacán influence) [Fig. 93], as well as the precinct of the Eagle warriors belong to this phase [Fig. 94]. In this last building, once occupied by those brave elite warriors, there is the Eagle Patio [Fig. 95] that is flanked by decorated stone banquettes

reminiscent of Tula [[Figs. 96](#) and [97](#)]. This phase corresponds to the reign of Ahuitzotl (1486-1502 C.E.).

Construction Phase VII

Phase VII constitutes the last building stage and was the phase of construction seen by the Spaniards in the 16th century. The stone flooring of the ceremonial precinct and traces of where the Great Temple stood are all that remain [[Fig. 90](#)]. This phase was undertaken during the reign of Motecuhzoma II (1502-1520 C.E.).

Emperors' Palaces

The Palace of Motecuhzoma II was one of the most elaborate and grand buildings constructed in the Aztec empire [[Fig. 98](#)]. It was located on the southern side of the Great Temple, where the Presidential Palace of Mexico stands today. It was two stories tall and had a large courtyard. The emperor's palace occupied an estimated 2.4 hectares (a little more than 5 acres). The royal palace was a large complex that housed 1,000 guards, servants, nobles, cooks, courtiers and members of the king's harem. It was reported that approximately 600 nobles attended the king's palace at all times. The aristocracy's residences were either attached to the palace or located near by. The palace was surrounded by a garden, other minor palaces, residences, military houses, and other structures for military orders and warrior groups. The temples of the precinct were surrounded by similar edifices as the emperor's palace. The palace had many rooms with the largest on the first floor. Columns were placed on the first floor in order to support the weight of the second floor. The staircase that connected the ground level to the second level was made of pure marble and was located directly in the center of the palace. Marble was a luxury in the Aztec empire; only the richest people in the empire had access to this fine good. The wealth of the emperor was manifested in the numerous paintings, gold panels, carvings, and mosaics found throughout the palace. According to Bernal Díaz Del Castillo (1963), Motecuhzoma's dining room had a low wooden throne (*icpalli*) and a low table covered with fine cloths. When the emperor ate, he was hidden by a golden-colored wood screen door so that he would not be seen by those in attendance. The emperor was served by numerous women and was entertained by dancers, singers, and musicians.

There were several main rooms on the first floor. The room in which the emperor received nobles, travelers, and other officials was named the Reception Chamber. The second and largest room (three times the size of the Reception Chamber) in the palace was the Main Meeting Chamber. It was designed to make the emperor appear omnipotent and powerful. For example, the emperor was raised above the people who visited him vis-à-vis an elevated platform with stairs that led to the emperor's throne. Thus, his presence was felt. This was the room where messengers provided the emperor with news about the empire. The last main room on the first floor was the Tribute Room/Store that was used to house the gifts the emperor received from his loyal citizens. The emperor received such large quantities of gifts, that there was usually not enough room in the Tribute Store for all his gifts/goods. Another important section of the palace was the emperor's personal apartments.

Not only was the palace exceedingly large, but it was also highly complex. The structure housed multiple rooms that served specific functions. There was an armory, a tribute hall, special rooms for women that wove textiles for the royal household, artisan workshops, an aviary, a zoo, and a pond. The aviary housed various species of birds from nearby and tropical regions. The zoo contained animals such as snakes, foxes, and jaguars. The special pond contained aquatic birds.

Motecuhzuma II's gardens and baths were an integral part of the overall layout and architecture of his palace. They were modeled after the gardens at Tetzaco. Because the gardens and baths no longer exist, the account of Bernal Díaz del Castillo is very important. He described the gardens as being filled with fragrant flowers and trees, promenades, ponds with fresh water, and canals with running water. He also wrote that the trees were full of small birds bred on the premises and the gardens were full of medicinal plants.

The palaces of previous emperors were also magnificent. The palace of Axayacatl is believed to be located beneath present day Tacuba and Monte de Piedad Streets (it was initially believed to have been below Guatemala and Correo Mayor Streets). The

palace of Motecuhzuma II is believed to be below the present day National Palace. On the west side of the National Palace's main plaza or *zócalo* (where the Aztec market-plaza was) lay the *petlacalco* (great warehouse), the *calpixcalli* (house of the butlers), the *pilcalli* (house of the noblemen) and *cuicacalli* (house of singing).

Cuauhtemoc's residency, erected by his father Ahuitzotl is considered to be west of the plaza of Santo Domingo [\[Fig. 78a\]](#).

Homes of the Inhabitants

The royal palaces and the homes of the nobility were built near the main square of the Great Temple while the houses of the *macehualtin* (potters, stonecutters, weavers, jewelers, farmers and fishermen) surrounded the city centers. For the Aztecs, the type of dwelling in which a person lived was an indication of status. The homes of the peasants and nobles were similar in layout and pattern, but different in size, decoration, and construction materials. The nobles' homes were made of stone and white-washed plaster. Their interior walls were of stucco painted with colorful murals. The dwellings of the *macehualtin* were humbler. They lived in different *calpultin*, and their homes were made of adobe bricks (mud mixed with straw or rushes). Wood and straw were also used in the construction of houses and their sloping gabled roofs.

Aztec residences were typically one story high (with the exception of palaces), and consisted of two structures, and housed up to 12 people. The first structure was comprised of a single room with a perfectly level floor divided into four areas. The bed area was where the entire family slept. The kitchen area was where the meals were prepared. In most kitchens, a *metlatl* (*metate*), a flat stone for grinding corn, and a *comal*, a clay dish for baking tortillas, were found [\[Fig. 99\]](#). There was a separate area designated for eating. This is where the family would sit, eat, and discuss the events of the day. The last area is where the family shrine was found.

The shrine area contained figurines of gods. Aztec homes did not have doors because theft was not an issue. The second adjoining structure was a *temazcal* (steam bath) [\[Fig. 100\]](#). According to Aztec doctors, steam baths were therapeutic and all families were advised to have one. Next to the bath area, a chimney and a stove were found.

The hot walls of the stove maintained the room's heat. When an Aztec wished to steam the room, water would be poured on the stove's wall. In order to maintain the stove's walls heat, the furnace had to constantly be burning. Although most Aztec homes contained a steam bath, they were predominantly used by the nobles because they had more leisure time than the peasants.

Chinampas

The swamps and gardens were on the outskirts of the city. *Chinampas*, known as "floating gardens" were rectangular patches of earth on the swamp used to cultivate food and to build houses [Fig. 101]. They were constructed on the swampy lakebed by staking out long rectangular enclosures of about 2.5m wide and 30m long. Stakes were woven together to form fences which would be covered with decaying vegetation and mud. Another plot would be constructed parallel to the first. The water in between each plot formed a canal. This developed long rectangular *chinampa* patterns. *Chinampas* were stabilized by planting slender willows around their perimeter. The willows' dense roots anchored the retaining walls. In order to irrigate the *chinampas*, a sophisticated drainage system of dams, sluice gates, and canals were installed. The *chinampas* allowed the Aztecs to have productive planting areas.

Ballcourts

The main ballcourt (*tlachtli*) of Tenochtitlán was located on the east-west axis of the ceremonial precinct's western end, aligned with the Great Temple and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl [Fig. 102]. The east-west axis of the ballcourt is meaningful in the context of sacred geography because the ballgame represents the daily cosmic battle between the day and night, Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, and ultimately, Huitzilopochtli and Coyolxauhqui. In the architecture of the ballcourt, ancestral myths are brought to life.

The ballcourt was formed by an I-shaped area with two large sloping walls, tiers, porticos for dignitaries, and boxes for judges. The structure was adorned by skull-racks, *tzompantli* that contained the heads of the decapitated captives from diverse rituals. In many cases the skulls were trophy heads from decapitation rituals linked to the ballgame. The skull-racks consisted of a base with upright wooden posts. The skulls of

the sacrificed were strung on top of bars located between the posts. It is believed that the main skull-rack was located in an area that is now buried under the Cathedral of Mexico City.

Temple outside the Sacred Precinct

This small circular temple was found during the construction of the Pino Suarez Metro Station in downtown Mexico City, but outside of what was the ceremonial precinct of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán [\[Fig. 103\]](#). The circular design of its two upper bodies suggests the possible dedication to Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, the wind god. It was common in Aztec architecture the construction of this kind of temples in diverse cities and their shape symbolized the whirlpools and free circulation of wind.

OTHER CITIES

The Aztec empire was a large domain that extended from the Valley of Mexico to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec [\[Figs. 104 and 105\]](#). Large portions of the empire were not occupied, but governed. Other cities of the empire were occupied and were important for military, religious or tribute purposes. Many sites such as Malinalco and the Hill of Coatepec were significant because the final breaks of the Aztecs occurred there during their migration history. In addition to Tenochtitlán, the more important cities of the Aztec world where archaeological remains can be visited are: Tenayuca, Sta. Cecilia Acatitlan, Teopanzolco, Tlatelolco, Tetzcotzincó, Tepoztlan, Huexotla, Calixtlahuaca, Coatetelco, and Malinalco. They are discussed below.

Tenayuca

Tenayuca, meaning the Place Where Walls Are Made, was a Chichimec city founded in 1224 C.E., and was located northwest of Mexico City. Tenayuca was an enclosed and fortified city founded by king Xolotl, and was the capital of the Chichimecs until a later king, Quinatzin moved to Tetzco. It had six major construction phases from 1224 to 1507 C.E. Aztec influence was visible by 1325 C.E. Although its temple was built during the Post-Classic period, archaeological materials found inside the temple indicate that Tenayuca was inhabited long before. The early phases of Tenayuca's pyramid

construction began after the fall of Tula (1200 C.E.) and before the founding of Tenochtitlán. It is believed by some scholars that the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán was modeled after the great temple of Tenayuca. The double-pyramid was four-tiered, faced the plaza, and was ornamented with rows of serpents surrounding all three sides of the base, forming a *coatepantli* (serpent wall) inspired by the one in Tula. As the snakes in the *coatepantli* have a spiral-like crest in their heads, they are identified as *xiuhcoatl*s, or fire serpents, the weapon of Huitzilopochtli. This symbol signified an association of Tenayuca with sun god cult and fire renewal. The gods Huitzilopochtli, Tlaloc, Mixcoatl, Itzpapalotl, Chicomecoatl, and Coatlicue were worshiped there.

The Pyramid

Tenayuca's pyramid is composed of several superimposed layers [Fig. 106]. All layers follow the same system of construction, patterns of decoration, and layout. The earliest structure has carved stone slabs facing a rock core. There after, the current pyramid would be used as a core for the next successive layering/construction phase [Fig. 107]. Slabs were coated with cement made from sand, lime, and crushed *tezontle*. Color would then be applied. Carved stone serpent heads, year glyphs, shields, knives, and other symbols were used for decoration. The low platform that projected from the pyramid was ornamented with bones and sculpted crossed skulls.

Wall of Serpents

Known as the *coatepantli*, the Wall of Serpents, covers all three sides of the pyramid's platform [Fig. 108]. It was found that there are 43, 50 and 45 serpent heads on the north, east and south walls [Fig. 109]. Greenish blue paint is visible on the snakes' bodies of the south side and half of the bodies on the east side. Their bodies' scales were outlined in black. The north wall's serpents were garnished in black with white ovals. Snakes' rattles were detailed by carving three stepped planes at the tip of their tails. It is believed that the color schemes used on the bodies were related to the symbolism of sun worship.

On the north and south ground level of the pyramid, coiled serpents were positioned. The heads of stone are ornamented with a spiral crest that identifies the fire serpent as

a *xiuhcoatl*, which is associated with fire renewal, sun worship, and the 52-year calendar [Fig. 110]. The stone heads were decorated with bulging dots that are believed to symbolize stars.

The rocky stairway has visible engravings from the last structural addition. A year glyph, a linked rectangle and triangle, banners, concentric circles, a knife, turquoise, *chimallis* or shields, and precious stones are still visible. The carvings do not appear to have a systematic order.

Tomb-Altar

Located in front of the pyramid, there is a combined tomb and altar with colored paintings of crossbones and skulls inside. The outside has carved stone reliefs illustrating skulls [Fig. 111].

Sta. Cecilia Acatitlan

St. Cecilia Acatitlan, meaning between the canes, is located north of modern day Mexico City. This Chichimec city was occupied later by the Mexica-Aztecs and was transformed into one of the numerous religious enclaves that surrounded the Tetzcoco lake region. Sta. Cecilia Acatitlan has a double pyramid-temple that faces a cobbled stone plaza that may have been used as a public arena during ceremonies [Fig. 112]. In that plaza, in front of the pyramid, there is a small church built in late 16th century with stones taken from the Pre-Columbian site.

The Pyramid

The pyramidal platform is composed of a double stairway that faces west and is separated by a balustrade (*alfarda*) that is twice as wide as the other two balustrades that form the extremes of the platform [Fig. 113]. On top of it there are two temples. The North Temple was dedicated to Tlaloc [Fig. 114]. A sculpture of Chac Mool (messenger of the gods who carry the human sacrifice offerings) used to accompany Tlaloc inside his temple, but because the deterioration of this North Temple, the Chac Mool is placed in the contiguous temple. The South Temple was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli. The roof of this temple was made out of inclining *tableros* (panels) that were decorated with nail-

like stones [\[Fig. 115\]](#). The doorway of the shrine has a wood lintel. Next to the figure of the Chac Mool, there can be seen a *techcatl* (sacrificial stone) and a brazier [\[Fig. 116\]](#).

The dual pyramid-temple of Santa Cecilia Acatitlan, with some variants, follows the traditional Aztec pattern of twin pyramids dedicated to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli.

Teopanzolco

Teopanzolco is located in the northeast part of the city of Cuernavaca and was originally under Tlahuica control and later taken over by Aztec imperial forces. This site with early Aztec architecture has a main pyramid, believed to have served as a model for the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán located in one side of a big plaza [\[Fig. 117\]](#). The pyramid had double shrines: one dedicated to Huitzilopochtli and the other to Tlaloc. The pyramid displays similar attributes with the one located in Tenayuca. It has several superimpositions; two have been found. The only remains of the exterior walls' last layer are the *talud* (sloping wall) and a staircase flanked by *alfardas* (balustrades) that is divided in two parts by a central double *alfarda* that forms the front of the pyramid which faces west and has a rectangular base that is 50 by 32 meters [\[Fig. 118\]](#). The substructure is better preserved than the most recent layer. It also faces west and measures 32 by 18 meters. Its stairway is limited by *alfardas* and like in Tenayuca; they rise vertically in the upper section. This characteristic also occurs midway up the stairs, forming a type of pedestal [\[Fig. 119\]](#).

The South Temple dedicated to Huitzilopochtli on top of the pyramid is rectangular in form, measuring ten by seven meters and it has a wide entrance that is divided by a transversal wall with an opening leading to a room that has a bench. The North Temple dedicated to Tlaloc has a small rectangular room measuring seven by four meters with an ample clearing and a bench at the end. There are also pillars presumed to have supported the wood that sustained the roof.

Behind the main pyramid, to the right of a temple attributed to god Tezcatlipoca [\[Fig. 120\]](#), there is a small stone altar possibly utilized for human sacrifice rituals, as suggested by the mass sacrificial burial found in the site [\[Fig. 121\]](#).

At the opposite side of the great plaza, there is a temple dedicated to Quetzalcoatl that is circular in design, thus honoring the deity in his Ehecatl form representing the wind [\[Fig. 122\]](#).

Tlatelolco

Tlatelolco was founded 12 years after Tenochtitlán when a group of dissident Aztecs decided to move northeast to Xaltelolco, meaning On the Hillrock of Sand. Xaltelolco was one of the marshy islands located along Lake Tetzaco. It had previously been inhabited by groups related to Teotihuacán and the Tepanecs. Overtime, this site came to be known as Tlatelolco. According to other scholars, its name is believed to have derived from the word *tlatelli* that means a built up mound of earth.

Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlán were contemporary cities that underwent parallel developments and were rivals until Tenochtitlán attacked and defeated Tlatelolco during the reign of Axayacatl in 1473 C.E. Tlatelolco was then incorporated into Tenochtitlán.

