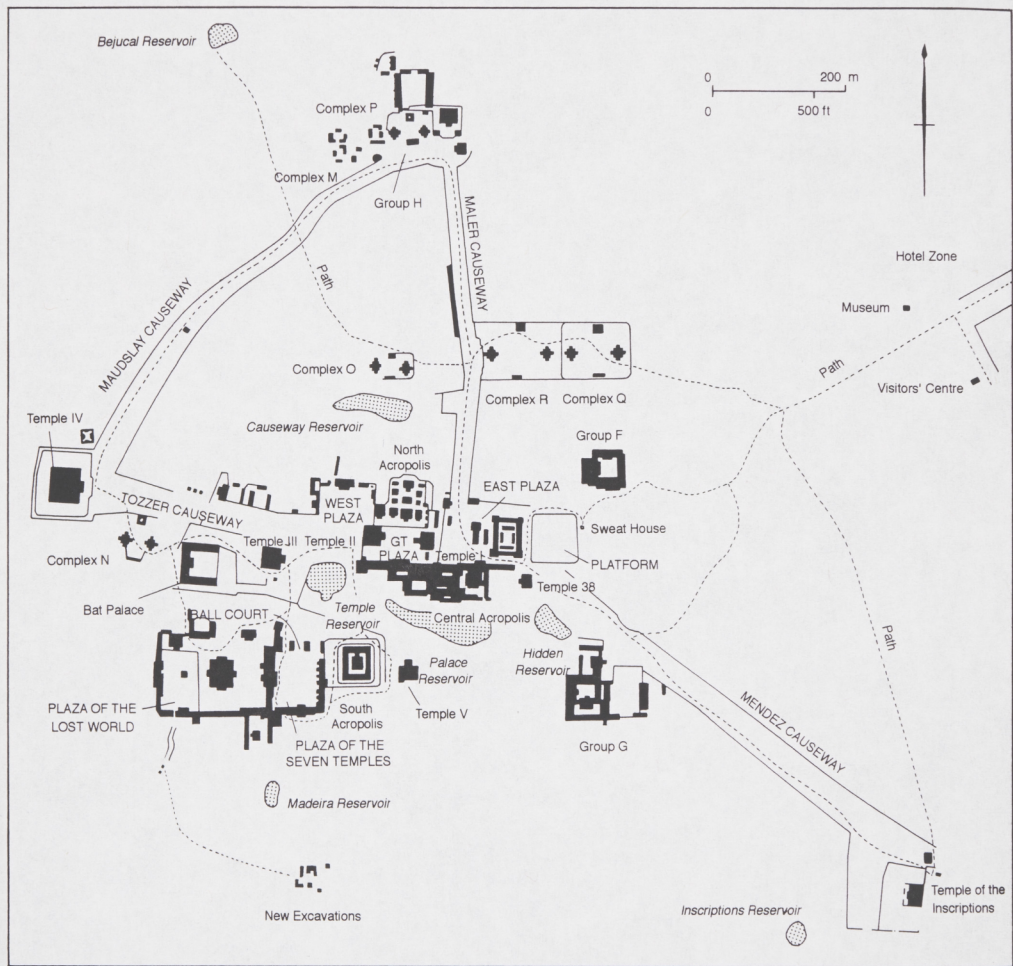




THE TEMPLO MAYOR OF TENOCHTITLAN RECONSIDERED

by Stuart Gentling

* IL + IR

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, the subject I will be discussing this evening is a new concept for the sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan known as the Templo Mayor. The models, maps, drawings and paintings illustrating my lecture tonight are mostly the work of my twin brother Scott Gentling. They are the product, however, of more than thirty years of our mutual investigations. Although my focus will be on the Templo Mayor itself, I will also show you some of our other views of the the Mexica Aztec world that will become in time a two-volume book to be published by the University of Texas Press and titled, "The One Reed Year."

In pursuing our own vision of the Templo Mayor we have literally stood upon the shoulders of giants. The early writings of Sahagun, Duran, Tezozomoc, Gomara, Diaz del Castillo, Cortez himself and many others have offered us a rich fountain of information to which we return constantly to refresh ourselves.

We, of course, owe a huge debt to the work of the late 19th and early 20th century scholar Edward Seler, and more recently to the research of Miguel Leon Portilla, Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Costanza Sosa Vega, Sonia Lombardo de Ruiz as well as H. B. Nicholson, Richard Townsend, Joanna Broda, Anthony

Aveni, and Cecilia Klein - the list could go on and on. I wish I could name them all. I can only say that practically every one of our sources has offered observations essential to our study of the Templo Mayor.

Our research of the archaeological record extends from the 18th century to the present day. The archaeological reports of Antonio Leon y Gama in the 1790's, the excavations of Leopoldo Batres, Antonio Penafiel and Jesus Galindo y Villa among others early in the 20th century and more recently the important work of Costanza Sosa Vega, and especially Eduardo Matos continue to aid and challenge us. Matos has also performed a remarkable service for all students of the Templo Mayor by publishing essays, and books - and especially for us - a summary of past archaeology in his book, "Trabajos Arqueologicos en el Centro de la Ciudad de Mexico." But there is one man whose impact is more profound than any other on the world's idea of what the Templo Mayor looked like. He is Ignacio Marquina.

* 2R Even in the light of recent discoveries to the contrary, we cannot escape the powerful influence of the scholar architect's magnificent model of the Templo Mayor that today graces the Mexico Hall at the National Museum of Anthropology and History. ^{2L} So compelling has been his authority that most books, magazines and even video tapes today still use his more than forty year old model to illustrate their texts in spite of subsequent evidence that clearly disputes his vision.

I first saw that model by myself in the summer of 1962 at a small museum adjacent to the early 20th century excavations of the Templo Mayor. Like everyone else I was overwhelmed by the beauty and grandeur of Marquina's concept and by its nobility. To my great joy I was able to purchase at the museum's modest bookstore a book by Marquina explaining his model, discussing his research and how he arrived at his conclusions. That was my first purchase of a book on Aztec archaeology. Although my brother and I have reached conclusions over our many years of study that differ significantly from those of Marquina, we hold his pioneering efforts in the greatest respect. His book has been our bible, and there is no doubt in our minds that his model provided the foundation that made our work possible.

