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State Ritual and Religion in the Sacred Precinct of Tenochtitlan

Alfredo López Austin and Leonardo López Luján

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Abstract and Keywords

The sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan was the center par excellence of divine atonement and one of the most prominent centers of liturgy in Mesoamerican history. It articulated two basic functional complexes: the religious, derived from building a temple shrine with lavish offerings to Huitzilopochtli in the center of the universe; and the political, shaped by the growing needs of the state. The state cult was sponsored by the supreme government to promote the great divinities, to ensure the well-being of all people living under the empire as well as its agricultural and military success. Outside the regular progression of the calendrical cycles, the state hosted lavish rituals in the sacred precinct for other important events and was the stage for grand ceremonies dedicated to seeking relief from the great misfortunes used by the gods to punish humans: agricultural disasters, famines, and epidemic diseases.

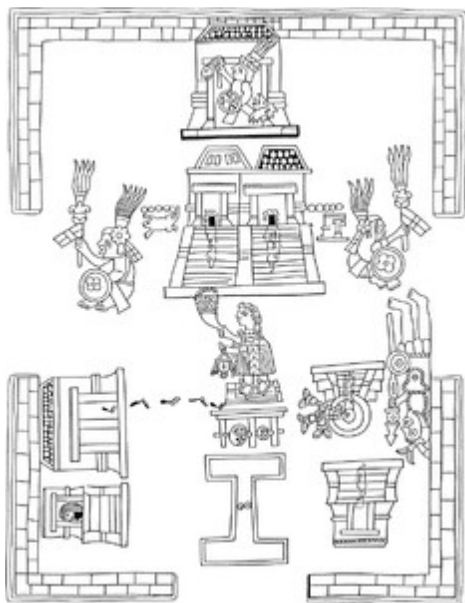
Keywords: Tenochtitlan, sacred precinct, religion, rituals, state cult, gods, temple, offerings

Myth and Reality

AROUND 1-Flint and 2-House (A.D. 1324–1325), a series of miraculous signs led the Mexica to the location where they would found the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan.¹ A tiny island in the middle of Lake Texcoco in the Basin of Mexico, the place was specifically chosen for them by Huitzilopochtli, their solar god of war (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949:62–63; Chimalpahin 1965:55; *Códice Aubin* 1902:95; Durán 1994:2:40–43). The new arrivals immediately thanked their patron god by building a modest earthen altar above the threshold between the human world and that of the gods (Carrasco 1981:180–282, 1987:130; Reyes García 1979:34). Considered the entrance to the afterlife, it has been

variously described as an anthill, a juniper tree, a two-cavern cave, or a double spring by different sources (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1944:8, 16, 1949:4, 62–63, 73; Durán 1994:40; “Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas” 1965:51). During the next 200 years, this primeval altar would be enlarged repeatedly, each time using even more sumptuous materials. By the early sixteenth century, it had become the great Coatepec (“Hill of the Serpents”), an imposing, 45 m tall dual pyramid presiding over the island city’s Sacred Precinct (Figure 43.1) (Boone 1987; León-Portilla 1978, 1987; López Austin and López Luján 2009; Marquina 1960; Matos 1987, 1988).²

Huitzilopochtli appeared in a dream to the priest Cuauhtlequetzqui (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949:74–75; Durán 1994:41), decreeing that the altar would also mark the (p. 606) intersection of the two horizontal axes that would guide the future urban expansion of the imperial capital, extending onto the mainland in the form of avenues: Tepeyacac, Iztapalapan, and Tlacopan. Thus Mexico-Tenochtitlan was divided into four large quadrants, or *nauhcampan*: Atzacualco, Cuepopan, Moyotan, and Teopan. This division was the earthly embodiment of the great cosmic cross, with the Sacred Precinct as the very *heart* of the city, since the heart in Mesoamerican symbolism was equivalent to the essential center of all animate beings (Calnek 1976; Heyden 1988:51–54; Nicholson 1971: 403; van Zantwijk 1964:198). Much later and when they had already attained power, the Mexica would conceive of this temple complex as the heart of the world they had conquered by force.