The city originally covered an area of about 20 square miles. Tlatelolco today is a neighborhood of Mexico City and its core forms the so called Plaza of the Three Cultures. The reason behind this name is that Tlatelolco is a living testimony of the transculturation process that created the *mestizaje* in Mexico. There coexist remains of Aztec temples, the Colonial church, and the convent of Santiago built by Fray Juan de Torquemada, all among many modern Mexican constructions [\[Fig. 123\]](#). Tlatelolco had a ceremonial complex that was dominated by a typical Aztec double pyramid similar to the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán and a very large market, in fact the largest in Mesoamerica [\[Fig. 124\]](#). There were also smaller pyramids, temples, and markets scattered throughout various districts.

One of the anomalies of Tlatelolco is that it did not appear to have the type of monumental architecture found at other Aztecs sites. One of the reasons for this is that it is believed that it was far from Coyoacan, the place where most of the Aztec monoliths were built. The other reason is the amount of time it was an independent city. Tlatelolco was incorporated into Tenochtitlán during the reign of Axayacatl, the emperor responsible for initiating the construction of large scale projects. Prior to Axayacatl,

Aztec architecture was not as massive. Another factor to consider is that at Tlatelolco the main material used may have been wood. For example, it is an established fact that there were thousands of canoes, but only one has been archeologically found. The others have doubtless disintegrated. Other perishable materials may have been used, making it difficult to discern the architecture of the city prior to its incorporation into Tenochtitlán. Nonetheless, Tlatelolco was an integral part of the Aztec metropolis and continued to flourish after its annexation.

Similar to other towns of the empire, Tlatelolco had its share of shrines, temples, palaces, gardens, markets, and canals. There is a Shrine, located near the north door of the colonial church of Santiago, which was built of human mandibles in a jewel like manner. Other altars similar to the above were found throughout the ceremonial complex. In addition, some other structures are reminiscent of Chichén Itzá and Teotihuacán. One of the edifices that display Chichén Itzá qualities has four staircases facing the cardinal directions. It is believed to have been situated in the middle of a plaza and was used for religious ceremonies, during which time the priest would direct the smoke from his incense to the four cardinal points. For that reason this particular structure did not have an altar. Such influence is not surprising since Tlatelolco had been previously inhabited and had borrowed styles from other groups.

The Temple of the Calendar

The Temple of the Calendar is one of the most significant structures of Tlatelolco. It is a unique edifice whose décor deviates from the norm in that it is ornamented with elements of the *Tonalpohualli* calendar [Fig. 125]. During Aztec times two calendars were used: the *Tonalpohualli* and the *Xiuhpohualli*. The *Xiuhpohualli* was the civil calendar and it was used to determine festivities, record history, and to date tribute collections. The *Tonalpohualli* served as the ritual calendar. *Tonalpohualli* consisted of 260 days while the *Xiuhpohualli* consisted of 360 plus the five bad days. The Temple of the Calendar is a quadrangular edifice with representations of 39 days; thirteen on each wall painted in blues, reds, and whites [Fig 126]. The base of the temple also has polychrome paintings with figures drawn similar to those found in the codices. These drawings correspond to early Tlatelolco and are intact in the front side of the temple due

to a later superimposition. The temple was a very important religious structure because computing time was one of the primary duties of the priests: determining solstices, baptisms, rituals, festivals, commerce, tribute, etc. This is the only calendrical structure that has been found.

Temple Of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl

This round temple was dedicated to Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, the wind deity. It consisted of a semicircular base that wound into a circular cone like *teocalli* roof, a staircase and a quadrangular platform [Fig. 127]. In general the temples dedicated to Ehecatl, the wind deity are of circular shape in order to not block the trajectory of the wind which could make whirlpools around the structure. Its entrance is characterized by a snake's mouth symbolizing Quetzalcóatl. This temple is similar to that in Calixtlahuaca and underwent two construction phases. Its construction dates back to the early times of Tlatelolco. In later times, other edifices were built over it. A rectangular enclosure decorated with polychrome paintings was found next to the temple. It is older than the temple itself.

Sacred Well

The sacred well is located next to the priests' residencies. It is a small monument that resembles a staired swimming pool that leads to the sacred well. The well is approximately three meters wide on each side. Scholars believe that it may have been used for ablution practices by priests or as a sacred spring.

Priests' Residency

The priests' residency was located within the ceremonial precinct because they were responsible for the maintenance of the temples and shrines associated to the cult of the deity to which they belonged. Their residence was constructed of *tezontle* and wood. The structure consisted of an altar and two sections adjoined by a central corridor with a chimney like area for burning wood. The structure also has wood wedges that supported lintels.

The Marketplace

Tlatelolco was best known for its immense and highly lucrative market place. Once Tlatelolco was incorporated into Tenochtitlán, its market became the principle market of

the Aztec empire [\[Fig. 128\]](#). According to Spanish chroniclers, the market housed approximately 25,000 people on a daily basis and 40,000 to 50,000 on special market days held every fifth day. The market was directed, administered, and organized by principal merchants called *pochtecas*. The *pochtecas* were responsible for assigning each type of merchandise to a particular section of the plaza and for determining prices. The market was very orderly, well run and very clean. The Spaniards were amazed at its organization and variety of goods. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1963) described the market as an organized and well managed space where merchandise and the quality of people who sold goods were well administered [\[Fig. 129\]](#). Each type of merchandise was kept by itself and had its fixed place marked out. The market was filled with luxury goods such as gold, silver, and precious stones, feathers, mantles, and embroidered goods, but it was also filled with the daily necessities, such as slaves, cloth and cotton and cacao. Every sort of merchandise that was to be found in the whole of New Spain was sold in the market, including the skins of tigers and lions, of otters and jackals, deer and other animals and badgers and mountain cats, some tanned and other untanned. There were also buildings where three magistrates sat in judgment, and there were executive officers like Alguacils who inspect the merchandise [\[Fig. 130\]](#). The great market place with its surrounding arcades was so crowded with people, that one would not have been able to see and inquire about it all in two days.

Tlatelolco was the last bastion of the Aztec resistance against the Spaniards in the Conquest war. Here ended the Mexica Empire with the capture of King Cuauhtémoc, as expressed by a dramatic sign located in the plaza next to the ruins [\[Fig. 131\]](#).

Tetzcotzinco

The Hill of Tetzcotzinco is an important Aztec site that is surrounded by agricultural terraces and is located east of Tetzco at the base of the Mt. Tlaloc foothills. It is associated with life giving rain rites and agriculture. Although there has been little archaeological excavation at this site, survey plans, surface explorations, and aerial views demonstrate its layout. The architecture of this site combines landscape, sculpture and ritual. Tetzcotzinco is a reenactment of the symbolic landscape of Mt. Tlaloc and has been a place of worship since the time of the Chichimecs [\[Fig. 132a\]](#).

After the famine of 1454 C.E., the *tlatoani* of Tetzaco, Netzahuacoyotl, decided to build a new ceremonial center, refurbish, and reconstruct the Hill of Tetzcotzinco. This became the site where Netzahuacoyotl erected his personal palaces. It had rock-cut baths known popularly as the “baths of Nezahualcoyotl” and canals, aqueducts, gardens, and over 300 rooms. Tetzcotzinco had a system of farming terraces extending northward from the hill, forming a huge natural amphitheater, and the hill and the neighboring towns that still exist today, were supplied with water by aqueducts from springs high on Mt. Tlaloc. The hydraulic works of Tetzcotzinco are considered one of the major engineering accomplishments of the Pre-Columbian times [Fig. 132b]. The aqueduct transported water over a distance of eight kilometers from springs at the slopes of Mt. Tlaloc through the Metecatl Hill to irrigate an extensive area of gardens, fountains, and baths carved in the rock of the Tetzcotzinco hill under the auspices of the great poet, engineer, and king Netzahuacoyotl [Fig. 133].

Most of the monuments of Tetzcotzinco were destroyed by the Spanish in 1539 C.E.; however, many pictorial manuscripts, texts, and related sculpture and architecture provide useful information to reconstruct what remains of the site. The archaeologist Richard Townsend mapped the area in 1979 and revealed that the upper hill was cosmologically designed. Approximately 55 meters below the summit, the ritual zone is demarcated by a walkway cut around the hill. On this path there are four baths or shallow basins oriented to the four cardinal directions. Their receptacles were manifestations of Chalchiuhtlicue’s aquatic domain and were used for ritual purification. Their water was supplied by an aqueduct built in a circular path that served processional circumambulation and divided the upper sacred zone from the profane space below [Fig. 134a, b].

Civic Monuments

Among the civil architectural features that can still be seen at Tetzcotzinco are: the Reservoir System H [Fig. 135] and the Fountain System A [Fig. 132b], a group of water deposits built on the northern skirts of Metecatl Hill with the intention to control the speed and flow of the water that descended to Tetzcotzinco; the Monolithic Room, a

pool at the entrance of the hydraulic system that had a temple on top dedicated either to the wind god Ehecatl or to the Sun (Tonatiuh) [Fig. 136 and 137]; the aqueduct subsystem circuit with a series of channels every 50 meters to irrigate the gardens, the farming terraces and give services to the royal compounds [Fig. 138]; the so-called King's [Fig. 139] and Queen's baths [Figs. 140 and 141], a collection of rock-cut monolithic deposits of water with a magnificent view to the former gardens in the slopes of the hill and the Valley of Mexico; and finally, the Palace attributed to Netzahuacoyotl that is not yet excavated.

Shrines

The Tetzcotzinco Hill has a sequence of shrine stations along an east-west axis that follows the natural ridge of the hill. The alignment indicates the path of the sun, leading scholars to believe that Tetzcotzinco had calendrical and astronomical functions determined by the solstice and equinox [Fig. 134]. In Tetzcotzinco's summit there are remains of a temple built over a cave [Fig. 142]. There is also a goggle-eyed mask of Tlaloc engraved on a bedrock boulder [Figs. 143 and 144].

There is an important shrine that is a cave below the circumscribing path next to the King's bath and near a system of lower terraces where Netzahualcoyotl's palace and botanical gardens stood [Fig. 145 and 146]. Caves are associated with the heart of the earth, mountains, and wombs related to fertility. The cave above is related to the ancestors and lineage of Netzahuacoyotl, recalling the genesis theme that people first emerged from the womb of the earth through caves (*Chicomoztoc*). By placing his compounds next to the cave, Netzahuacoyotl legitimized himself and his legacy.

Another shrine is located high on the western axis, it has two very damaged carved effigies on the living rock; they are of female divinities connected to the cycle of maize. The divinities are associated with the festivals of *Huey Tozoztli*, *Huey Tecuihuatl* and *Ochpaniztli*. *Huey Tozoztli* was dedicated to Chicomecoatl, the goddess of dried seed corn, and Cinteotl, the conflated male and female deity of the young corn, and was celebrated at the height of the dry season when corn was consecrated for the coming planting. *Huey Tecuihuatl* was dedicated to Xilonen, goddess of the mature corn, and it

occurred during the middle of the rain season. *Ochpaniztli* was dedicated to the male and female earth and maize deities, and it was celebrated during the harvest to mark the start of the dry season.

The last shrines are Netzahualcoyotl's personal commemorative monuments located on the eastern slope of the hill below the summit. There was an ample assembly plaza that was constructed facing an exposed rock-face where the sculptures were carved. The monuments have been destroyed, but from the writings of chronicler Fernando de Alva Ixtlixochitl, it is known that the first monument recorded the deeds of Netzahuacoyotl as a hero and founder of the Tetzcoacan nation. Adjacent to this sculpture there was a seated coyote of stone with Netzahualcoyotl's hieroglyphic name, which means fasting coyote. The monuments faced east toward the rising sun, associating Netzahuacoyotl with the daily appearance of light, heat, and the renewal of seasons.

Huexotla

Meaning "Place of the Willows," Huexotla is located 5 km (3 miles) south of the city of Tetzcoaco. It was an important city of the kingdom of Acolhuacan whose capital was the city of Tetzcoaco. It consisted of an urban center surrounded by suburbs and scattered villages. Huexotla's formal qualities are those of a military city suited for defense and attacks; it was protected by a wall on the west side. Scholars believe the main building of Huexotla is located directly below the Franciscan convent and church of San Luis that was built in the 16th century. The great *atrio* (churchyard) displays the unique characteristic of being formed by two levels connected by a staircase due to an underlying Pre-Columbian pyramid. It shows the deliberate intention of the missionaries to impose the Catholic religion physically and conceptually in the indigenous towns [\[Fig. 147\]](#).

The site consists of the following parts:

The Wall

The great wall erected by the people of Huexotla was 650 meters (2,130 feet) long and 6 meters (21 feet) wide. At present only part of the original huge wall remains [\[Fig. 148\]](#).

This defense mechanism covered the space between two gorges and completely enclosed the site. Evidence suggests that what appears to have been the main town area was accessed through several gates. Today two entrances remain: one in front of San Francisco Street which leads to *La Estancia* and *La Comunidad* buildings and one in front of the San Luis Church.

The wall was made of the volcanic *tezontle*. Spikes (stones cut into cones) were found on the first tier. At present, only the round part remains visible; the rest is embedded into the wall's core. Building the wall was necessary because neighboring warring groups sought to extend their territories. Other towns of the region such as *Tenayuca* were also built with bulwarks as defense mechanisms.

La Comunidad (The Community)

La Comunidad is a staired structure that is superimposed on a previous building that faces a different direction and whose function is unclear. It consists of two tiers and is believed to have been a palace with several rooms and a portico with four columns on top [Fig. 149]. In some of the rooms are found *Tlecuiles* (hearths). The floor has traces of red paint and is coated with plaster.

La Estancia (The Hacienda)

Las Estancia covers an older building. It consists of two tiers with a staircase in the front leading the first tier to the second tier [Fig. 150]. The front façade is a plaster-paved apron. Some of the original red paint is still visible.

Santa Maria Group

The Santa María Group consists of two structures. It is found past the San Bernardino Gorge over the colonial bridge. The first structure had two construction phases. The first was between 1150 and 1350 C.E. It consisted of a platform with a staircase on the west side [Fig. 151]. The second building phase (1350-1515 C.E.) was very crude, suggesting that the site lost importance during this time. The second structure is located east side of the first structure. A section of the west wall can be seen from this building.

San Marcos

Local people call this edifice the observatory, but its original function is unknown. This mound is a series of rooms with a small staircase that leads to a plastered room with an adobe that is unevenly shaped. A stone structure rests on top.

Santiago

The Santiago was a ceremonial platform in Pre-Columbian times. Because 16th century, evangelizing Spanish friars had a chapel built over it, its only remains are the columns that held up the chapel's roof.

The Ehecatl-Quetzalcóatl Building

It is located east of the other Huexotlan pre-Columbian structures with a beautiful view of Mount Tlaloc in the background. The structure was built on a circular platform that is 19 meters (62 feet) in diameter. The building was fashioned in the traditional circular form so that it would not act as a barrier that could hinder the wind god's entrance [\[Fig. 152\]](#). The front of the structure indicates that there are two impositions. The first building was erected with the small stones cut in a similar fashion as those from the Santa María building. The newest layer is the one that is presently visible [\[Fig. 153\]](#).

Tepoztlan

Tepoztlan whose name means "place of copper" is a town located south of Mexico City, near the city of Cuernavaca. Other meanings or names associated with the site are "place of split stones" or "place of axes". In some records, the town is named Tepozteco because the spectacular and beautiful sierra with the same name surrounds it [\[Figs. 154 and 155\]](#). The city was founded in the Late Post-Classic period by the Tlahuica people. Its pyramidal complex was dedicated to Tepoztecatl also known as Ome Tochtli, the *pulque* (alcoholic beverage from the maguey plant) god. He was a legendary cultural hero that after being a priest for the gods of *pulque* was deified. The intoxication with *pulque* was an important religious practice of alteration of consciousness with the purpose of communication with the gods. According to the *Mendoza Codex*, Tepoztlan was conquered by Motecuhzoma II Ihuilcamina, becoming tributary to Tenochtitlán.

The Pyramid-Temple of Tepoztlan

The pyramid was built on top of a mountain in the spectacular Tepoztlan sierra. The area where the pyramid was erected is rocky in nature and was artificially molded and cut [Fig. 156]. A 9.50 meter high platform was constructed there. The platform is accessed from the east side through stairs situated in the posterior part of the temple; there are other stairs in the southeast section of the edifice. On the back section of the platform, there is a raised base composed of two inclined sections separated by a passageway that has stairs on its west side leading to the temple [Fig. 157].