In 1963 I returned to Mexico City to visit a college friend who shared my interest in Mexican archaeology. I remember well the many late night conversations we had at school, discussing the vivid descriptions penned by Bernal Diaz del Castillo in his "Discovery and Conquest of Mexico" which I had purchased the previous year at the college bookstore. Unlike my first visit to Mexico City which lasted only a morning, I now had the time with my friend to explore the downtown sites more thoroughly as well as the archaeological zones of Teotihuacan and Tula just north of the city.

On our return from Tula one afternoon we came into town

on a road that took us by Tlatelolco. My friend suddenly remembered that he had read in one of the local newspapers that extensive excavations were being carried out at Tlatelolco's Templo Mayor. ^{* 3R} We decided to investigate. By the best of luck nobody stopped us as we walked onto the site. The entire archaeological zone was divided by deep trenches. In other places there were isolated holes where graves containing skeletons and simple, unpainted pottery lay exposed. We even worked our way through the trenches which led us behind the remains of the great temple itself.

I will always remember seeing that tragic layer of human bones mixed with broken pottery and flakes of obsidian that extended as an unbroken line just a few feet below ground level. I knew from Bernal Diaz's chronicle that the final battles of the Mexica against the Spaniards and their thousands of indian allies were fought near here, and that not far away, off the north shore of the ancient island Cuauhtemotzin, the last Aztec Tlatoani, was captured, thus ending the war. Were these the remains of the last heroic defenders of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco and the Aztec way of life? Such a sight only made me more determined to learn about this country and the remarkable people who lived here on the eve of the Conquest.

^{* 3L + 4R} My visit to Tlatelolco affected me in other ways. As we explored the great double-staired temple and the many smaller structures nearby, it became apparent to me that this sacred

center had a completely different ground plan from Marquina's model of Tenochtitlan's Templo Mayor. ^{* 5R} It had none of the bilateral symmetry that was so prominent a feature of his design. And now that I had seen Teotihuacan and Tula, I was disturbed that these cities also lacked any hint of symmetry in their overall plans. As Scott and I intensified our studies and acquired more books on pre-Colombian cities, we could not escape the conclusion that the buildings of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan were most likely not arranged in a balanced, symmetrical pattern. In fact we could not find a single classic or post-classic city that was built with such symmetry.

One of the most obvious differences in the two Aztec cities was the fact that no prominent north to south road extended through Tlatelolco as it did at Tenochtitlan's sacred precinct. At Tlatelolco there were several platforms with stairs to the north that were separated from each other by narrow passages, but these platforms and three large structures along the north border of the great temple platform itself effectively cut off the north from any sort of north to south grand avenue like the one proposed by Marquina.

Two early post-conquest documents were to become especially important to us. ^{* 5L} They are the Nuremburg Map of 1524 showing the lake, the island and the sacred centers of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco ^{* 6R} and the drawing generally thought to be of Tenochtitlan's sacred center from Sahagun's

"Florentine Codex." At first the Nuremburg Map seemed almost useless, but Scott theorized that the printer had been given two preliminary drawings from which to make his finished print, one of the lake, the island, and the city itself and another more detailed drawing of the buildings of the great ceremonial center. (Notice that Tlatelolco's main plaza is a blank space.)

In combining these in the final work he mistakenly placed the image of Tenochtitlan's sacred square upside down. ^{* 6L} When corrected it is plain to see that the monuments assume their rightful places in relation to the palace of Moctezuma II and to the archaeology of the Templo Mayor known to us today. The Nuremburg Map then offers some tantalizing clues. So too does Sahagun's drawing of the sacred square. Please note that neither the Nuremburg Map nor the Sahagun drawing show us a symmetrical plan for the Templo Mayor.

Both plans show a large building to the north. On the Nuremburg Map this building crosses the main north to south road effectively blocking passage. The Sahagun drawing is more problematical. ^{* 6R} If the priest who is standing on the platform in front of the temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc has walked directly south from a large building to the north in a straight perpendicular line as is shown by the drawing of a path of little feet, and the structure upon which he stands waving his incensario is located in the middle the ceremonial way as is generally agreed, than we might cautiously assume that a large

building lay directly to the North blocking access to the Northern gate. It is not unlike what can be observed at Tlatelolco.

At the time we were making these observations, the Coyolxauhqui stone had not yet been discovered, an event which ultimately opened the way for the massive archaeological investigations carried out by Eduardo Matos and his team between 1978 and 1982. ^{*7L+7R} In the course of those investigations the famous eagle stairs were discovered as well as a long colonnaded platform to the north which ran east to west under Argentina Street. Very possibly this platform continued under the house of the Marques de Apartado where in 1901 under its interior patio were discovered three south facing stairs that appear to be directly in line with the platform and stairs uncovered by Matos. If this is true, then the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan may bear a closer resemblance to earlier central Mexican cities than we originally thought.

In 1970 Scott and I visited Mexico City for the first time together. And it was the first time either of us had visited the Museum of the City of Mexico not far from the Cathedral. ^{*8R} On the wall in that place was a very intriguing map of the Templo Mayor created in 1935 by Ignacio Alcocer. It offered an alternative view that was a radical departure from Marquina's concept, and we liked it. Clearly he was influenced by the Nuremburg Map and the Florentine Codex as well as the testimony

of the Conquistadors and the excavations of the early 1900's. Although we were not in agreement with the entire plan, there is little doubt that seeing a different concept put forth encouraged Scott and me to begin our own reconstruction of the Templo Mayor.

We will probably never know exactly what the sacred center of Tenochtitlan looked like. Our plan is simply another step toward that goal, to be tested and verified or disproved by future scholars and archaeologists. While acknowledging this, I can nevertheless say that our model more closely attempts to reconcile the early written sources to the modern archaeological discoveries, and no other model, I believe, can better illustrate the sacred ceremonies and processions related to us by Sahagun, Duran and others. Even Scott and I do not completely agree on the placement of all the buildings, but we decided that we would never be able to create a vision of the Templo Mayor unless we worked together to place in our plan as many of the buildings as possible mentioned by the earlier chroniclers.