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Figure 43.1 The Sacred Precinct of Mexico-Tenochtitlan according to Sahagún (1993:fol. 269r).

Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy of the Templo Mayor Project.

The Sacred Precinct was the center par excellence of divine atonement and one of the most prominent centers of liturgy in Mesoamerican history (López Luján 2001). Clearly separated from the profane space of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, it was delimited on all four sides by a wide rectangular platform composed of alternating walls, balustrades, and stairways on both the interior and exterior (López Austin and López Luján 2009:223–228; López Luján and López Austin 2011;

Marquina 1960). This platform, which would have measured 340 m north-south and 360 m east-west, was interrupted three or four times by the main entryways (Durán 1984: 1:22; López Austin and López Luján 2009:215–219; López de Gómara 1985:122–124; Oviedo 1945:10:53; Sahagún 1951:165). The (p. 607) interior space of nearly 20 ha. was occupied by pyramids of all sizes crowned by temples; *momoztli* (small ritual platforms); priestly quarters; oratories (areas devoted to fasting and penance by the most important people); *calmecac* (temple-schools for the nobility); *tlachtli* (ballcourts); *tzompantli* (palisades where the skulls of sacrificial victims were displayed); *tlacochcalco* (storehouses where weapons acquired sacred powers); *Yopilcalco* (the temple where visiting foreign sovereigns stayed when they traveled to Tenochtitlan to witness the great ceremonies); ritual monoliths like the *techcatl*, *temalacatl*, and *cuauhxicalli* (for the sacrifice and the offering of blood and hearts); and springs and other replicas of the sacred geography (including a grove), all separated by wide plazas or smaller patios (Acosta 1962:238; Durán 1984:1:20–30; López Austin and López Luján 2009, 2012; López Luján and Barrera 2011; Matos 1999, 2001; Matos and López Luján 2009; Sahagún 2000: 1:271–281).



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Figure 43.2 The Sacred Precinct of Mexico-Tenochtitlan according to Cortés (1994: second letter).

Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy of the Templo Mayor Project.

Historical data regarding the number of buildings vary greatly from one source to another. Hernán Cortés (1994:64) recorded “40 very tall and well-wrought towers,” while the Anonymous Conqueror (1941:45) speaks of more than 20. Motolinia (Benavente 1995:51) mentioned 12 to 15 *teocalli* (temples), while Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1945:53) identified more than 60 *cus* (religious buildings of various types) (Figure 43.2).

(p. 608)

Meanwhile, Fray Diego Durán (1984:1:20–21) mentioned eight or nine groups of temple buildings that provided lodging for ministers, each with its own roof emblems, patio, and steps. In contrast, the indigenous informants consulted by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1951:165–180) described 78 buildings of varying sizes and functions (Couvreur 2002; López Austin 1965; Matos 2001). Whatever the case, many other temples were scattered around the city, beyond the limits of the Sacred Precinct and as a means of paying homage to it. They were located in “the parishes and neighborhoods; with towers and sanctuaries with altars where the idols are kept and images of their gods, and which serve as mausoleums for the nobles who own them” (López de Gómara 1985:122). Thus the Sacred Precinct became the nerve center of the capital and the Mexica Empire, a symbol of power embodying the hegemony of Mexico-Tenochtitlan.

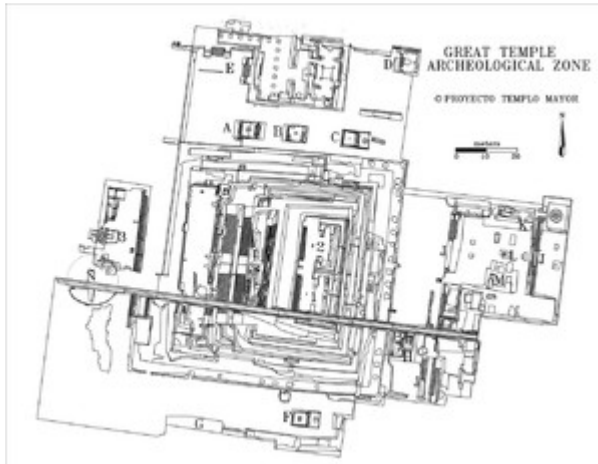
The Functional Centrality of the Sacred Precinct