The temple consists of two rooms that are bordered by two meter wide walls. The first room or vestibule is formed by the extension of two side walls and two pillars [Fig. 158]. The room is six by 5.20 meters and has lateral benches and a depression at the center similar to some of the temples in Malinalco. Archaeological remains suggest that the roof was made of *tezontle*; door jambs and benches were made of stone. The benches have small cornices whose ornamentation is believed to represent the twenty day signs. In the lower part of the pyramid there are two plaques; one has the hieroglyph of king Ahuizotl, indicating a date of 1500 C.E. and the other has the date *10 Tochtli* (rabbit) that corresponds to the last (final) years of Ahuizotl's reign. These plates indicate that this monument was constructed sometime between 1502 and 1520 C.E. The pyramid also consisted of 13 steps that symbolized the 13 levels of heaven.

Ome Tochtli, the *pulque* god and patron deity of Tepoztlan is related to the earth goddess. Festivals at the temple were carried out after the crop season. In addition, when a person died of alcohol intoxication, the town members would have a celebration in honor of the deceased individual. At present, on December 8 every year coinciding with the Christian festival of the Nativity, there is a festival dedicated to the cultural hero Tepoztecatl, and people still climb the mountain to place offerings to him. Tepoztlan is a place loaded with ancient traditions, legends and magic practices of Pre-Columbian affiliation.

Calixtlahuaca

Dating back to the Early Post-Classic Period (900-1250 C.E.), Calixtlahuaca was

located in the Valley of Toluca, southwest of modern day Mexico City. Calixtlahuaca, meaning Place of Houses on the Plain, was named by the Mexica-Aztecs who were impressed by the large quantity of towns that dotted the area of the Matlatzinca settlement. The city's overall architectural style is a combination of Toltec and Aztec motifs. However, when the Matlatzincas were in power, they developed a style reminiscent of Teotihuacán and built joined stone slabs covered with mud. The city was founded along the Tejalpa River, bordering the emerging Aztec Empire from the Valley of Mexico and the Tarascan domain to the west. This was a highly vulnerable position. For that reason, the Matlatzincas had fortifications and granaries placed in protected areas in order to withstand a siege.

According to the writings of Friar Bernardino de Sahagún (1951-69) in the 16th century, the Matlatzincas were called the net people because of their innovative use of nets. Because Calixtlahuaca was in a region surrounded by lakes, the use of nets was common and with nets they fished, trashed corn, carried their children, trapped birds, and made sacrifices. The Matlatzincas were also referred to as *quaquatl*, a Nahuatl word alluding to use of slings for hunting small game. Slings were strapped to their heads.

Calixtlahuaca was conquered by the Aztecs during the reign of Axayacatl (1469-1481 C.E.). It is believed that approximately 11,000 Calixtlahuacan prisoners were sacrificed in temple rituals at Tenochtitlán. Aztecs families moved to Calixtlahuaca to solidify the Aztec authority and to act as a buffer against the Tarascans. Major temples were added to the city. There are 17 visible mounds, with several of them lying on an artificially terraced hill. With the exception of the structures listed below, most of the monuments have not been excavated. It should be noted that a statue of Coatlicue was found at the top of the hill and is now at the Mexico City Museum of Anthropology.

Temple Of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl

The temple was built in four separate stages. Each stage added a new layer, though the structure always maintained its circular form indicating worship to the wind god Ehecatl [Fig. 159]. The original temple was plain, without much decoration. The

second layer was added during the Toltec dominion (900-1200 C.E.). The third layer was erected at the time the Matlatzincas controlled the area (1200-1474 C.E.). The final layer was added after the Mexica conquest [Fig. 160]. The temple also has a single stairway facing east with 13 steps, a symbol of the thirteen heavens of the supernatural realm [Fig. 161]. Carved stones are embedded into the structure.

Next to the temple was found a stone image of the wind god Ehecatl wearing a *maxtlatl* (loincloth), sandals and a mask with a beaklike mouth indicating that he is an incarnation of Quetzalcóatl, the Feathered Serpent [Fig. 162].

The Tlaloc Cluster

A group of three structures are clustered together around a small plaza in the middle of the hill. Archaeological findings associate them with Tlaloc [Fig. 163]. The Altar of the Skulls (*tzompantli*) was erected in a cruciform fashion on the west side. The transverse part to the west is semicircular. The outside walls are covered with projecting skull-shaped carvings [Figs. 164 and 165]. Rows of skulls, possibly heads of prisoners of war were found in this building.

The other two structures in this plaza are rectangular platforms with a single staircase that face the plaza [Fig. 166].

Calmecac Group

The *calmecac* group is a series of clustered buildings around a courtyard on the lower part of the hill near the Tejalpa River. The word *calmecac* derives from the Náhuatl word *calli* for house and *mecatl* for rope. The name is a reference to a building with long narrow corridors [Fig. 167].

According to the Spanish chronicles, priests in charge of the education of the nobility's children lived in *calmecac*. *Calmecac* were the elite schools where Quetzalcoatl was a patron god. Flowers, sugar cane, beverages, and food were offered to the god on the day *Ce Acatl*, "one cane" of their calendar. Trimmed snail shells, symbols of Quetzalcoatl, were found during the explorations of the rooms of the buildings.

Ballcourt

The site of Calixtlahuaca holds a traditional ballcourt used to play the Mesoamerican ballgame. The ballcourt has not been excavated.

Coatetelco

Coatetelco is an urban site of medium size built in the late Aztec period [Fig. 168]. The ceremonial center was excavated by the archaeologist Raúl Arana in the 1970s. It consists of a ballcourt [Fig. 169], a small pyramid-temple [Fig. 170], a building that seems to be a palace [Fig. 171], and a few other edifices all clustered around a public plaza [Fig. 172]. The ballcourt is one of the very scarce Aztec ballcourts that have been excavated [Fig. 173]. Under the stairway of the western ballcourt platform elite burials were found with a great amount of tomb artifacts, such as ceramic vessels, obsidian, jade, copper-bronze objects, and a pile of *manos* (stone tools for grinding corn on a flat stone, called *metate*). According to Michael Smith (2003), the residential areas of the site are buried today under the modern town of Coatetelco.

Coatetelco is important because it is one of the few surviving Aztec sites that were not destroyed deliberately by the Spanish Conquest. Thus, its sacred precinct has been widely excavated and studied. There is a group of small platforms aligned in the plaza adjacent to the ballcourt [Fig. 174]. One of the platforms is circular and that would suggest its use in the worship of the wind god Ehecatl, but in this case it is also possible that it was used for gladiatorial sacrifices [Fig. 175]. This is reinforced by the fact that in the site was found a *temalacatl*, a round stone utilized to tie the captive warriors in those practices [Fig. 176]. The *temalacatl* were used also as rings for the ballgame, but in this case the size is too big and the hole is too small to allow the passing of a ball. Those platforms besides being a unique feature in Aztec urban planning, they contained buried offerings that included long-handled incense burners similar to those shown in the codices and utilized by the priests in diverse rituals [Fig. 177]. The provincial town of Coatetelco has an interesting architectural feature. Its main pyramid-temple is relatively modest indicating that not all Aztec cities followed the pattern of building large, massive twin pyramids like those in Tenochtitlán, Teopanzolco, or Tenayuca. Excavations of the

residential areas have not been conducted.

Malinalco

Malinalco is a city located in the east-central part of the state of Mexico, south of the modern city of Toluca. It is believed that the site was founded by the Matlanzincas and was taken by the Aztecs in 1469-1476 C.E., during the reign of King Axayacatl. Malinalco is best known for its rock-cut temples (similar to those of Ajanta and Ellora in India, the Longmen caves of China, the city of Petra in Jordan, and the temple Abu Simbel in Egypt) and for being a fortress city of the Aztecs. Called the Eagle's Nest (*Cuauhtinchan*) by the Aztecs, it served military-religious society purposes and was the headquarters for the Eagle and Jaguar Knights, the Aztec military castes of prestigious warriors.

Malinalco's ceremonial center is located on a mountain cliff called the *Cerro de los Idolos* (Idols mount), and it resembles an eagle's nest amid a mountainous region [Fig. 178a]. Malinalco was a strategic location, allowing the Aztecs to control the Valley of Toluca (Matlatzinca region), northern Guerrero and the Tlahaica region. Its name means "place where Malinalxochitl (grass flower) is adored," or more simply, "Place of the Grass Flower" [Fig. 178b].

The temples of Malinalco are usually described as sculpture-temples or sculptural architecture. They were carved on a sloping hill, oriented southeast for ritual purposes [Fig. 179a]. According to the Aztecs, Malinalco was one of the most important architectural sites because of its association to Aztec religious history and for its military nature. Malinalco is the place where the three levels of the Cosmos unite: the sky, the earth, and the underworld [Fig. 179b]. It is well known for its shamanism and as the place where Copil, nephew of Huitzilopochtli and son of Malinalxochitl, fought Huitzilopochtli. Copil was defeated and his heart was thrown over the lake of Tetzaco and landed on the island that would later become Tenochtitlán.

Temple I (Cuauhcalli) - Temple of the Eagle and Jaguar Knights

The major structure of Malinalco is a temple called the *cuauhcalli*, meaning house of the eagles, by the archaeologist José García Payón (1974). The circular *cuauhcalli*

pyramidal base and balustraded staircase is a rock-cut structure carved in the mountain side and is oriented south. It has two bodies in *talud*, with one superimposed on the other with a height of four meters [\[Fig. 180\]](#).

The staircase, located in the front façade of the building, is two meters wide and has 13 steps. The staircase has two balustrades with changing slopes at the top, each becoming almost vertical. On the left and right sides of the stairs, two squatting jaguars are found. On the fourth and seventh steps, there are remains of a damaged sculpture of a sitting standard (*pantli*) bearer similar to ones that once stood on top of the balustrades of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán [\[Fig. 181\]](#).

At the top of the stairs there is low platform that functioned as an antechamber for the shrine of the temple. The platform floor has a rectangular perforation that is believed to have had an embedded *Techcatl* (sacrificial stone). Three-dimensional figures of a serpent head with an Eagle Knight sitting on top (east side) and a *huehuetl* (vertical drum) covered with *ocelotl* (jaguar) skin surmounted with remains of a Jaguar Knight on the west side, flank the doorway [\[Fig. 182\]](#). The doorway of the shrine is the open mouth of a serpent, with fangs on each side and a bifid tongue sculpted on the floor [\[Fig. 183\]](#). García Payón believed that this architectural sculpture represented Tlaltecuhltli, the earth monster, but it is now more widely accepted that it is Coatlicue, the mother earth goddess. This characteristic makes the *Cuauhcalli*, to be a cave-temple, the entrance to the womb of the earth.

The interior structure has a painted, raised ledge cut from rock which follows the circular contour of the wall and is almost six meters (19 feet) in diameter. The east and west sides have sculptures of flat eagles and the north side has an extended jaguar. The sculptures were zoomorphic thrones. The extended jaguar was used by the king and the eagles by his imperial officers. In the center of the shrine there is a sculpture of an eagle facing the doorway [\[Fig. 184\]](#). Behind the eagle there is a circular hole, approximately 30 cm (12 inches) wide and 33 cm (13 inches) deep. It is believed that it was a *cuauhxicalli* (repository for the hearts of sacrificed victims) that served as offerings that were needed to maintain the movement of the Sun and human existence.

The eagle is the *nahual* (disguise) of the Sun and is the terrestrial form taken by god Huitzilopochtli-Tonatiuh. The carved circular wall was completed with an extension of *tezontle* to support the thatched roof.

Like most Aztec architecture, the *cuauhcalli* is a re-enactment of historical and religious beliefs. As stated above, to some scholars it simply honors Tlaltecuhltli or Coatlicue, the earth monsters through its function of a sanctuary that represents the earth itself on which Aztec Warriors struggled in warfare and perished fighting, offering their lives to the sun. To other scholars (including the author of this work) the temple represents, like the Great temple of Tenochtitlán, the mount of Coatepec (Snake Mountain) that is a transitional place on the surface of the earth (*tlalticpac*) connecting the middle world with the heavens and underworld. It is the mythical house of Coatlicue, represented by the serpent's mouth door. When the interior chamber is entered, it leads to a cave, the womb of the earth. It is a metaphor for the mythical places of creation and origin Tamoanchan-Aztlan-Chicomoztoc. Coatepec, as we have seen before, is the place where Huitzilopochtli was born from the womb of Coatlicue. There are physical elements referring to the myth of Coatepec in the *cuauhcalli*. The *cuauhtehuanitl* (ascending eagle) or rising Sun is represented by the carved eagle in the center of the shrine that faces toward the portal of the earth cave (Coatlicue) [Fig. 185]. It symbolized Huitzilopochtli's victory over his siblings. The battle was re-enacted everyday symbolizing a new day for human beings. This is exactly the same meaning that appears in the *huehuetl* of Malinalco discussed in the section of Art. When the Sun rose from the east, it was carried from the zenith by warriors that died in war or on sacrificial stones. When it sets on the west, it is taken by the *Cihuateteo*, deified women who died in child birth. It was believed by warriors, that the hearts placed in the circular hole of the shrine's floor aided Huitzilopochtli in his nightly quests. In the exterior, next to the portal, on the southeast side, there is a *xiuhcoatl*, the weapon used by Huitzilopochtli when he traveled everyday from east to west [Fig. 186]. The archaeoastronomical measurements of Javier Romero-Quiroz (1980) and Jesús Galindo-Trejo (1989) confirm that the day of the winter solstice (December 21st) at noon, the light of the Sun coming from a cleft in a mountain located in front of the

cuauhcalli, enters through the doorway of it, illuminating exactly the head of the eagle that is the embodiment of Huitzilopochtli, the Sun himself [Fig. 187]. We know through Sahagún, that on the solsticial day the *Panquetzaliztli* was celebrated, a festival dedicated to honor the flags of sacrifice because this was the day of the descent of Huitzilopochtli to the earth. It means that the orientation of this temple was built with this solsticial effect in mind (see section on the Great Temple in this article for further information).

Flanking the door are images of the *Cuauhtli* and *Ocelotl* warriors who were the guardians of the temple and worshippers of the Sun [Fig. 182]. Archaeologist Richard Townsend (1982, 2000) points out that *Cuauhtli* and *Ocelotl* warriors' ritual practices and ceremonies such as initiation and graduation were celebrated in this temple.

Although Temple I is circular, it is not associated with the cult of Quetzalcoatl (many circular structures in Mesoamerica honor the deity). This temple was erected in honor of the Sun god Huitzilopochtli and that is proven by all the iconographic motifs already discussed.

Temple II

Temple II is a truncated pyramid that is located a few feet southeast of Temple I. It has a squared floor plan and a staircase on the west side of the façade. The balustrades were constructed with carved stones and were built with stucco plaster [Fig. 188]. Altar carvings and a platform were incorporated into the building. The building is consolidated, but it shows a state of deterioration.

Temple III

Temple III was used to celebrate the funerals of warriors who died in war or captivity and were worthy of going to *Tonatiuh Ilhuicac* (the paradise of the Sun) [Fig. 189]. The rock-cut structure holds two chambers, a circular and a rectangular one. The eastern portion of the building faces south and is part of a natural *talud* (slope) of the mountain. It is constructed of stone joined with soil and lime mortar. The temple's entrance consists of three doors that are separated by two columns [Fig. 190].

The rectangular chamber has a fire pit in the middle of the room. The room contains a

bench that runs through the east, west, and north sides. It is interrupted at the center of the north side and gives access to the circular chamber. The rectangular chamber originally had a mural that represented the *mimixcoua*, the deified eagle and jaguar warriors who lived in the Heaven of the Sun [Fig. 191]. Unfortunately, this mural no longer exists.

Temple IV

Temple IV is partially carved into the living rock, faces east, and is considered to be a *Tonatiuhcalli*; Temple of the Sun. Half of the edifice is carved out of rock, while the other half, the front façade, is made of ashlar stones. The building is raised from a platform and has a central staircase [Fig. 192]. The interior consists of two rectangular pedestals that served as column bases that supported the roof. There is an altar carved out of the rock that lies along the main wall [Fig. 193]. Some scholars believe that an image of the sun, similar to the Aztec Calendar of Tenochtitlán was embedded in the main wall due to the fact that the Temple wall was designed to receive the light rays of the rising Sun (*Cuauhtehuani*), illuminating every morning the face of the god.