It has been very hard work, but the discipline required to design and build our own version of the Templo Mayor, has richly repaid us for our efforts. Our studies of Aztec religion and symbolism have been considerably enriched by our models, and we have gained insights that might have been impossible without them. In the final analysis, our paintings, drawings

and models of the Templo Mayor convey, I think, a better idea of what that place actually felt like and how it functioned than anything yet done.

If our conclusions so far are reasonable, then one thing we have learned is that the Templo Mayor did have more in common with other classic and post-classic central Mexican cities than would seem apparent in Marquina's model. Before we look at our model I am going to show you a few of the cities we have studied, and I will follow this with a quick review of the plans of the Templo Mayor put forth by other scholars. The cities we will look at are Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, Monte Alban, Tula, Cholula and Cempoala.

One of the most important discoveries made during the Templo Mayor excavations of 1978 - 1982 was the abundant evidence that the Mexica of Tenochtitlan were fascinated by older cultures. During the reign of Motecuhzoma I (1440 - 1469), perhaps the greatest ruler Tenochtitlan ever had, elements of Teotihuacan's talud - tablero architecture were deliberately incorporated into several small structures of the Templo Mayor and other areas of Tenochtitlan. It is also from this period that Teotihuacan art begins to appear in offerings uncovered from the foundations of the remodelled Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Earlier Olmec, Toltec, Mixtec and Guerrero objects were also found.

* 8L+9R
Of all the earlier cities of central Mexico, Teotihuacan

was by far the most grand. Teotihuacan is an Aztec word meaning "The place where the gods were made or born." It was here in Aztec myth that all the gods gathered at the beginning of the Era of the Fifth Sun to sacrifice themselves in a sacred fire so that the sun might be created. Teotihuacan was certainly a good candidate for the ancient Tollan of Aztec myth and not just the Tula of the Toltecs whose high culture and artistic accomplishments were so admired in Tenochtitlan.

One of the most prominent features of Teotihuacan is the great north to south road known as the Avenue of the Dead. There is also an East to West road that bisects the city between the Great Pyramid and the Ciudadela along the San Juan River, but this road is much less significant. The northern end of the Avenue of the Dead terminates in a great plaza and ultimately at the foot of the so called Temple of the Moon. This temple deliberately imitates the mountain behind it called "Tonan" or "Tenan" by the Aztecs. "Tonan" means "Our Mother." "Tenan" means "Mother of Stone."

When viewed from the middle of the Avenue, the Temple of the Moon is perfectly aligned with the cleft of the mountain behind it. At least from Formative times - and probably far longer - mountain clefts were thought to be entrances into the underworld or the womb of the earth. This was a place of beginnings and endings, of the great earth mother, creator and destroyer of all life. That is why the grand Avenue ends here,

for not only does the mountain, the temple and the plaza enclosure represent the life giving womb of the earth, they also represent the entrance to the underworld, to the realm of Mictlan, the place of the dead.

And this place has celestial importance as well. On a clear night one can see how the stars in the east rise in an arc over the Temple of the Moon and around the polar star and then descend in the west. This heavenly display formed in the ancient mind a skirt of stars for the earth mother. One of her Aztec names was Citlalicue meaning "Stars are her skirt." Any holy place that gives access to the heavens, the earth and the underworld is called an Axis Mundi. Every Temple, infact every fire place where fire is burning, is a model of the Axis Mundi or center of creation. Scott and I believe that the most important Axis Mundi at Teotihuacan was at this northern temple dedicated to the many forms of the earth goddess. And it was here, we think, that the gods sacrificed themselves to create the Fifth Sun and not, as most scholars believe, in front of the larger so called Temple of the Sun.

It is important to remember that when the Fifth Sun was born at Teotihuacan it was without direction. The wind god Ehecatl blew on the sun to give it motion, and the fire god Xiuhtechtli, who is also the god of the five directions, determined that it should rise daily in the east and set in the west. The annual path of the sun from north to south and

back again, like a bouncing ball in a great ballcourt, determined the changes of the seasons, the time of rain and the time of drought, the time of planting and the time of harvest and hence the time of war.

If this is true, then the city plan of the long abandoned Teotihuacan with its great north to south avenue ending at a temple of the earth goddess almost certainly had a profound influence on the design of Tenochtitlan's Templo Mayor. Such was the case at least from the reign of Motecuhzoma I, who I have mentioned, consciously began to model his growing imperial city after the greatest imperial city of them all, Teotihuacan.

Scott and I began to see similarities as well in other classic and post-classic cities of central Mexico where the north to south axis appears to be the most prominent. We also noticed that most of the main roads around Chaco Canyon and the pueblos in the Southwestern United State, long a mystery to archaeologists, ran from north to south. It is important to remember that the Aztecs believed that they originated in the north and migrated south, their mythic pilgrimage a model perhaps of the annual passage of the sun they worshipped.

* 9L + 10R

When looking at a map of the ancient city of Xochicalco one is instantly aware that the most prominent thoroughfare is a north - south road that ends at a small elevated plaza dominated by three pyramidal structures and a central platform. The three temples may stand for the three sacred hearth stones

of the fire god. The northern temple which is the most prominent of the three may be a temple in whose interior the sacred fire burned continually. Xochicalco is an Aztec word meaning "The Place of the House of Flowers." I don't know if that was its original ancient name, but it is significant, for a flower was a symbol of the god of fire who was often addressed by the Aztecs as "Ineffable Flower." Also notice on the map that there is an important ballcourt to the west of the great road and it runs from east to west, not unlike the ballcourt in our plan of the Templo Mayor.