Playing on the importance of security and glory to society, and combined with the gradual economic and military rise of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the Sacred Precinct articulated two

basic functional complexes: the religious, derived from building a shrine to Huitzilopochtli in the center of the universe, and the political, shaped by the growing needs of the state. The ties between both complexes became so strong that today it is not possible to clearly distinguish between them in the ceremonial activities described in sixteenth-century historical sources. Religion and politics were not only mutually dependent of each other, but both had blended together and become transformed in order to form the foundations of an ever-expanding state. In its dual function as the oratory of the warrior god Huitzilopochtli and also the rain deity Tlaloc, Coatepec itself reflected what Eduardo Matos (1982:110, 1990:22–23, 26, 29–30) identifies as the prodigious appearance of the two material determinants of the Mexica state: the tribute regularly paid by militarily conquered peoples and the annual crops resulting from agricultural activities.

Moreover, a careful reading of the historical sources reveals that Coatepec grew with the empire. These same sources explain that toward the end of the various enlargement phases, a conquest expedition was organized in the name of Huitzilopochtli to obtain prisoners from an independent polity for sacrifice when consecrating the new pyramid (López Luján 1999). Thus the successive enlargements glorified military expansion and also provided the ideological justification for an aggressive imperialist policy (Figures 43.3 and 43.4).

Each of the Coatepec construction phases symbolized, celebrated, and sanctified the addition of new tribute payers to the Mexica domain. Significantly, when the members of the *excan tlatoloyan*, or Triple Alliance—Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan—could not subjugate an independent polity (e.g., the unsuccessful campaign against the Purepecha of Michoacan), they postponed the building's inauguration until (p. 609) (p. 610) a successful conquest was achieved. This helps us understand why the archaeological ruins of Coatepec, located in the historic center of Mexico City, provide evidence for at least 13 total or partial expansion phases during just 130 years (Figure 43.5).



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Figure 43.3 The archaeological zone of the Templo Mayor, Mexico City.

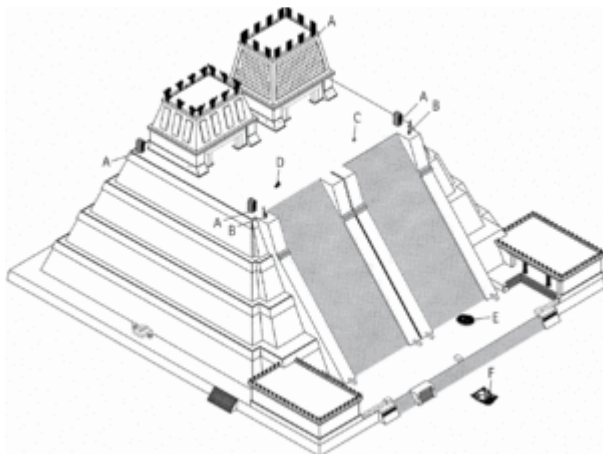
Drawing by Leonardo López Luján, Saburo Sugiyama, and Michelle De Anda, courtesy of the Templo Mayor Project.



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Figure 43.4 The archaeological zone of the Templo Mayor, Mexico City.

Photograph by Leonardo López Luján, courtesy of the Templo Mayor Project.



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Figure 43.5 Hypothetical reconstruction of the Templo Mayor. (A) sculptures of the goddess Coatlicue, (B) standard bearers, (C) geometric sacrificial stone, (D) Chacmool sacrificial stone, (E) Coyolxauhqui monolith, (F) Tlaltecuhтли monolith and Offering 126.

Drawing by Tenoch Medina, courtesy of the Templo Mayor Project.

Contained within the temple of Huitzilopochtli was the celebrated Coateocalli or Coacalco (“temple” or “place of the meeting house”), which “here dwelt the gods of cities which, in all places which the Mexicans overran, they took captive. They then carried them back and shut them in here. And here they were guarded at Coacalco” (Sahagún 1951: 168; see also Alvarado Tezozómoc, 1944:457–461; Durán 1994:431–437; López Austin 1965:82).