Temple V

This monument has a circular floor plan of 2 m. of diameter and is built of stone ashlar over a platform [Fig. 194]. Even though it is very dilapidated, its limited space and round form are similar to the Kivas of the Southwest of the United States, an area located beyond the north border of Mesoamerica. The hole that this structure has in its center could have been used to hold the flags or banners of war and sacrifice.

Temple VI

Temple VI was under construction at the time of the Spanish conquest, and so it was never completed. Its platform is identified as that of a *temalacatl* (wheel of stone) [Fig. 195]. The chroniclers and the codices show that on that particular type of stone, brave enemy captives were exposed to the gladiatorial sacrifice (*tlauauanaliztli*) [Fig. 175]. Some *temalacatl* were also considered to be *cuauhxicallis* (vessels that contained the hearts of the sacrificial victims).



Figure 27a. Coyolxauhqui (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 27b. Older Coyolxauhqui Relief (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 32. Chacmool of the Tlaloc Shrine (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 47. Acolman Cross (Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

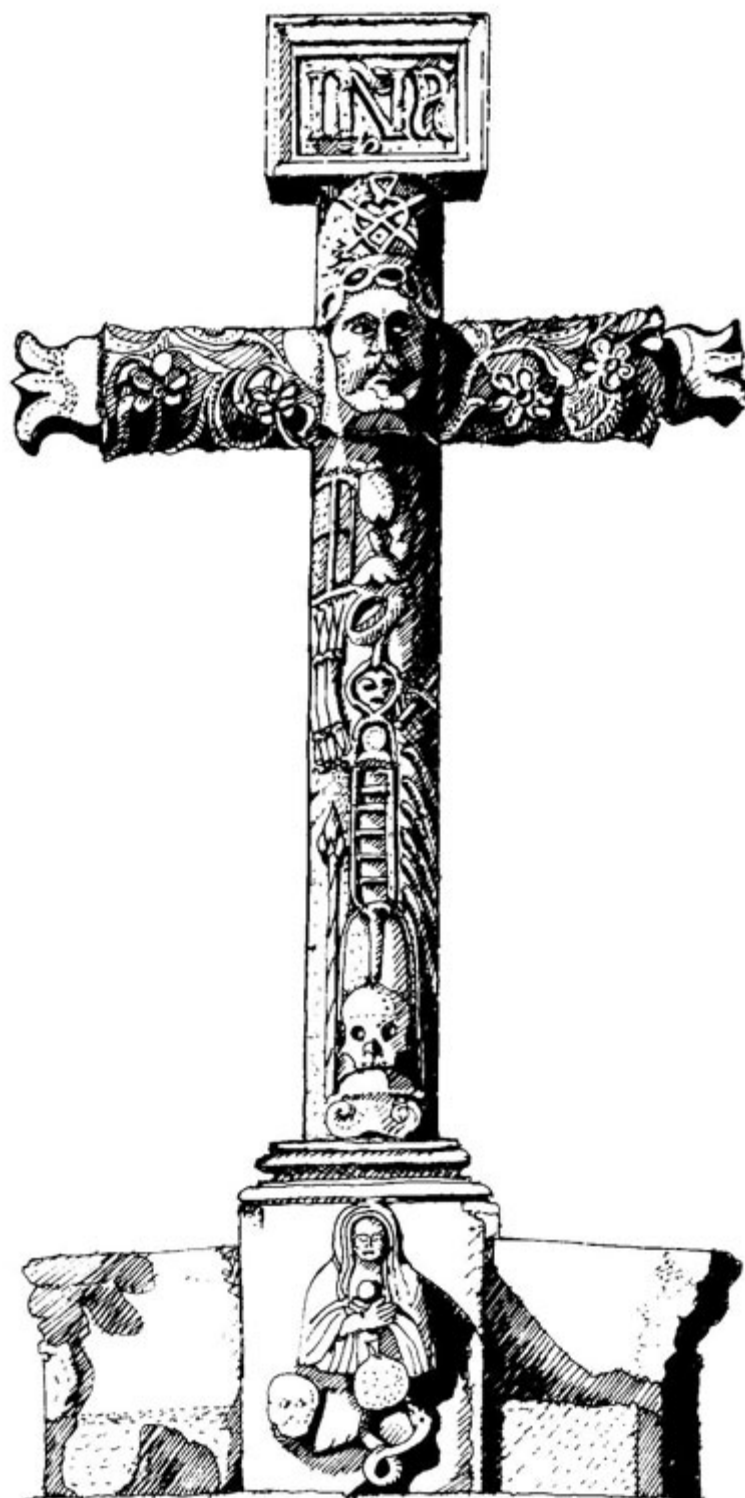


Figure 48. Acolman Cross (drawing Richard Perry).

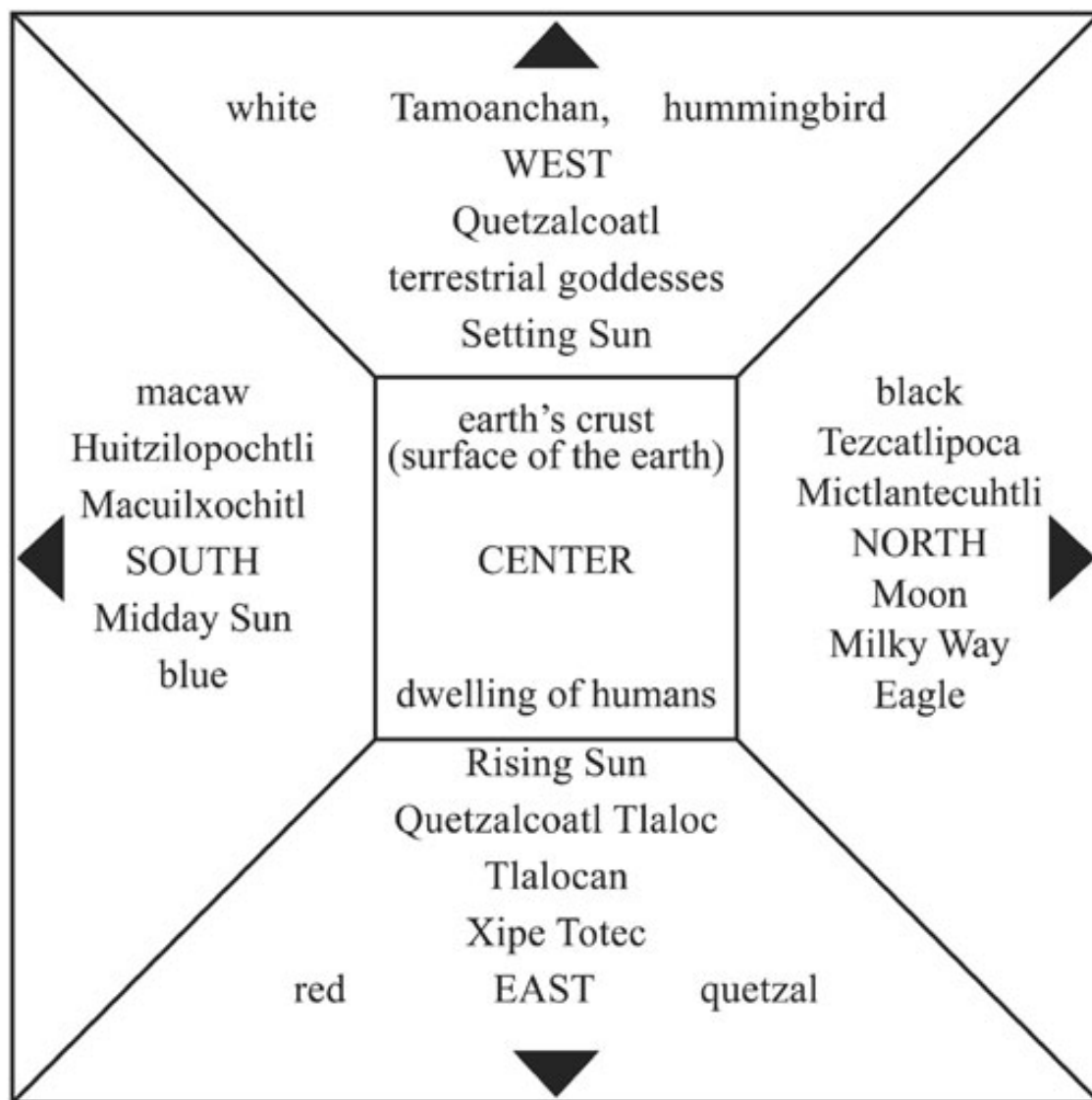


Figure 69. Diagram of Orientation of a Pyramid-Temple (drawing Lluvia Arras).

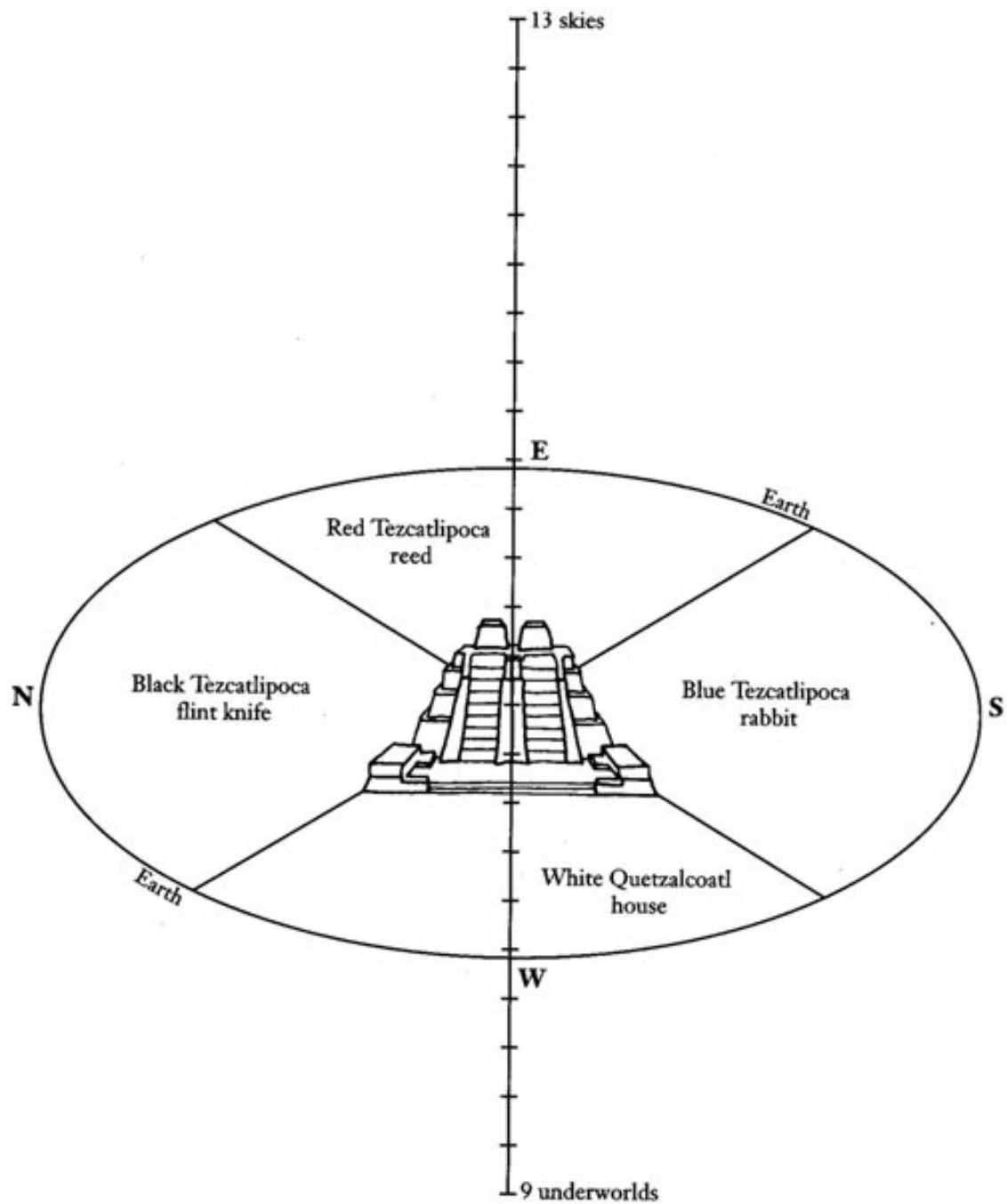


Figure 70. Aztec Cosmogram (drawing by Fonda Portales).



Figure 71. Shrine in the Hill of the Star (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 72. Ball Court of Coatetelco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 73. Aqueduct Chapultepec-Tenochtitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 74. Tlatelolco Market (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 75. Chinampas (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 76a. Portrait of Tenochtitlan by Miguel Covarrubias (photo Fernando González y González).