* 10L + 11R

With the plan of the great city of Monte Alban in front of us, we again can see the strong north to south orientation of the central plaza ending in the north at a grand staircase giving access to a another large sunken plaza. We know that there was a barrio at Teotihuacan inhabited by craftsmen and probably merchants from Monte Alban. Also notice the small ballcourt on the eastern edge of the central plaza, this time running north to south.

* 11L + 12R

Our next plan is of the Toltec capital of Tula, a city with very important ancestral associations for the Aztecs of Tenochtitlan. We know that they frequently excavated the ceremonial center of this city as well as Teotihuacan for works of art to be carried back to their own capital to be installed in sacred spaces and also copied. A number of low benches carved with warrior processions have been discovered over the years

at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan that are direct copies of bench sculptures from Tula. Some might even be original Toltec art brought to the Mexica capital to enhance the legitimacy of the new empire.

Notice again that all access to the north terminates in stairs and a columned platform fronting the so called Temple of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli facing south. It was in these columned halls in front and to the side of this temple that the carved benches just mentioned were found. Like Teotihuacan there is also a larger temple on the eastern side of the plaza facing west. In the center of the plaza is a central platform and further to the west a large Tzompantli or skull rack running north to south. It borders a very large ballcourt also oriented north to south. Even though much of the area is still unexcavated, We think there are very strong similarities between this center and the Templo Mayor.

* 12L

Although the great ceremonial center of Cholula has its own peculiar layout, dominated by one great structure, the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, ^{* 13R} it does have an important enclosed northern plaza whose only pyramid temple faces south. In some ways it seems to have stronger affinities to Tlatelolco which, like Cholula, was a great market city.

Finally there is the plan for the east coast city of Cempoala, a contemporary of Tenochtitlan and part of its empire. Again we can see a prominent series of buildings aligned on

a north-south axis. The most prominent temple is in the north and faces south. It is bordered on the east by another less prominent temple in a plan that has some resemblance to Teotihuacan and Tula.

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Although it has consumed a great amount of our time, our study of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan is but one subject of our book, "The One Reed Year." ^{★ 13L} We chose that title because the year One Reed in the Aztec Calendar was the year 1519, the year that Hernan Cortez and the army under his command landed near Vera Cruz. One Reed or Ce Acatl was one of the names of the god Quetzalcoatl who vanished in the east but vowed to return.

The first volume of our two-volume work will consist of technical material concerning our research on the Templo Mayor and many other aspects of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. We will also discuss the gods of Aztec Mexico as well as Aztec art and symbolism. The second volume we hope will be a lyrical tour of Mexico from the east coast to the Valley of Anahuac following the path of Cortez and the conquistadors. ^{★ 14R + 14L} Here we will attempt to portray the elegant people of Tenochtitlan, their houses, palaces, and temples, their magnificent zoos and gardens and many other interesting things too strange and numerous to

mention, as the early Spanish chroniclers would say. And It will be done in our own words, our drawings and paintings. The first volume then will be science; the second volume poetry and art. We have only just begun doing the drawings and paintings for the second volume, but I thought you might like to have a preview of the work we have done so far. Many of the pen and ink drawings you are about to see are studies for future paintings. We will begin near where Cortez began, at the first large city on the east coast, the Totonac capital of Cempoala.

*16L + 17R

With a population of 30,000 Cempoala was the first large city to be visited by the Conquistadores in 1519. One of the most intriguing tales told by Bernal Diaz concerns Cortez's advance guard who upon glimpsing the city from a distance raced back to the army declaring in amazement that its buildings were made of silver! He goes on to say that when the army finally reached the place they all had a hearty laugh at the simple mindedness of the advance guard, but then Bernal Diaz goes on to say that the white stucco of the buildings was so beautifully smoothed and burnished that indeed they did shine like silver.

Scott and I always had our doubts about this description until we visited the ancient site of Cacaxtla in the early 1980's. We too were astonished to see a building just excavated whose stucco was so wonderfully preserved that it still retained its original polish which was truly like a mirror.

One other note. In the year 1519 there were no cities in Spain that had a population of thirty thousand. It is thought that Madrid had a population of about 9,000, Sevilla about 20,000. You can imagine how those Spaniards, not just from Cuba but from the old country, must have been impressed and worried when they were told that the size of Cempoala was nothing compared to the that of Mexico-Tenochtitlan many leagues to the west. You should also keep in mind that although the country was overwhelmingly rural with every parcel of arable land used

for farming, there were nevertheless many small towns scattered about and now and then cities of truly impressive size. Thus Mexico in 1519 had both a fully developed rural economy and a sophisticated urban culture that in many ways rivaled those of Europe and Asia even though it had essentially a neolithic culture.

Cempoala must have been a beautiful tropical city. Bernal Diaz was very surprised by the quality of the houses and the many districts enclosed in strong stone walls as a guard against flooding. There were also many gardens not just for food but for ornamental sweet-smelling trees and flowers and medicinal herbs.

*17L

Our next view shows the Recinto Sagrado of the kind of small highland city that lay in significant numbers along the Spaniards' route to Mexico. In the distance is Popocatepetl which was having a mild eruption in 1519. The round temple of Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl is plainly visible as well as a large Tzompantli for the display of the skulls of sacrificial victims. This was not just a war trophy, but had deep religious meanings which I will discuss later. Although this is an imaginary plan we like to call this place Zautla after one of the cities visited by Bernal Diaz.

*18R

This is a noble's house in Tlaxcalla inspired by ruins

we saw near Tizatlan the homeland of a people who were the ancient enemies of Tenochtitlan and who were to become the staunchest allies of Cortez. Scott and I are always amused when people boast about the superiority of a small army of Spaniards as they triumphed over a great indian empire. Without impugning the bravery and resourfulness of the Spaniard army and Cortes, a man I admire in many ways, it must be kept in mind that when Mexico-Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco finally were defeated Cortes had the considerable help of probably 150,000 native allies.

* 18L

The next drawing is an imaginary view of one the Tlaxcallan capitals. After valiently resisting the Spaniards the Tlaxcallans decided to join them. They always claimed how poor they were because of a kind of Aztec blockade on their region. But on the whole they were much more prosperous than they claimed or they would not have been able to resist Aztec power so successfully. Later when the Spaniards reached Tenochtitlan Motecuhzoma arrogantly claimed that they allowed the Tlaxcallans their independence so that when the Mexica needed sacrificial victims Tlaxcalla was a convenient place to get them.