This structure was a result of the Mexica practice of stripping defeated people of their divine strength: by burning their temples; afterward, the victorious armies made their jubilant return to Mexico-Tenochtitlan, bringing with them the cult effigies captured in battle. As war trophies, they were taken to Coacalco where they were displayed along with those of other polities that were also subjects of the empire.

Temples dedicated to the other magnificent deities were built near Coatepec, from which also emanated the supernatural powers that gave the Mexica people the strength and protection necessary to prevail militarily in the most remote places. Among them, the pyramid dedicated to the god of fate, Tezcatlipoca, stood out for being “very tall and (p. 611) very beautifully constructed” (Acosta 1962:238; López Luján 2015; Matos 1997; Olivier 1997), while the temple dedicated to the god of wind, Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, was built in the form of truncated cone “because of the form air takes on as it swirls around in the sky, they made his temple round;” and “the entrance was a door in the form of a serpent’s mouth, and devilishly painted. Its fangs and teeth in relief, amazing all who came there, particularly Christians, who imagined they were seeing hell before them” (López de Gómara 1985:123; Matos and Barrera 2011).

Archaeology has revealed several buildings in an archaic style associated with these three great pyramids, which evoked in their profiles and decorative art two renowned civilizations by then long disappeared: Teotihuacan and Tula. Indeed, four neo-

Teotihuacan shrines have been unearthed, three of which are now known as the “red temples.” They were dedicated to Xochipilli-Macuilxochitl, the solar god of music and dance (Batres 1902:47–49; Gussinyer 1979; López Luján 1989; Olmedo 2002). Oriented toward the rising sun, its colors, images, and symbols related to the sun, while offerings of musical instruments allude to the beginning of a new era in the mythical Teotihuacan, the creation of the Fifth Sun. Two neo-Toltec portico precincts have been uncovered as well. One is the great *calmecac* associated with the temple of Ehecatl, the god of the wind and one of the many manifestations of Quetzalcoatl, patron god of this noble educational institution and the legendary ruler of Tula. Archaeologists have named the other the House of the Eagles, a ritual setting for the transmission of power from the deceased *tlahtoani* (supreme ruler) to his newly elected successor (Barrera and López Arenas 2008; López Luján 2006, 2013; López Luján and López Austin 2009:403–411). Mexica power was based on two factors: (a) the direct descent of the ruling lineage from the god Quetzalcoatl and (b) the link to ancient Tula through the blood ties of Acamapichtli, founding *tlahtoani* of the royal dynasty (López Luján and López Austin 2009:391–392).

Through this tremendous concentration of the powerful forces of ancestors and gods—both their own and those of other groups—the Sacred Precinct linked the preservation of the well-being of the Mexican people and the fertility of the land to the achievement of state cohesion, the sacralization of centralized government power, and military domination over other peoples. Obviously, all of this was subordinate to religious discourse; however, this discourse held that the supreme divinities were represented not by priests but by the *tlahtoani* himself.

Large Public Rituals

In terms of daily religious activities in Mesoamerican cities, community life in the *calpultin* or neighborhoods contrasted with that of the large public precincts—mainly markets and temple complexes—controlled by the state government. The temples were of considerable capacity because religious architecture is distinguished precisely by the predominance of open spaces on roofs and plazas on the massive pyramidal temples. Regarding the Sacred Precinct of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Cortés (1994:64) mentioned that the area (p. 612) could accommodate 500 people, while Andrés de Tapia (1963:65, 67) cited just 400. Meanwhile, Francisco López de Gómara (1985:122–124) claimed that the precinct permanently housed some 5,000 people performing various services and whose primary mission was to maintain the order of this space. José de Acosta (1962:637) noted

that on holidays between 8,000 and 10,000 people would congregate there to dance without hindrance.