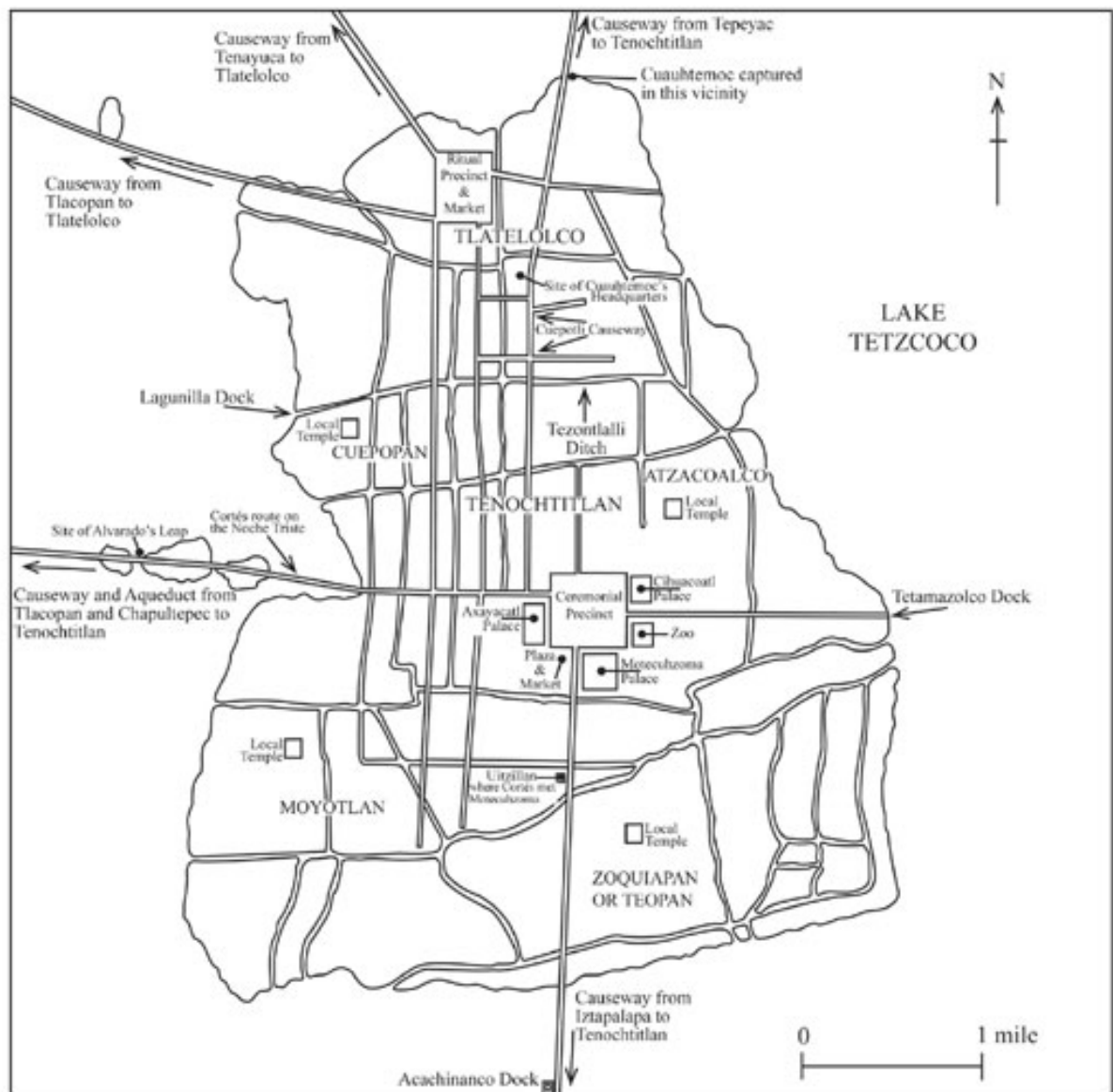
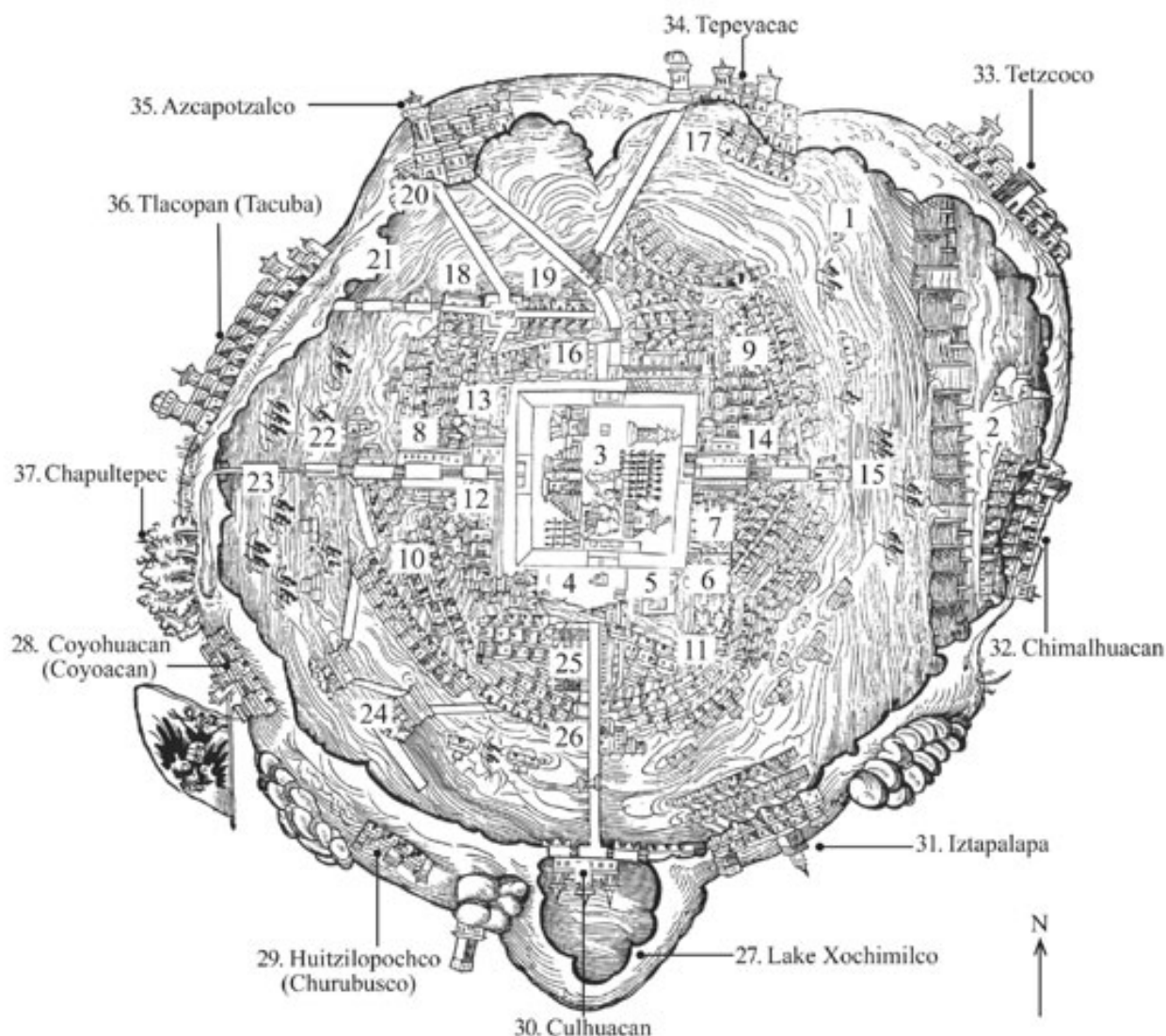
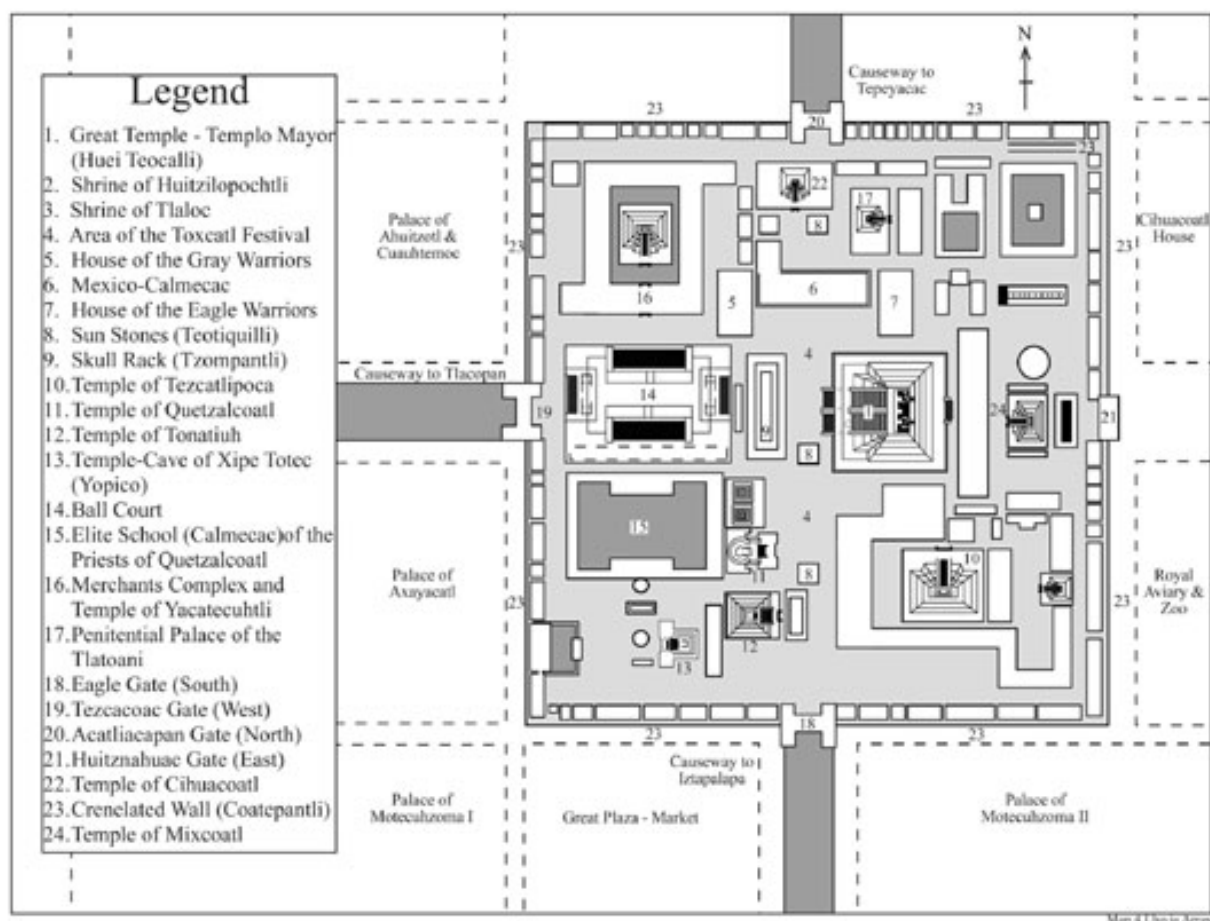


Figure 76b. Map of Tenochtitlan (drawing Lluvia Arras).



1. Lake Tetzaco	14. Causeway from Ceremonial Precinct to Tetamazolco Dock	24. Motecuhzoma's Country Side Houses
2. Netzahualcoyotl's Dike	15. Tetamazolco Dock	25. Iztapalapa Causeway
3. Ceremonial Precinct with Great Temple	16. Tepeyacac Causeway	26. Xoloc's Fortress
4. Plaza and Market	17. Tepeyacac Causeway	27. Lake Xochimilco
5. Motecuhzoma's Palace	18. Tlatelolco's Great Temple	28. Coyohuacan (Coyoacan)
6. Botanical Garden	19. Tlatelolco's Market	29. Huitzilopochtli (Churubusco)
7. Zoo	20. Causeway and Aqueduct from Azcapotzalco to Tlatelolco	30. Culhuacan
8. Cuepopan District	21. Causeway and Aqueduct from Tlacopan to Tlatelolco	31. Iztapalapa
9. Atzacolco District	22. Tlacopan Causeway (Tacuba)	32. Chimalhuacan
10. Moyotlan District	23. Aqueduct from Chapultepec to Mexico lined up with Causeway to Tlacopan	33. Tezcoco
11. Teopan District		34. Tepeyacac
12. Axayacatl's Palace		35. Azcapotzalco
13. Cuauhtemoc's Palace		36. Tlacopan (Tacuba)
		37. Chapultepec

Figure 77. Map of Tenochtitlan by Hernán Cortéz (drawing Lluvia Arras).



Map 4 Lluvia Arras

Figure 78a. Plan of the Sacred Precinct of Tenochtitlan (drawing Lluvia Arras).



Figure 78b. Model of Tenochtitlan by Ignacio Marquina (photo Fernando González y González).

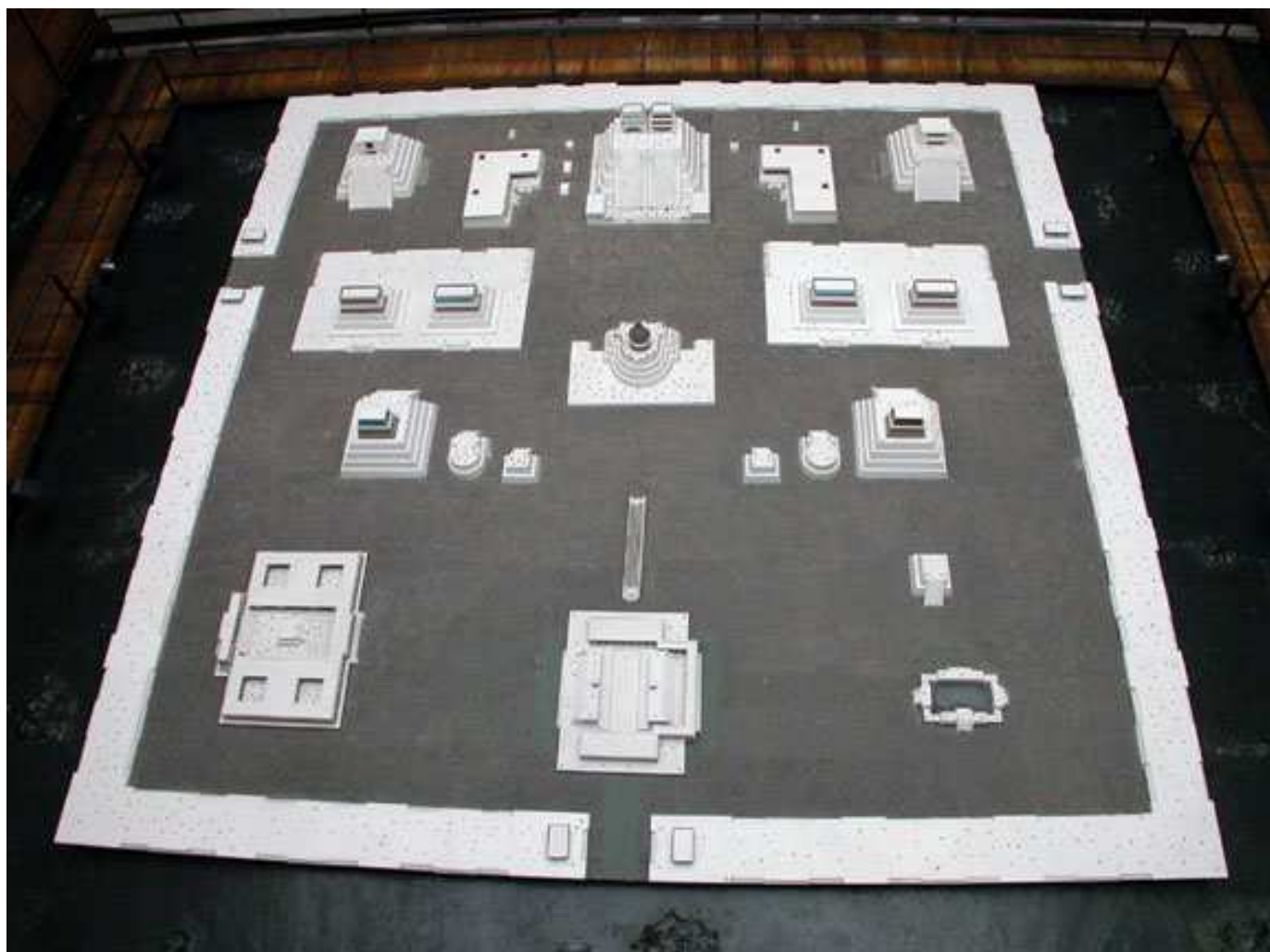


Figure 78c. Model of Tenochtitlan at the Templo Mayor Museum (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 79a. Model of the Great Temple (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 79b. Superimpositions of the Great Temple (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 79c. Superimpositions of the Great Temple (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 80a. The Great Temple (photo Fernando González y González).

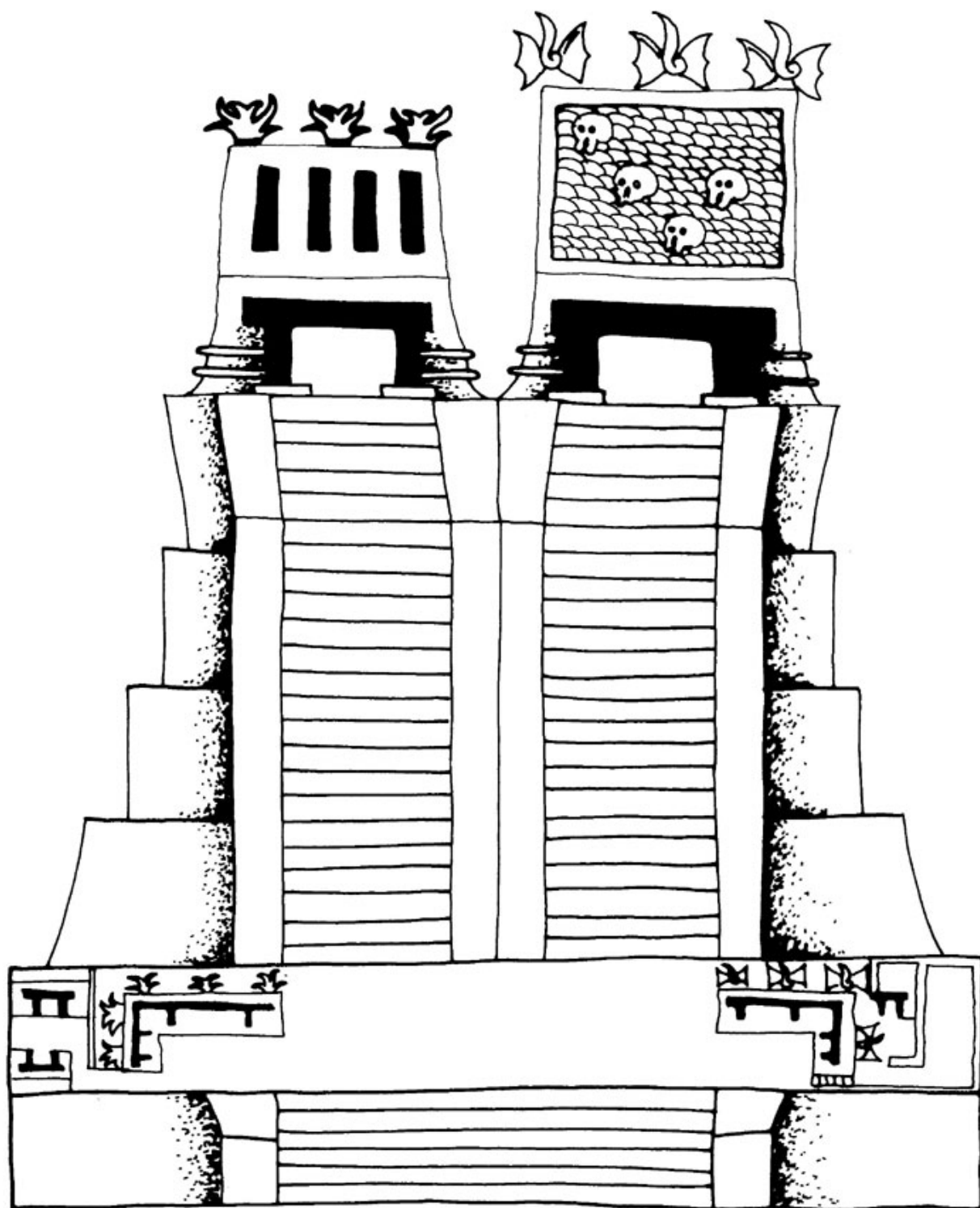


Figure 80b. The Great Temple from Codex Ixtlilxochitl (drawing Fonda Portales).