When Cortes finally entered Tenochtitlan he came with 6,500 Tlaxcallan and Cempoallan allies which was an insult to those in the capital who stood against Motecuhzoma's weakness at allowing the foreigners to proceed past Cholula.

* 19R

Here we have a view of the kind of small temple precinct that was common in the countryside. This is a temple dedicated

to the god Mixcoatl-Camaxtli, a heroic hunting god and tribal progenitor of all nahuatl speaking people

★ 19L + 20L + 20R

Cholula was the largest city visited by Cortes and his allies on the march to Mexico. It had been a great trading city since pre-classic times, known for its splendid pottery and luxury goods. It had more than 40,000 houses and many temples everywhere. In the distance to the left you can see the ancient mound called Tlachiutepetl that was once perhaps the temple of Quetzalcoatl where a church stands today. By 1519 the religious center had been moved to the west of the old pyramid where a new Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the one you see here, had been erected. It was here in this courtyard that the Spanish, having been warned by Dona Marina that an ambush was about to happen, attacked first. Thousands of Cholulans were killed and wounded. Motecuzohma was blamed, and after the massacre the Aztec emperor only put up token resistance as the Spaniards, more determined than ever, proceeded on to Mexico. Here are two other views of that courtyard.

As Cortes and his army proceeded toward the pass between Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl they saw other small cities and temples along the way. All good land was cultivated and many areas were crossed by a sophisticated system of irrigation canals like the one you can see in the foreground.

★ 23L + 23R

One can only imagine how the travelers felt upon their first sight of the distant Valley of Mexico and way off a lake and in the lake their goal, the powerful Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan and other splendid cities, looking serene and secure.

After passing through the mountains and descending to the valley, the army came to the city of Ixtapalapa on the southern shore of the lake of Mexico. They were astounded by all the cities on the dry land, some entirely built on the water, some half on water, half on land. And they had never seen so many people crowded along the roads and on rooftops to see the strangers whose coming had been fortold in legend and rumored for months. The Valley of Mexico may have had more than a million inhabitants when the Spanish arrived.

★ 24R

This view is of the southern or Ixtapalapa causeway looking north toward the island city of Tenochtitlan. This was the route taken by Cortes on November 8, 1519. On that day the causway was also filled with thousands of curious people, the lake waters nearby clogged by canoe traffic. Embassies of Mexica nobles kept coming and going in preparation of Cortes's entry into the city and the meeting with the great Motecuhzoma.

When the army finally began its march along the causeway, the advance guard sallied forth on their horses thrusting their lances and banners warning people not to come too close. Bernal

Diaz declared that none of the descriptions of Tenochtitlan and the cities of the Valley of Mexico given to them by indian informers could do justice to the grandeur and power of the place. As they reached and passed through the fortress of Acachinango ^{★ 24L.} far out on the causeway, many Spaniards must have felt that they were walking into a death trap. At various places along the road bridges crossed openings in the causeway to allow for the flow of the lake to pass. It was quite obvious to any soldier that these bridges could be removed making any advance or retreat difficult. It was here at the fortress that Cortes would one day establish his camp ^{★ 26L + 27L} for the seige of the city.

The army continued along the causeway until they reached the entrance to the city at a place called Xoloco near a precinct of the women known as Tocititlan. ^{★ 25R + 26R} Motecuzohma who had been carried from his palace in a splendid litter down the Ixtapalapa road, descended from his seat and leaning on the shoulders of two powerful nobles came forward to greet Cortes.

There has always been some confusion over whether or not a double gateway existed here as well as at Acachinango, but Scott likes to believe that such an important entrance to the capital must have had some sort of special architecture. It was from this drawing that Scott decided to create a large oil painting of the scene. From here you can see the small temple of the goddess Toci ("Our Grandmother") like a guard house where a new idol of the straw stuffed skin of a sacrificed Toci

impersonator was placed annually at the festival of Ochpaniztli. In the painting you can clearly see the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan in the distance. Nearby are the priests' quarters for the goddess. ^{★ 27R} The next drawing is a close view of the Toci's peculiar temple.

^{★ 28L} ^{★ 28R} As we proceed up the Iztapalapa road we finally arrive at the great plaza which is now today's Zocalo. In front of us is the Eagle Gate, the southern entrance to the Templo Mayor. Behind the great wall can be seen the temples and the great skull rack. To the right is the main entrance to the palace of Motecuhzoma. The platform, to the left in front of the gate, ^{★ 29L + 30L} is the place of the so called Calendar Stone. Our next view is the central courtyard of the Hueytecpancalli or Great Palace of Motecuhzoma. This painting is not yet finished, but you can see that such places were beautifully decorated, ^{★ 29R} with painted walls and carved beams. In the distance is the grand staircase to the throne room and the emperor's living quarters. He also had many other houses and gardens nearby and in other parts of the city.

^{30R + 31L} Next is another view of the palace of Motecuhzoma looking west across the Zocalo toward the houses of the princes, the palace of the Cihuacoatl, a kind of prime minister, the House of Songs, and part of the palace of Motecuhzoma I. Next to this palace, but not in view, is the palace of Axayacatl where the Spaniards were quartered during their stay in Tenochtitlan.

They fled from this palace westward along the Tacuba causeway when they made their escape on the famous Noche Triste.

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We will now take a closer look at the Templo Mayor itself. Ignacio Marquina was not the only man to offer a plan of the Recinto Sagrado based on scholarship rather than archaeology. I will take a brief look at some of these plans. ^{★ 32 L} The earliest one was created in 1887 or 88. Here the double temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc faces south, not west as it should. All the smaller temples are crowded around the central structure without much attention being paid to the symbolic orientation of these temples. The surface of the earth, in the Aztec mind, was divided into five directions, the four cardinal points plus the center. Each direction possessed a distinct character of its own, presided over by particular gods and influences. If Chavero had kept these in mind, he might have come up with a better plan.