Those attending the ceremonies ranged from large local crowds to the few and very select dignitaries from other political entities (Sahagún 1951:177). The former included inhabitants not only from the island but also from the whole region, as mentioned regarding “gladiatorial” combat between sacrificial victims and Mexica warriors (Sahagún 1951:176) or the *tlahtoani*’s redistribution of food to the poor during eight days of the 20-day period known as *huei tecuhilhuitl* (Sahagún 1951:91–92). Regarding foreign dignitaries, presumably only those from allied polities visited Tenochtitlan; however, historical sources report that the Mexica *tlahtoani* also invited some hostile counterparts, who were hidden behind screens so they could witness the ritual performances without being seen by the other spectators (Sahagún 1951:53). This political maneuver was obviously meant to discourage and intimidate, as it was not uncommon for attendees to witness the sacrifice of their own warriors who had previously been captured in battle.

Centralized Liturgy

The contrasting spheres of religion (i.e., daily life in the *calpultin* vs. at large public venues) are clearly perceptible in the historical sources (López Austin and López Luján 2005:211–215, 240–246). On the one hand was the communitary worship in each of the small urban districts that were like neighborhoods where groups of relatives and people dedicated to the same productive tasks resided. There they worshipped the *calpulteotl*, or local patron, who had delegated a specific profession to his followers. They dedicated prayers and offerings in the hopes of meeting the needs of the *calpulli*: family, school, career, and so on. On the other hand, the state cult, as we have seen, was sponsored by the supreme government to promote the great divinities, like Huitzilopochtli, Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, and Xipe Totec, to ensure the well-being of all people living under the empire as well as its agricultural and military success (Figure 43.6).

The two forms of worship were subject to the overarching ritual calendar. The community cult of the *calpultin* largely followed the *tonalpohualli* (divinatory cycle of 260 days divided into 20 periods of 13 days each). Meanwhile, the state religion followed the *xihpohualli* (agricultural cycle of 365 days organized into 18 periods of 20 days each plus five unlucky days), with the priest Epcoacuacuilli leading liturgy from the Sacred Precinct (Sahagún 1951:194). Even though the *calpultin* and the state religion followed different calendars, both forms of worship recognized festivities during both cycles. **(p. 613)** For example, certain precinct temples, like the Tetlanma, Chicomecoatl Iteopan, and

Tulnahuac, were clearly linked to the *tonalpohualli*; the names of other temples, like the Macuilcipactli, Macuilcalli, Macuilmalinalli, and Macuilquiahuitl, refer to specific days of that cycle (Sahagún 1951:166, 170, 175).



[Click to view larger](#)

Figure 43.6 Templo Mayor Offering 126 was discovered under the monolith of the earth goddess Tlaltecuhтли.

Photograph by Jesús López, courtesy of the Templo Mayor Project.

Outside the regular progression of the calendrical cycles, the state hosted lavish rituals in the Sacred Precinct for royal and noble funerals—including burial in the complex itself—the election and enthronement of rulers, the recognition of newly elected *tlahtoque* of allied political entities, the arrival of triumphant armies, and the parading of captives before sacrificing them to the gods (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1944:26–27, 175, 245–248, 269–337, 393–399; Chávez 2007; Durán 1994:58–60, 65–66, 70–72, 123, 247–

248, 295–298, 309–313, 355–360, 387–393, 417–424; López Austin and López Luján 2009: 403–407; López Luján 2005:172–183; 2006:1:244–253; Olivier 1997:94–103; Townsend 1987). In addition, both the inauguration of the sacrificial monoliths as well as the continuous building and enlargement of the pyramid temples warranted lavish celebrations and the burning and burial of sumptuous offerings (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1944:114–121, 132–141, 153–166, 202–222, 494–499; Broda 1987; Durán 1994:182–193, 223–232, 234–235, 272–277, 286–290, 335–341, 479–482; López Luján 2005:183–225; 2006:1:225–255; Matos 1988). (p. 614) Finally, the Sacred Precinct was also the stage for grand ceremonies dedicated to seeking relief from the great misfortunes inflicted by the gods to punish humans: agricultural disasters, famines, and epidemic diseases (Chimalpahin 1965:99–100; Durán 1984:238–241; López Luján 2005:148–157).