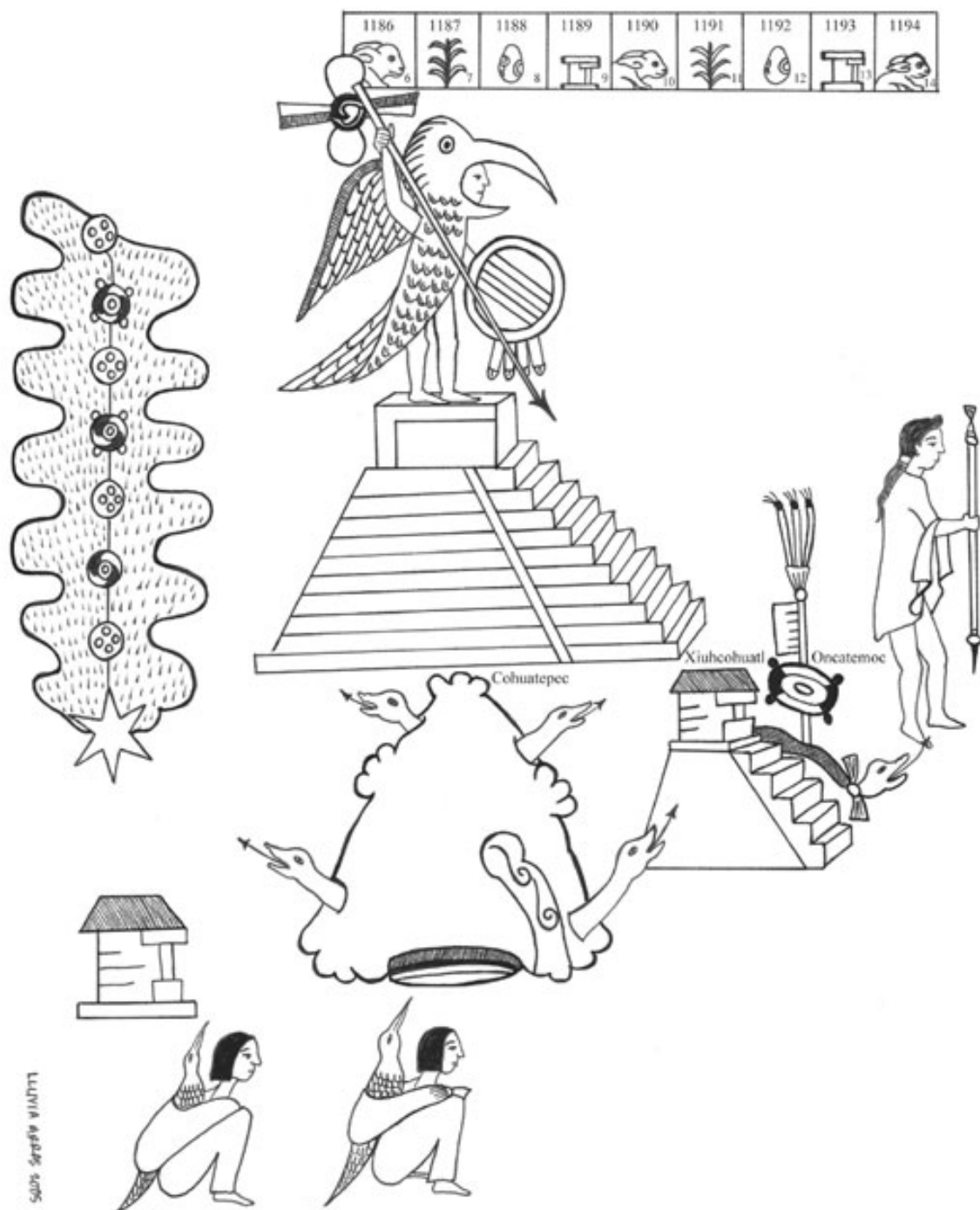


Figure 81. Birth of Huitzilopochtli at coatepec from Codex Azcatitlan (drawing Lluvia Arras).

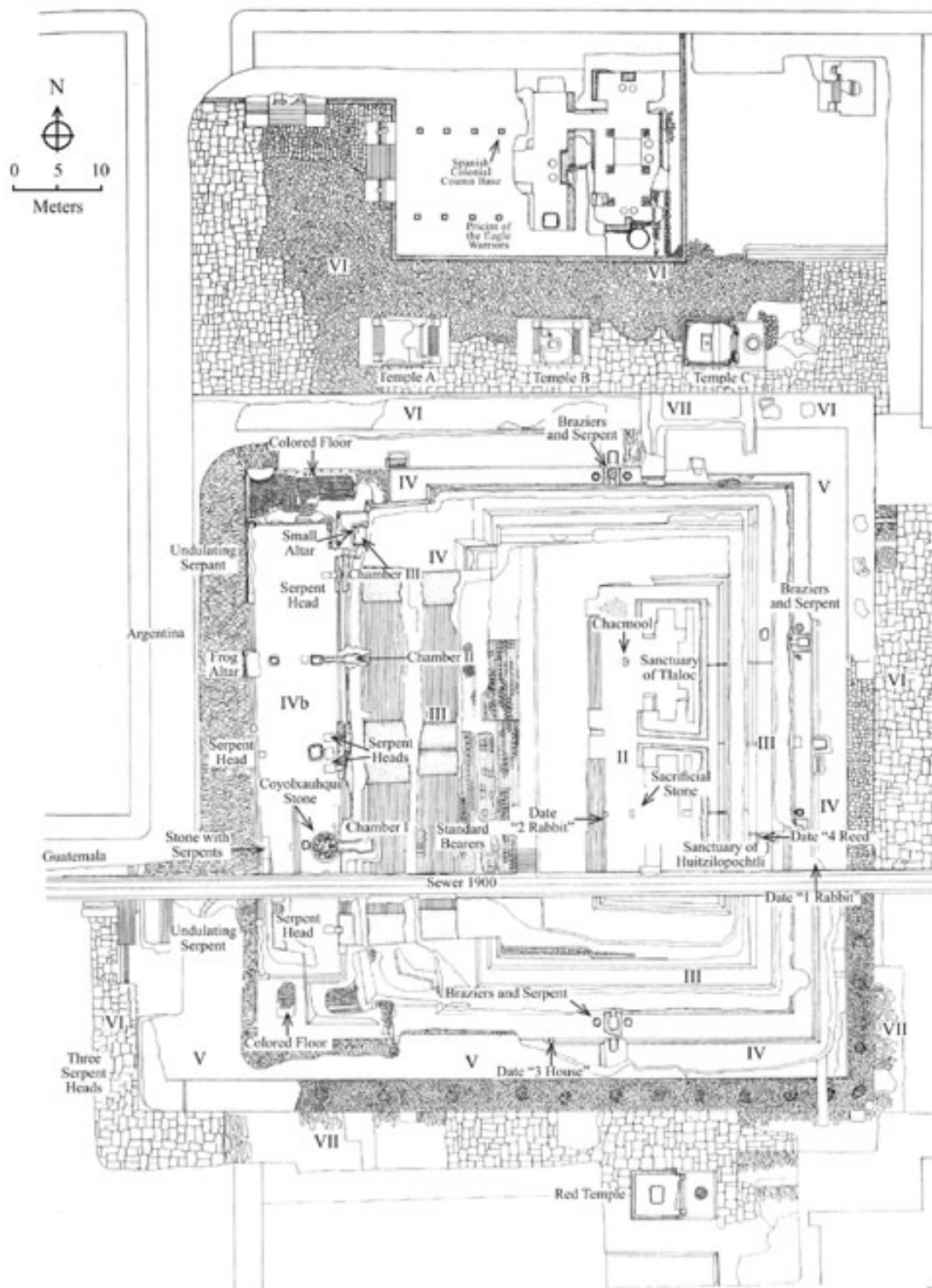


Fig. 9.7

Figure 82. Plan of the Seven Superimpositions of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 83. Phase II of the Great Temple with the Shrines of Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 84. Stone of Sacrifices in the Huitzilopochtli Shrine (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 85. Chacmool in the Tlaloc Shrine (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 86. Phase III of the Great Temple with statues of the Centzon Huiznahua (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 87. Phase IV and the location of the Coyolxauhqui Stone (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 88. Serpent Head in Phase IV (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 89. Offering Cache found in Phase IV (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 90. Phase V (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 91. Eagle Warriors House and Temple A in Phase VI (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 92. Temple B (Tzompantli Altar) in Phase VI (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 93. Temple C (Red Temple) in Phase VI (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 94. Eagle Warriors House in Phase VI (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 95. Interior of the House of the Eagle Warriors (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 96. Bench Relief in the House of the Eagle Warriors (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 97. Bench Relief in the House of the Eagle Warriors (photo Fernando González y González).

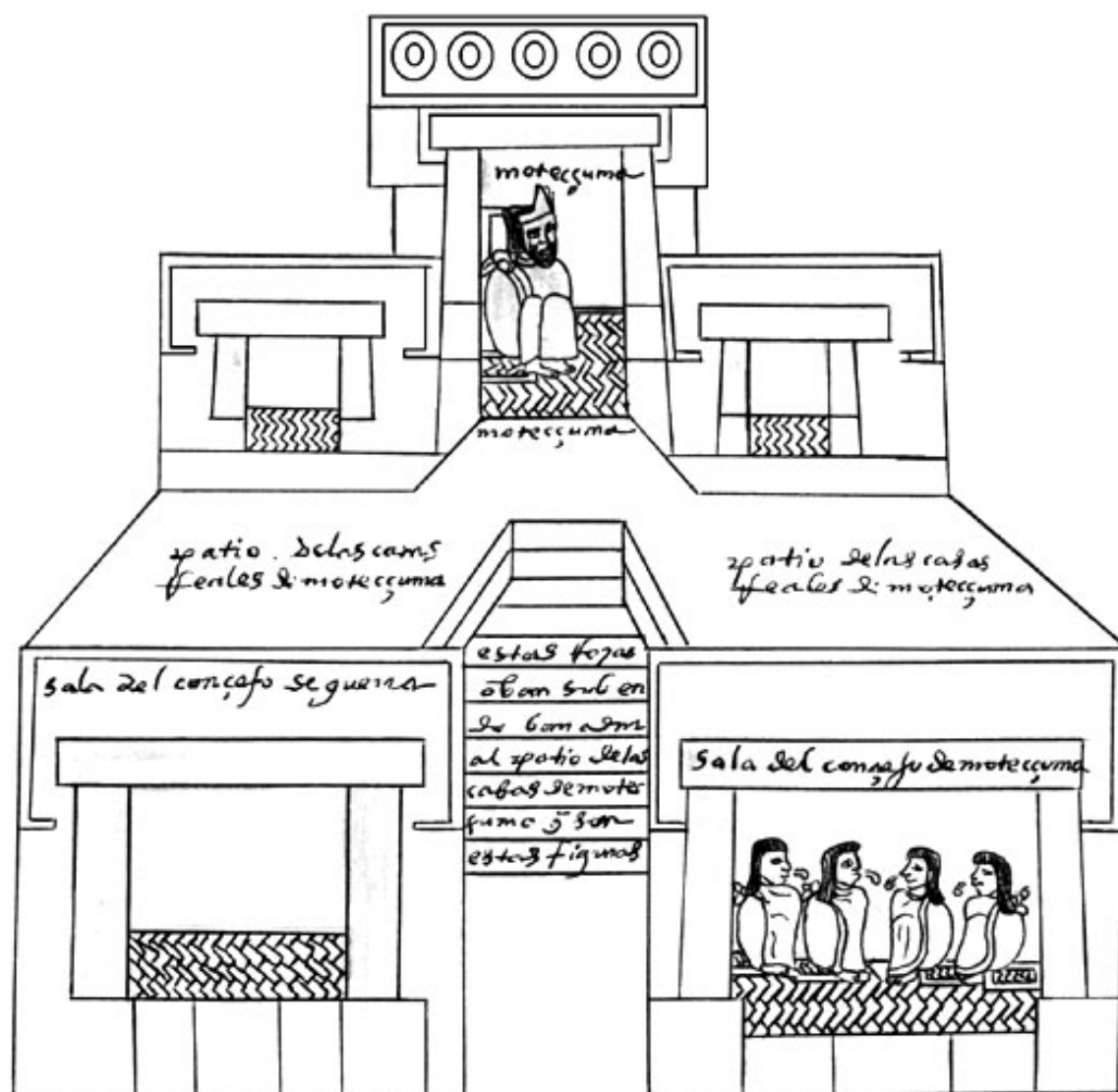


Figure 98. Palace of Motecuhzoma II according to the Codex Mendoza (drawing Maria Ramos).



Figure 99. Metlatl and Comalli (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 100. Temazcalli (drawing Fonda Portales).



Figure 101. Chinampas (photo Fernando González y González).

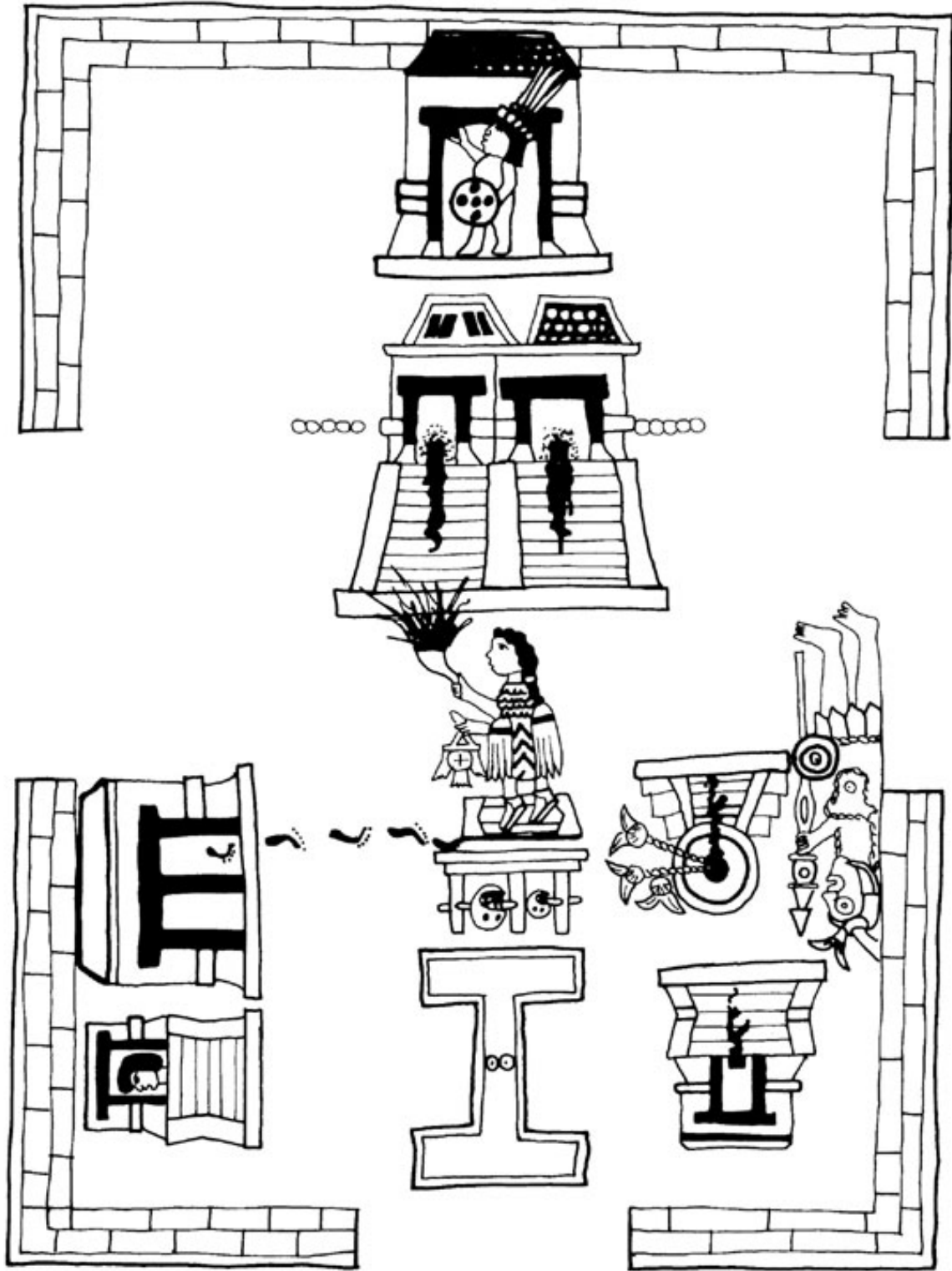


Figure 102. Plan of the Sacred Precinct of Tenochtitlan from Primeros (drawing Fonda Portales).