^{★ 31 R} A much better plan was proposed by Ignacio Alcocer in 1935 in which the orientation of many of the Temples is essentially correct. He erred in placing the great skull rack and the ball court and the temple of the Sun or Xipe Totec outside of the western wall. Notice that there is not a clear uninterrupted avenue running north to south. And notice also all the small

buildings on the inside of the great wall. These are calpulli buildings for the priests and visiting dignitaries. The early ^Sspanish writers said that there was space enough in the sacred square for a town of five hundred houses where as many as five thousand people could live.

★ 33L

Next we have an early concept put forth by Marquina following the ~~early~~ drawing of Sahagun that we have already ^{had a look at} looked at. However, he places the great skull rack next to the ball court instead of in front of the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc as Sahagun and the Nuremberg ^Mmap showed. No large temple building is shown on the north of the great double temple to match the one on the south that we do know was the Temple of Tezcatlipoca. Marquina has Tezcatlipoca's temple facing north. Recent archaeology has confirmed that this large temple actually faced west as is shown by the Nuremberg Map.

★ 32R

Michael Coe has presented a plan more closely matching the early sources. His north to south road runs completely through the sacred square. He shows the ball court running east to west and the great skull rack running north to south as in Sahagun. And like Sahagun he includes a small structure behind the great double temple which he calls the Temple of Culhuacan, saying that it represents the first Temple of Huitzilopochtli. He also places the Temple of Tezcatlipoca facing north but does not include a large sacred structure opposite the courtyard facing south to balance his plan.

★ 34L

Another odd concept offered by Alejandro Villalobos Perez combines structures uncovered archaeologically with ideas from Sahagun and Marquina. Notice the great skull rack that runs east to west by the western gate in recognition of a large structure discovered in the Metro excavations of the late 1960's. A large platform showing Teotihuacan influence was indeed found here probably dating from the reign of Motecuhzoma I, but there is no conclusive evidence that it was a Tzonpantli, no post holes, no perforated human skulls. Notice that the ball court runs east to west, not unlike Marquina's plan at the Museum of Anthropology and History though in a different location.

Also Perez has shown a large building for the Temple of the Sun by the southern gate. We are told by Duran that this temple was a small pyramid of only forty steps and therefore must have had a different shape, for Perez knew the exact dimensions of its base.

★ 33R+ 35L

Finally we have the two models currently on display in Mexico city, one at the Templo Mayor Museum and Marquina's final concept at the Museum of Anthropology and History which I first saw in that small museum by the Templo Mayor in 1962. In an attempt to reconcile Marquina's vision of a symmetrically balanced square with the known archaeology, ^{★ 34R} the Templo Mayor model is a curious hybrid with some resemblance also to the Villalobos Perez plan. Of course, much of it is guess work the same as our model.

If we very carefully read the early Spanish accounts of the ancient rites and ceremonies of Tenochtitlan as well as the native histories of the conquest, we are almost forced to look for alternative designs. Fortunately many of the Archaeological investigations of the last forty years are open to interpretations that go a long way toward reconciling what we know about the buildings today and the ancient sources. Still there are and will probably always be many unanswered questions.

★ 36L

Now that we are back at the Eagle Gate, the southern gate of the Templo Mayor, let us take a look at our plan for this sacred space. (Show Scott's model on the other screen and, using a pointer, tell the audience how we are going to move through the square. Then show the next drawing).)

★ 32R

★ 37L

This scene shows a few people standing at the base of Tezcatlipoca's temple. Looking upward you can see the Great Temple itself, especially that of Huitzilopochtli with its shining panels of black obsidian mosaic, a stone that was thought to have fallen from heaven. The white sculptures standing out from the obsidian are stone skulls which actually represent Stars. The sculptures which are attached to the sides of the pyramid base are serpent heads which define the pyramid as Coatepetl or Serpent Mountain.

★ 38L

In this next view we have moved to a place near the western gate, the Tezcacoac or "Serpent of Mirrors" Gate. We are looking east. In front of us is the Tezcatlachco, one of the two

★ 39L + 36R

ballcourts of the Templo Mayor. Beyond the ballcourt is the Great Tzompantli or skull rack and then the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. My brother and I believe that the Great Tzompantli was located here rather than where other scholars placed it, because that is how it appears in two early independent sources - Sahagun and the Nuremberg Map. (show the two blackbook Tzonpantli slides here). ★ 40L + 37R + 38R

A tzompantli is not simply a display of war trophies as too many scholars have assumed. There was a very close relationship between a warrior and his captive. In fact a captive was treated like an adopted son and was highly honored, since his capture was a sign that he had been chosen by Tezcatlipoca and therefore belonged to the god. In many ways every captive was an impersonator of Tezcatlipoca whose most powerful manifestation was the night sky filled with stars.

All warriors, even enemies, believed that they were part of a brotherhood dedicated to a mystical bond to sustain the gods with their very blood and hearts. When they died on the sacrificial stone in the ultimate fulfillment of their vow, their skulls were raised skyward on the skull rack as a great honor. In the Aztec mind the stars that filled the night sky represented the souls of departed ancestors and warriors. Skulls then often represented stars, as can be seen on the upper facade of Huitzilopochtli's and Tezcatlipoca's temple. Round pegs on the facade of the Coatlan enclosure to the north also signified

stars and gave the entire courtyard a celestial significance.

This particular Great Skull Rack (there were seven to nine skull racks in the religious precinct) was placed here in honor of the victory of Huitzilopochtli over his sister Coyolxauhqui and his brothers the Huitznahuac warriors or starry warriors of the south. Essentially this symbolized the sun's triumph at dawn over darkness and the night sky as well as the Mexica conquest of the cities of the southern Valley of Mexico.
★ 40R Then ★ 41R
We know that this mythic drama was reenacted here at the Coatepetl mountain, the pyramid of Huitzilopochtli, especially at the festival of Panquetzaliztli. Sahagun's indian informants said that here in the courtyard at the foot of the Coatepetl was the ★ 42L great Teotlequilli or sacred fireplace in which were burned the paper Xiuhcoatl (Huitzilopochtli's dart of lightning) and the sacrificial papers of the captives who were lined up (Sahagun says) at the Great Skull Rack facing the fire altar and the stairs of Huitzilopochtli. Remember that the famous carved stone of the defeated Coyolxauhqui was found here.