The Transmission of Ideology through the Temple-Schools

We have already mentioned that the *calmecac* in the Sacred Precinct served as both priestly residences for those directing liturgy at the temples and as centers for the formation of new officiants. Usually these buildings were dedicated to the worship of specific deities: the so-called Mexico Calmecac-revered Tlaloc; meanwhile, the Tetlanman Calmecac was dedicated to Chantico, the goddess of hearth fires and volcanoes; the Puchtlan to Yacatecuhtli, patron god of trade; the Atlauhco to the enigmatic goddess Huitzilincuatec, and so on (Durán 1984:1:21; Sahagún 1951:168, 170, 174). Some *calmecac* offered specialized education in specific skills, such as the Mecatlan, where students learned to play the trumpet (Sahagún 1951:172-173). Individuals attending these temple-schools from early childhood were considered priests from the time of admission; they were both male and female (Cortés 1994:64). *Calmecac* education was extremely strict. Students practiced self-sacrifice on a daily basis in order to obtain blood to offer to the divine images. The punishment for young people who failed at this or any other obligation was harsh. For example, upon failing to fulfill part of their obligations, the students in charge of the temple of the rain god Epcoatl (Sahagún 1951:80-81) were taken to the swamps, where they were beaten and submerged in water until they nearly drowned during the 20-day period of *etzalcualiztli*.

The other *calmecac* distributed throughout the city and in the towns subject to the empire were controlled from the Sacred Precinct. The top position was held by the priest Mexicatl Teohuatzin, who was personally responsible for punishing the transgressors of ecclesiastical rules. He was assisted in his duties by Huitznahuatl Teohuatzin and Tepan Teohuatzin (Sahagún 1951:193).

Giving and Receiving Gifts

The religion of the Mexica and their contemporaries was characterized by the practice of reciprocity, which not only created an ethos of exchange between individuals but also governed the essential everyday interactions between the living and dead and between humans and the divine. All economic production was seen as a joint effort in which both the mundane and the divine made a contribution, and thus the fruits of any labor were shared by both. (p. 615)

In the great cosmic apparatus, exchange was consummated through the *axis mundi*, composed of, from the bottom up, the Place of the Dead, the Holy Mountain (the large storehouse of potential goods), and the Tree of Life. This great structure, which animated the world and propelled different cycles, was projected onto the main pyramid of the Sacred Precinct: Coatepec. Indeed, the building itself brought together the two fundamental forces of movement in the cosmos: fire and water, personified by the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc (López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2009).

The Sacred Precinct thus became the model of reciprocity, where men offered members of their own species as sacrificial victims: as containers for the gods or as food for them (López Austin 1980:1:432–436, 1988:1:375–379; González 1985; Carrasco 1987, 1999; Graulich 2005; López Austin and López Luján 2008). In the first case, the victims were *teteo imixiptlahuan*, or living representatives of the divinities, who were reborn through the death of their human representatives. The second were the *nextlahualtin* or “payments,” sustenance required by the gods to recover the energy lost doing their part in the world. In the Sacred Precinct, the gods were paid with the labor via prayers, music, dancing, and singing, as well as the physical effort involved in performing the required rituals for the ball game, races, and skirmishes that were part of the festivities (López Austin 1967).

Also presented periodically to the divine images were the bodies and blood of animals (i.e., quail, raptors, felines, and canines), food, copal incense smoke, flowers, and rubber. During the most solemn moments, rich offerings were interred in religious buildings and under platforms and plazas (López Arenas 2003; López Luján 2005:81–353, 2006:1:225–256; Nagao 1985). About 80 percent of the materials offered at Coatepec were allochthonous, derived mostly from territories that had become tributaries of the *excan tlatoloyan*. Faunal remains are the most abundant (López Luján et al. 2014). To date, we have identified over 300 species from temperate ecosystems in the Central Highlands, tropical rainforests, coral reefs, and coastal estuaries and lagoons. In sharp contrast, flora and crude minerals are less common. The former includes maguey, copal, coniferous wood, and rubber; the latter is characterized by marine sands and fragments of jet, turquoise, and greenstone. Human skeletal remains are also widely represented in the sample. Some belong to very high-ranking individuals who were ritually buried following cremation; the vast majority, however, were victims of sacrifice by slitting the throat or extracting the heart. Imported goods that arrived in Tenochtitlan via tribute, trade, gift, or plunder stand out among the artifacts recovered by archaeologists. These include obsidian from the Sierra de las Navajas and Otumba, Mixteca-style sculptures made of green marble, urns from Veracruz, pottery and travertine objects from the Puebla-Tlaxcala region, as well as a large quantity of copper bells and metamorphic greenstone ornaments of diverse origins. An impressive number of antiques belonging to cultures

