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Dr. John M.D. Pohl
Pathway Productions Inc.
5101 Whitsett Avenue
No. Hollywood, California 91607

Dear John:

I thought that you might like to see the progress Scott has made so far on his model of the Templo Mayor. We took it out to the backyard the other day and photographed it. Both Scott and I are very pleased with the visual impact that these buildings convey although they are in such incredibly small scale. Scott is literally working fourteen hours a day on the thing and has been doing so for months. He thinks that he can complete the main temple enclosure in two more months barring no major interruptions.

John, I really do wish that you could see this model for yourself to really appreciate the absolutely incredible detail of the structures. All the priests' quarters show their galleries of painted frescos and curtained doorways. And the flagstone patios, which absorbed an awesome amount of Scott's time, reflect sunlight on the buildings with a most wonderful effect. In fact the model comes to life in real sunlight, and when you place your line of sight close to the ground you get a view that looks absolutely like looking at large buildings. Many of the buildings are not yet glued down and sealed, and the gaps are bothersome and break the spell until they are fixed (the Teotlalpan and the temples around the Culhuacan Temple show the unsealed spaces).

Scott and I think that our model is far and away the best model of the Templo Mayor yet done, that it conveys a much better feeling of a ceremonial center of a large Aztec city than do the Marquina and Templo Mayor Museum models which do not show the calmecacs or maze of ancillary structures that all the eyewitness accounts mention and which take up so much of Sahagun's famous list. Our model also intentionally avoids the kind of bilateral symmetry that the Mexican museum models persist in displaying. No Aztec archaeological site that I know of shows anything like the kind of bilateral symmetry demonstrated in the Marquina or Templo Mayor Museum plans. Even that seeming paragon example of bilateral symmetry, the joined Coatepetl and Tonacatepetl temples of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc, was not symmetrical, for the stairs on the war god's side were often wider than on Tlaloc's, and Tlaloc's calli structure was lower than Huitzilopochtli's by at least the height of a man. The slightly lower stature of Tlaloc's house symbolized his close affinity with the earth and underworld and conversely the more verticle thrust of the war god's house emphasized his heavenly nature as Ilhuicatl Xoxouqui "Blue Celestial Way." This unevenness is not shown in the Mexican models.

Alas, the Templo Mayor Museum has carried the bilateral

design of Marquina to incredible lengths by maintaining Marquina's original design and not only adding the recently discovered structures found under the cathedral but symmetrically repeating those cathedral structures on the north half of the Temenos! For the original square to have incorporated all these buildings it would have had to be much, much larger than even the most generous estimates of its original size.

Both Museum models continue to show a large temple on the north balancing the large eighty step high temple of Tezcatlipoca on the south. Only the controversial Cortez Nuremburg map shows any large temple structure located laterally to the great temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. When that map is properly re-oriented (which is a subject for an essay in itself) a large temple appears on the south which is most likely the Temple of Tezcatlipoca mentioned above. Scholars have tried to figure out to whom a large northern temple might have been dedicated. The Black Tezcatlipoca or the mythical Huitznahuac warriors have been suggested. Although the Huitznahuac were born of Coatlicue whose temple was at Coatlan in the north, they are known as the southern stars and southern celestial warriors. A southern location for the Huitznahuac temple mentioned by Sahagun would seem more appropriate (though there is mentioned the sacrifice of victims called Huitznahuacs which occurred at Coatlan). I personally think that Huitzilopochtli's own temple may have been the Huitznahuac Temple, since he was known as the quintessential Huitznahuac Warrior, having appropriated the titles and insignia of the the Huitznahuac warriors he killed at the celestial ballcourt on the day of his miraculous birth.

A temple to Mixcoatl is also a tantalizing possibility, although we placed him in the so called Temple of Culhuacan behind the great temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Although there are absolutely no archaeological remains to justify our placement of Mixcoatl's temple there, we are impressed by Sahagun's map and others showing such a temple. It should be remembered that Mixcoatl, a decidedly northern god of chichimec ancestry, a progenitor, the paragon of ancestors and ancestral spirits, worshipped as Camaxtli by the nahuas of the eastern mountains, conquered the south and was murdered by his children there. His bones were gathered by his son Quetzalcoatl and were buried south of Tenochtitlan on the Hill of the Star at Culhuacan where the new fire was lit every fifty-two years. By placing his temple at the eastern gate near the Teotlalpan and straddling the east-west central axis of the ceremonial square we have shown that his power and history encompass both north and south. The placement of Mixcoatl's temple here thus pays homage to the Mexicas' wild, nomadic past on the arid steps north of the Valley of Mexico and their destiny - to conquer and rule over the settled, civilized peoples to the south and elsewhere.

All these things will be seen in our model when it is completed. Much can be seen already in the accompanying photos. I have labelled them on the back for your convenience. We hope that you like them.

Stuart