The presence of the Coyolxauhqui stone and the Great Skull Rack running north to south may help us discover the location of the other ballcourt listed by Sahagun, the Teotlachco or "Divine Ballcourt" which does not appear in any of the plans proposed by scholars. We know from one version of the myth of the birth and triumph of Huitzilopochtli at the Coatepetl, that

the great Mexica war god killed Coyolxauqui and beheaded her there at the ballcourt. We know that most tzompantlis were built parallel to the long sides of ballcourts. We can see this clearly at Tula, the Toltec city that, we noted, was partially excavated by the Aztecs. A very large ballcourt running from North to South was located at the western edge of the central plaza and had next to it a large tzompantli also running north to south.

★ 43L

If, as in our plan, the main north to south avenue was cut off by a staired parapet to the north as it also was at Tula, then we can see that the central avenue of Tenochtitlan's Templo Mayor can be viewed as a great ballcourt, the Teotlachco or Divine Ballcourt mentioned by Sahagun. This would make perfect sense when we consider that the north to south and back again yearly passage of the sun was thought of as a Cosmic ballgame with the sun as the ball. The decapitation of Coyolxauhqui by Huitzilopochtli reflected an ancient ballcourt custom where the loser paid with his head. We know that heads themselves could become symbolic balls.

★ 40R KEEP?

Thus, if our concept is correct, the avenue at the foot of the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc became a ballcourt and a cosmic theater where myths were reenacted and festivals were celebrated by people dressed as the gods. The northern platform then was a kind of stage where the gods dramatically emerged to initiate many of these observances. They emerged

★ 41R

from a very sacred patio dedicated to the various forms of the earth goddess. It was the Coatlan. In this place was the most sacred access to the underworld, to the womb of the earth
★ 44L
- the source of life and the resting place of the bones of the dead. Here was the alpha and omega of the Aztec cosmos. At this Coatlan, this "Place of Serpents" was, we believe, the Temple of Cihuacoatl.

In the Aztec mind the serpent was a symbol of the life force or anything capable of transmitting power. If we are correct, the Temple of Cihuacoatl was situated at the north of this small sacred plaza and faced south. Another one of her names was Tonantzin "Our Mother," like the northern mountain at Teotihuacan we have already discussed. Her Temple in fact was in direct alignment to the mountains north of the lake and to the Temple of Tonantzin at Tepeyac where today is honored the Virgin of Guadalupe.

★ 45L
Cihuacoatl's Temple was the holiest place at the Templo Mayor. Here within her shrine burned the most sacred fire brought to her temple first from the chest of a sacrificial victim at Culhuacan every fifty-two years. This fire was represented by the goddess Chantico. Only two priests, the most august and holy leaders, were permitted to enter her inner shrine, the Tlillan or place of darkness, where she stood surrounded by many other idols of the earth and mountain gods. More human sacrifices were offered to her than to all the other

gods combined, at least one victim every eight days. Notice that the upper facade of her temple is also faced with obsidian representing the night sky and attached round pegs or skulls representing stars. Specifically these are the stars of the North that circle the polar star, making a symbolic skirt of stars, Citlalicue - "She of the Skirt of Stars", another name for Cihuacoatl.

In front of the shrine of Cihuacoatl there was another fire platform called Teccalco where large fires were often lit from coals brought from the eternal fire within the Goddess's temple. Here offerings of small animals and snakes were brought once a year by children as an offering to Xiuhtecuhтли - Huehuateotl the old fire god, whose own temple may have been in this enclosure. Here too the old fire priests gathered annually to burn themselves with flaming pine pitch. They peeled the drippings from their skin and threw them into the fire along with huge baskets of expensive incense so that the smoke from this most sacred center of the fire could be seen for miles throughout the Valley of Mexico. And here victims were burned alive in celebration of the annual return of the gods at the festival of Teotleco especially in honor of Xiutecuhtli and Yacatecuhtli, god of Merchants.

In the distance at the far right can be seen the northern edge of the king's House of Penance, where he fasted for four days before each state festival and where he offered blood from

his own body. It was here in the Coatlan of Cihuacoatl that kings were initiated, where they symbolically died as mere mortals and were ritually reborn to the office of Huey Tlatoani, the supreme leader and speaker of Mexica people.

* 44R
In the next view we are also looking at the House of Penance. To the right is the fire platform and above it can be seen the back of the Temple of Tlaloc. Next is a view from the Penitential Palace looking southwest to the gate which opens onto the great ceremonial avenue. To the right of center is the temple of Xiuhtecuhli. It stands opposite the emperor's House of Penance in homage to the fact that the king's turquoise crown, the Xiuhcopilli, and his blue cloak, the Xiuhltlalpilli, identified him as a living embodiment of the fire god. Like Xiutecuhli who always stood at the center of creation, the king stood at the center of his people, his city and the nation.

46L
45R + 46R
Next to Xiuhtecuhli's temple can be seen a building whose door looks like a prison. And indeed it was. This is the Cuahcalli where the captured idols of enemy peoples were kept. Occasionally they were allowed to be carried back to their original homes for important festivals, but they were always returned to this place.

In the foreground is an altar decorated with skulls and crossbones, here representing the skirt of the earth and the underworld. On top is a sculpture of an eagle with the head of a jaguar, a mythical creature symbolizing the union of heaven

and earth. Thus here is represented A place where heaven, the earth and the underworld meet, the Axis Mundi we have already talked about.

If we walk through the distant gate and emerge on the great platform and look south, we are confronted with a spectacular view.