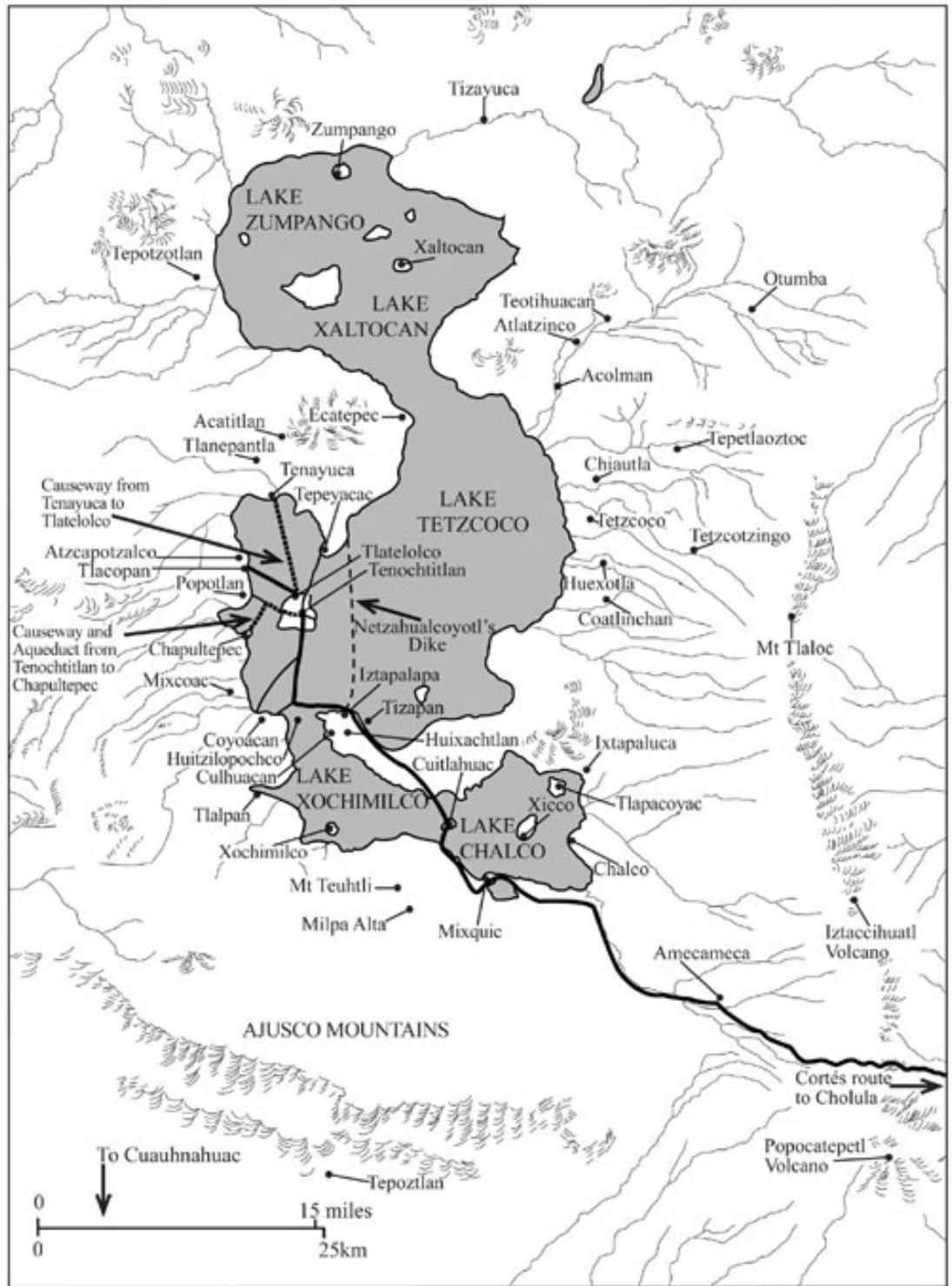


Figure 103. Temple of Pino Suárez Metro Station (photo Fernando González y González).



Map © Lluvia Arras

Figure 104. Map of the Aztec Empire (drawing Lluvia Arras).



Map 2

Figure 105. Map of the Valley of Mexico (drawing Lluvia Arras).



Figure 106. Pyramid of Tenayuca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 107. Superimpositions in the Pyramid of Tenayuca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 108. Coatepantli of the Pyramid of Tenayuca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 109. Coatepantli of the Pyramid of Tenayuca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 110. Xihcoatl of Tenayuca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 111. Tomb-Altar with Skulls (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 112. Pyramid of Santa Cecilia Acatitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 113. Pyramid of Santa Cecilia Acatitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 114. Pyramid of Santa Cecilia Acatitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 115. Temple of Huitzilopochtli in Santa Cecilia Acatitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 116. Chacmool, Sacrificial Stone and Brazier at Santa Cecilia Acatitlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 117. Plaza of Teopanzolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 118. Pyramid of Teopanzolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 119. Dual Temples of the Main Pyramid of Teopanzolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 120. Temple of tezcatlipoca in Teopanzolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 121. Altar #14 of Teopanzolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 122. Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl at Teopanzolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 123. Tlatelolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 124. Main Pyramid with Dual Temples in Tlatelolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 125. Temple of the Calendar (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 126. Detail of the Temple of the Calendar (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 127. Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl in Tlatelolco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 128. Tlatelolco Market (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 129. Tlatelolco Market (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 130. Tlatelolco Market (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 131. Sign in Tlatelolco announcing the Birth of Mexico (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 132a. Mount Tlaloc (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 132b. Tetzcotzinco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 133. Nezahualcoyotl by Jesus Contreras (19th Century) (photo Fernando González y González).

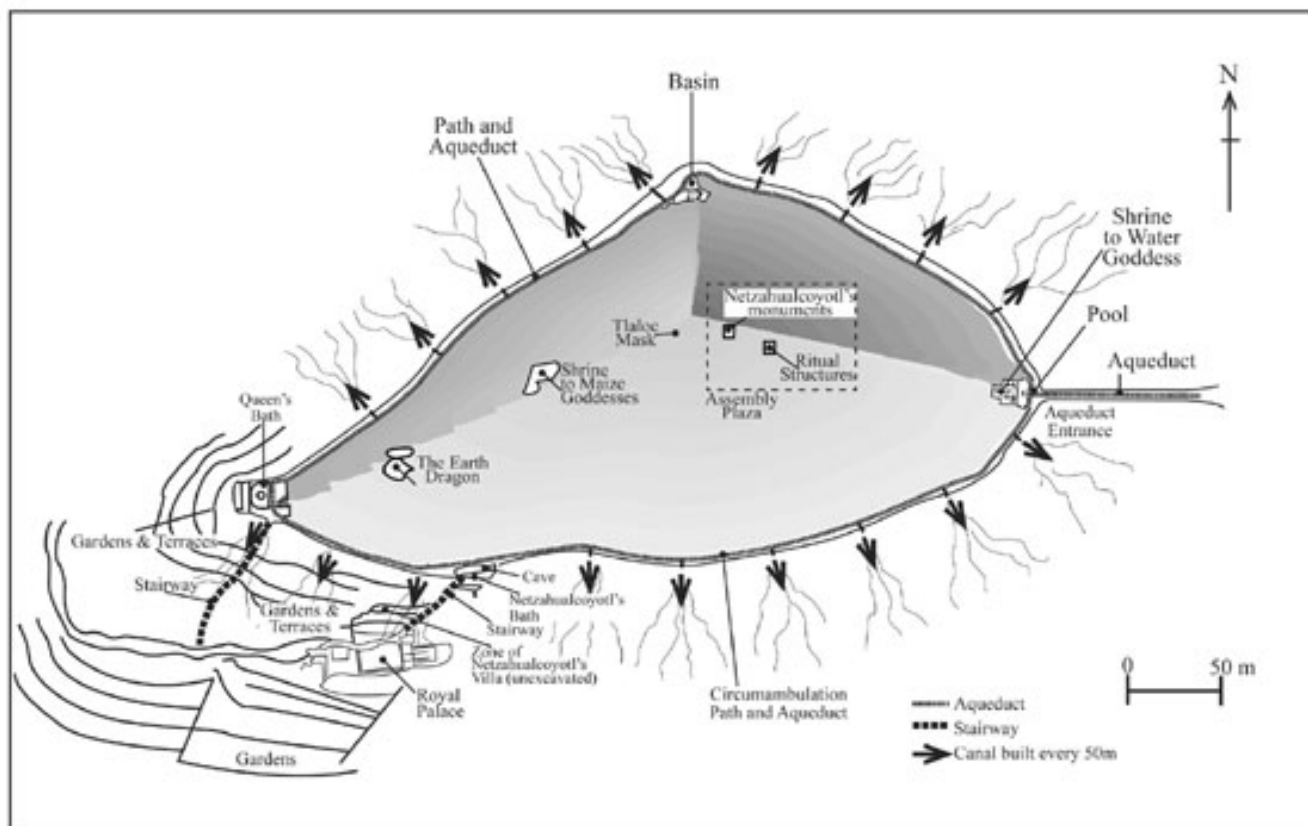


Figure 134a. Map of Tetzcotzinco (drawing Lluvia Arras).



Figure 134b. Aqueduct and Circumabulation Path in Tetzcotzinco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 135. Reservoir System H and Tetzcotzinco Hill (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 136. Aqueduct and Monolithic Room in Tetzcoztzinco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 137. Monolithic Room (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 138. Circumambulation Path and Subsystem of Irrigation Canals (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 139. The King's Bath (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 140. The Queen's Bath (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 141. The Queen's Bath overlooking the City of Tetzaco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 142. Cave-Temple in the Assembly Plaza on Top of Tetzcotzinco Hill (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 143. Mask of Tlaloc (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 144. Mask of Tlaloc (photo Fernando González y González).

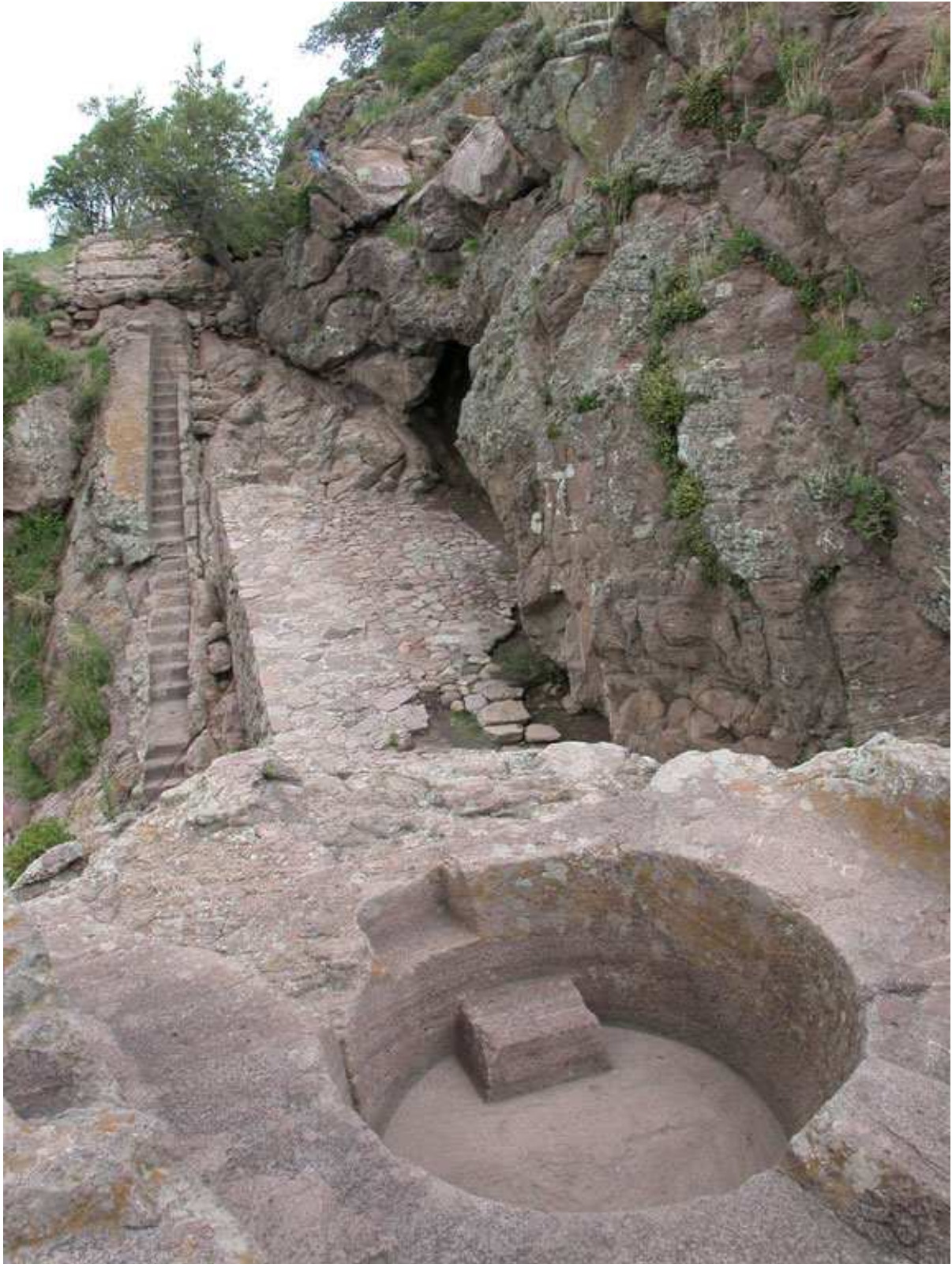


Figure 145. King's Bath and Cave (photo Fernando González y González).