that were not contemporaneous with the Mexica, including a mask, a sacrificial spoon, a pendant, and several anthropomorphic figurines of Olmec style; and several fragments hundreds of Mezcala-style greenstone figurines and masks; dozens of Teotihuacan lapidary and pottery complete objects and fragments; several Classic Maya jade ornaments; and a Toltec imitation of a plumbate ceramic vessel. Surprisingly, Mexica goods are not as common. (p. 616)

In exchange for these offerings, the gods delivered their gifts to the Sacred Precinct itself. Thus political power was sacralized; the fruits of the fields were turned into fertile seeds in the temples (Sahagún 1951:7, 60–63, 116); their consumption was consecrated (Sahagún 1951:99); weapons received divine strength in buildings known as the Tlacochealco Acatl Yiacapan and Tezcacoatl Tlacochealco (Sahagún 1951:179), and the faithful ingested pieces of *tzoalli*, divine images formed from amaranth dough (Durán 1984:1:28–30) or drank holy water from the Tozpalatl spring (Sahagún 1951:178). Moreover, in one of the temples of the great complex—the Tlillan Calmecac—the goddess Cihuacoatl miraculously appeared outside the confines of the temple (Sahagún 2000: 1:274).

All this was carried out ritually throughout the 18 periods of 20 days that divided the year, dedicated to the major gods in the form of 18 festivals of considerable complexity. Documentary sources detail the diversity of rites; the magnificent garments worn by priests, nobles, and warriors; the richness of the divine images (Carrasco 1999; Durán 1984:1:18–20, 39, 47; Graulich 1999; Sahagún 1951:1–216); and the time and effort required for the celebration. It was, indeed, an alienating complexity whose varied ritual details held the attention of any spectator.

Center-Periphery

The Sacred Precinct was not only the largest place of worship but also the point of origin for ceremonial processions to the lake, swamps, fountains, fields, forests, hermitages, and, importantly, the neighborhoods and homes of ordinary people (Carrasco 1981, 1987). For example, the “Painal race,” held during the month of *panquetzaliztli*, covered a considerable radius (Durán 1984:1: 28–29; Sahagún 1951:133–135). Conversely, all *capultin* in the city participated in the great festivals, and on the platform surrounding the Sacred Precinct were buildings known as *Calpulli* (Sahagún 1951:179–180), which may have served as meeting places for the people coming from the different neighborhoods of the city. The Sacred Precinct was therefore the center of a huge network that directed all members of the state in support of a government that sought to

integrate a huge population and weaken, through ostentatious demonstrations of its greatness and glory, the resistance of those who opposed its hegemony.

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Notes:

(1.) Based on the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* "Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas" (1965:56), Cuauhmixtitlan, or the "Cloudy Place of the Tree," was the name originally given by the Mexica to Mexico-Tenochtitlan. However, it is possible that

the name Cuauhmixtitlan was derived much later considering the religious tie to the cosmic axis.

(2.) Starting in the sixteenth century, both the double pyramid known as Coatepec and the whole Sacred Precinct framing this pyramid have been referred to as the *Huey Teocalli* or “Templo Mayor” (Great Temple), which has led to considerable confusion. Coatepec pyramid was enlarged thirteen times. Its last building phase measured 84.47 from North to South and 77.24 meters from East to West.

Alfredo López Austin

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Leonardo López Luján

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