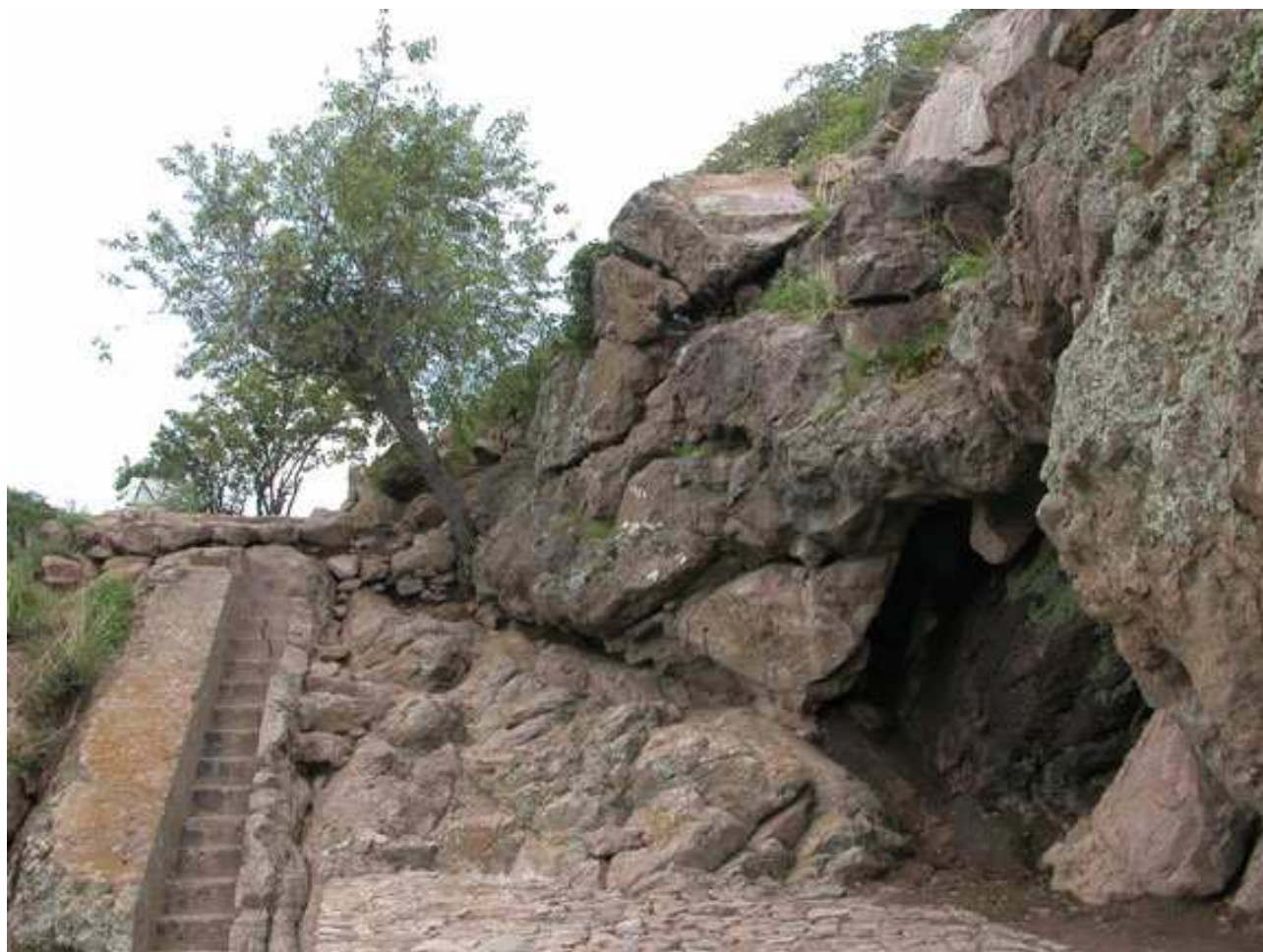


Figure 146. Cave (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 147. Atrio of Huexotla (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 148. The Wall of Huexotla (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 149. La Comunidad Building in Huexotla (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 150. La Estancia Building in Huexotla (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 151. Santa María Group in Huexotla (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 152. Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl and Mount Tlaloc (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 153. Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl in Huexotla (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 154. Sierra of Tepoztlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 155. Tepoztlan and Tepozteco Hills (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 156. Pyramid-Temple of Tepoztlan on Tepozteco Hill (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 157. Pyramid-Temple of Tepoztlan (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 158. Interior of the Pyramid-Temple of Tepoztlán (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 159. Superimpositions of the Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl in Calixtlahuaca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 160. Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl in Calixtlahuaca (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 161. Temple of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 162. Statue of Ehecātl (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 163. Tlaloc Cluster in Calixtlahuaca (photo Fernando González y González).

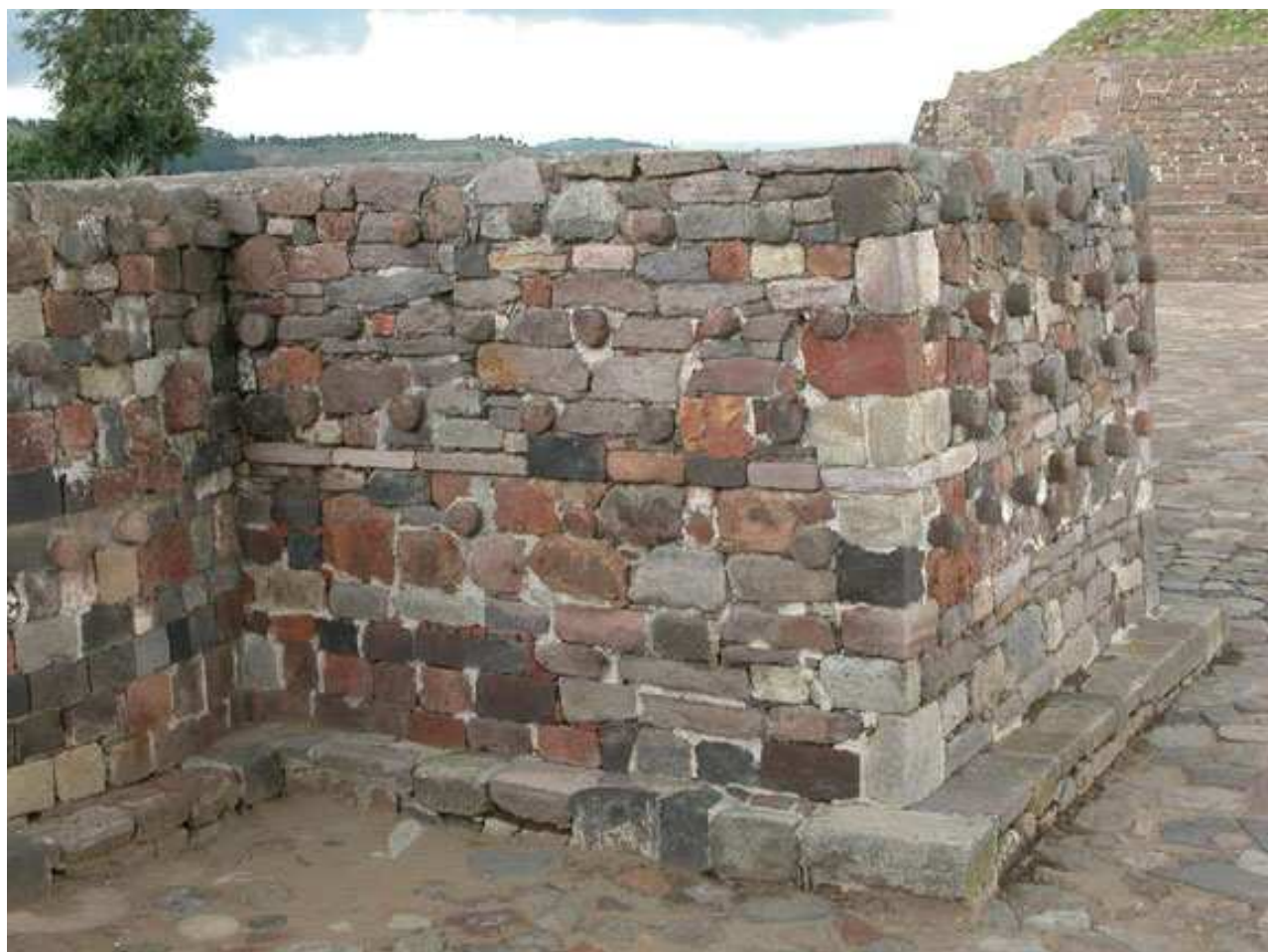


Figure 164. Tzompantli in the Tlaloc Cluster (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 165. Detail of the Tzompantli of the Tlaloc Cluster (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 166. Rectangular Buildings of the Tlaloc Cluster (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 167. Calmecac Group of Calixtlahuaca (photo Fernando González y González).

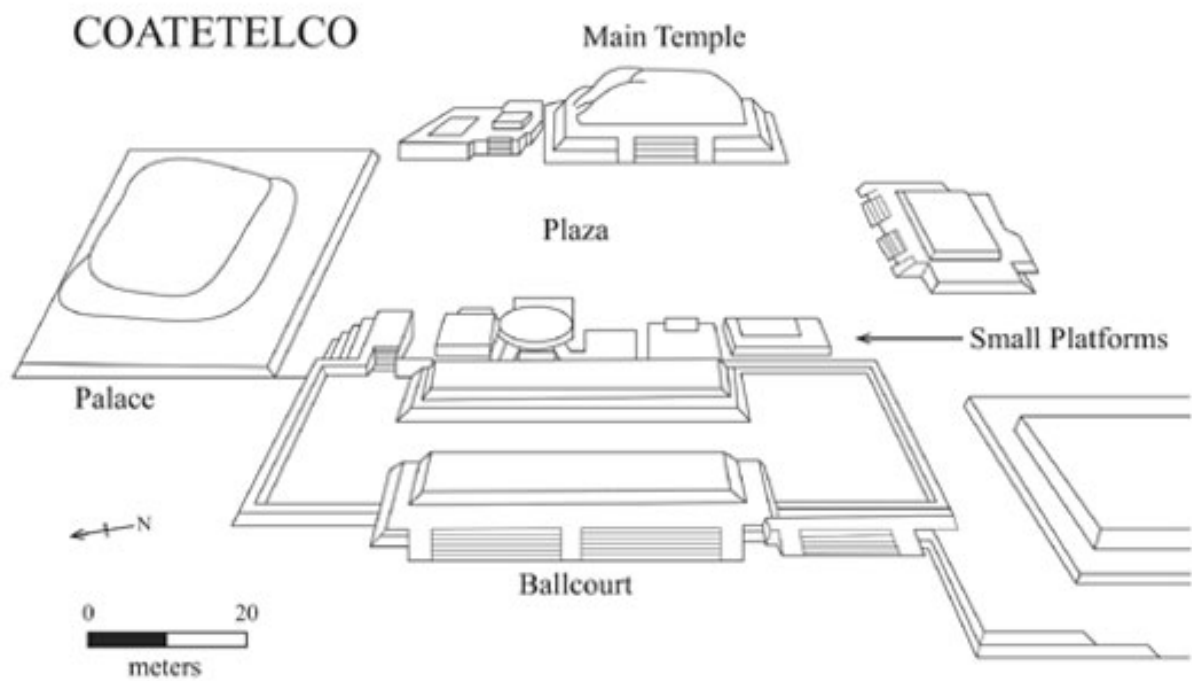


Figure 168. Plan of Coatetelco (Lluvia Arras after Smith 2003).



Figure 169. Ball Court of Coatetelco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 170. Main Pyramid-Temple of Coatetelco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 171. Plaza of Coatetelco with the Palace and Main Pyramid-Temple (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 172. Plaza with South Platform of Coatetelco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 173. Ball Court of Coatetelco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 174. Ball Court and Alignment of Small Platforms in the Central Plaza of Coatetelco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 175. Image of Gladiatorial Sacrifice from Atlas of Duran (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 176. Temalacatl for Gladiatorial Sacrifice (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 177. Long-handle Incense Burner (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 178a. Idols' Mount and Site of Malinalco (photo Fernando González y González).

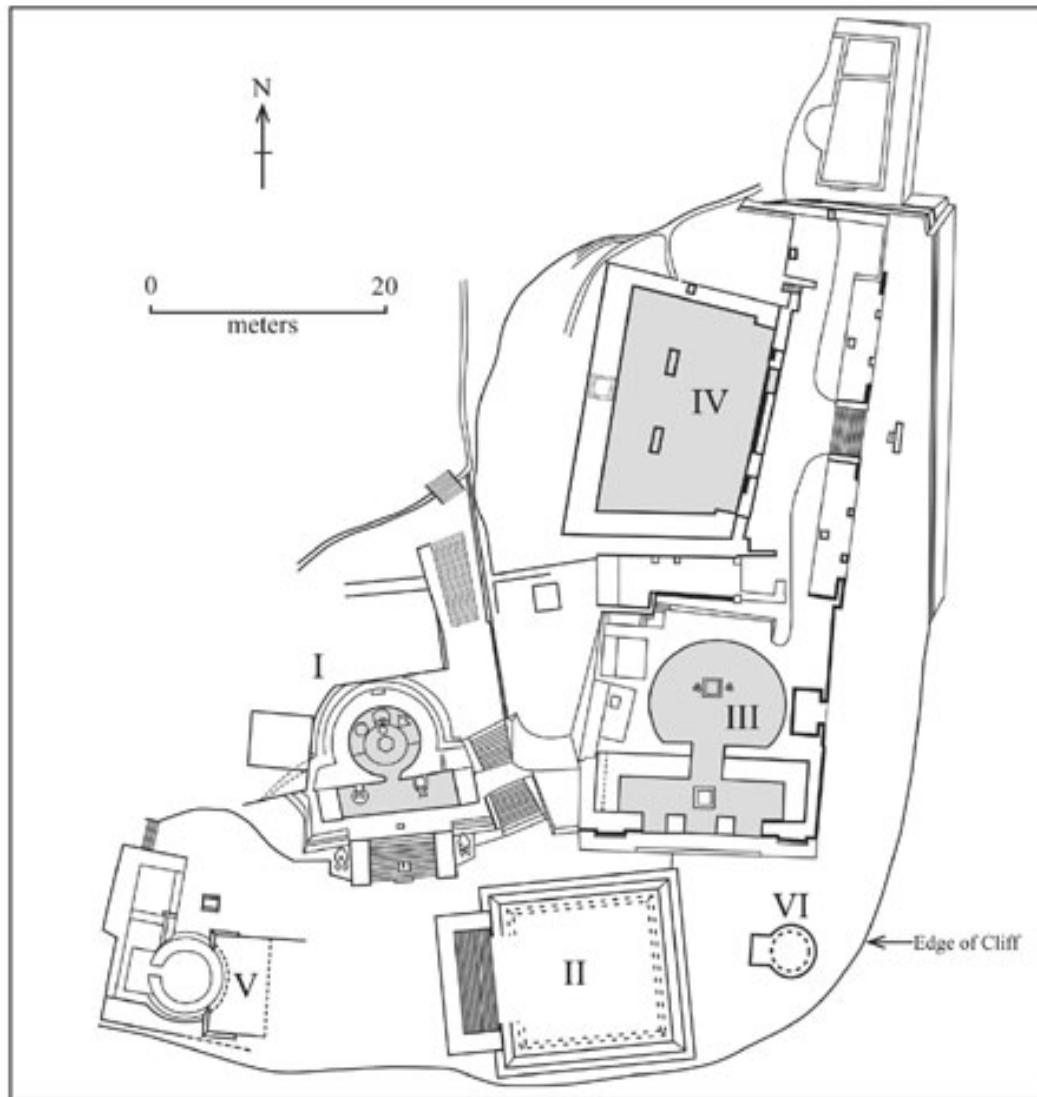


Figure 178b. Malinalli Grass (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 179a. Cuauhcalli (Temple I) (photo Fernando González y González).

Schematic Map of the Site of Malinalco



- Building I - Rock Temple (Cuauhcalli)
- Building II - Square Pyramid
- Building III - Semicircular Shrine (Tlacochealco)
- Building IV - Rectangular Temple (Tonatiuhcalli)
- Building V - Circular Small Temple
- Building VI - Platform for Gladiatory Sacrifices (Temalácatl)
- - Temples Cut Into Rock

Figure 179b. Plan of Malinalco after Marquina (drawing Lluvia Arras).



Figure 180. Temple I (Cuauhcalli) (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 181. Temple I (Cuauhcalli) (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 182. Xiuhcoatl, Huehuetl, Cavity of Sacrificial Stone (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 183. Mask of a Serpent at the Doorway of Temple I (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 184. Zoomorphic Thrones in the Bench and Solar Eagle at the entrance of Temple I (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 185. Jaguar Throne and Solar Eagle (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 186. Xuhcoatl and Eagle Warrior (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 187. Cleft in Mountain in front of Malinalco Temples (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 188. Temple II (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 189. Temples III, IV, and VI of Malinalco (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 190. Temple III (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 191. Mural Painting of the Mimixcoua (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 192. Temple IV (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 193. Temple IV (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 194. Temple V (photo Fernando González y González).



Figure 195. Temple VI (Temalacatl) (photo Fernando González y González).

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