* 47R
On the left are the stairs of the Temple of Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. Farther south is the Temple of Tezcatlipoca facing west. Directly in front of us is the North - South road, the symbolic Ballcourt of the Gods. We can see the two other fire platforms. The most distant one was where the the Spanish raised their cannon, as is told in the native accounts of the conquest, and fired at the Mexica who hid behind the columns and on the rooftop of the Coatlan.

It was also in this courtyard that Pedro de Alvarado massacred the unarmed Aztecs celebrating the feast of Toxcatl, a repetition of the massacre at Cholula. The city erupted in a general uprising which brought about the fall of Motecuhzoma. It would have resulted in the deaths of all the Spaniards and their indian allies if they had not escaped on the Noche Triste.

47L
The conquerors were in general agreement that within the sacred enclosure at Tenochtitlan all the large temples faced west, and the smaller temples were closely grouped together as we see here. The temple closest to us, if there was one here as is hinted in the archaeology, we have chosen to be the Temple

of Xochipilli - Macuilxochitl. We decided this because he is the god associated with games, and here his temple stands at the corner of the two ballcourts and just south of the Great Tzompantli.

The next Temple to the south we believe was the Cincalco, the shrine of the corn deities, the goddesses Chicomecoatl and Xilonen and especially Cinteotl, a male corn god representing the mature corn. If there was no temple of Xochipilli here as we have discussed, then Cinteotl also would have been a good choice for a god at the crossroads of the two ballcourts, for the Cincalco was one of the main ^{* 48R} temples where the Cihauteteo, the goddesses who represented women who died in childbirth, were worshipped along with the corn gods, and these goddesses preferred to haunt crossroads.

The next temple to the south is a round temple associated with Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl. And the farthest temple is generally thought to be the Temple of the Sun, or as I would prefer calling it, the Temple of the Knights of the Sun. The grouping of these four temples closely together is appropriate for all these gods, because they are all intimately involved in the mythology and worship of corn.

The sun of course insures fertility, and its yearly passage dictated the dry and wet seasons, the times for planting and harvesting and after harvesting the time for war, especially celebrated at the festival of Ochpaniztli, "The Sweeping of

the Roads."

We also know that Quetzalcoatl was part of the corn myth, for he stole corn from the Tonacatepetl "The Mountain of our Sustenance" governed by Tlaloc and gave it to mankind thus making civilization possible. In his guise as Ehecatl, the god Quetzalcoatl, became the breath of life and the wind generally, the wind that swept the roads for the coming of rain.

Thus all these gods belong together. Even Xochipilli, the god of festivals and games and patron of the palace people, was closely associated with corn and the springtime sun.

^{48L}
Next we see two drawings of the Temple of the Knights of the Sun. Duran has told us that this temple was only forty steps high. In order for it to fit the large platform that was discovered at that place under the National Cathedral, my brother conceived a structure with a large elevated patio in front. It was here that the gladiatorial sacrifices were fought during the festival of Tlacaxipehualiztli, honoring Xipe Totec, the God of Renewal, and Tonatiuh, the Sun. ^{49R} The next drawing is a closeup of the Sun temple hung with a painted banner bearing the image of Nahui Ollin the calendar date "Four Motion". This was the date that the Era of the Fifth Sun would eventually come to an end in an earthquake bringing about the collapse of the sky.

The Aztecs always had a rather gloomy view of their distant future. As conquerors and as visitors to the ruins of great

ancestral cities like Teotihuacan and Tula they knew they would come to an end as well. Thoughts along these lines may have contributed a certain fatalism to Motecuhzoma's actions when rumors reached Tenochtitlan that bearded, white skinned strangers had appeared mysteriously out of the east. As a young man he was a warrior who had proved his bravery many times, and as a ruler he was held in fear throughout the land. The only explanation that I can understand is that he saw the coming of the Spanish - whoever they were - as a history altering event, the beginnng of some new cycle not clearly understood. He knew these men could be killed, that they grew hungry and thirsty and had other human weaknesses. But they also had extraordinary powers. They were clever and seemed almost to be clairvoyant. Their steel weapons and body armor and their powerful horses also gave them god-like powers. Truly if these Spaniards were not gods they were not human beings like himself and the millions of people he governed. Probably to the end of his days when he was stoned by his own people at the palace of Axayacatl and later likely stabbed to death by the Spaniards, he may never have been able to resolve these questions in his mind.

* 50R
Our last look at the Templo Mayor will be the area behind the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Sahagun places a structure here that he called the Temple of Culhuacan. No archaeological evidence for such a temple survives, but we must keep in mind that only a few fragments of the final arhaeological

level seen by the Conquistadors remains. All the rest was scraped off to make way for colonial buildings.

* 49L
Michael Coe proposes that this Temple of Culhuacan was the earliest Temple of Huitzilopochtli, but knowing how the Aztecs built every new temple over an earlier one, I doubt this is so. The name Culhuacan offers a clue, for the most important temple at Culhuacan for the Aztecs of Tenochtitlan was where the New Fire ushering in a new calendar cycle of fifty-two years was lit. And that was the Temple of Mixcoatl. Mixcoatl is usually translated as "Cloud Serpent." But if you stop at this definition, you will not understand what his name means. A cloud has spiritual associations like smoke. "Coatl" not only means "serpent," it also means "twin" and "companion." Thus his name is better understood as "Spirit Companion" an embodiment of the starry ancestors.

Mixcoatl was the progenitor and ancestral hero of all Aztec people, and his sacred bones were buried at his temple on the Cerro de las Estrellas near the city of Culhuacan. To be part of the noble Toltec blood of the rulers of Culhuacan was why the Aztec leaders constantly sought to marry Culhuacan women. The word "Culhuacan" refers to the place of ancestors. Mixcoatl was a rude hunter god from the northern desert country who taught his people how to hunt, to make fire and to brew intoxicating pulque. Before he was a god he probably was a man, a tribal

Hero. As a god he was one of the countless stars called the Mimixcoa originating in the north. He and the Mimixcoa embody the Milky Way, the starry road of the Ancestors, commemorated by the great north-south roads of the cities we have discussed. That is why the Aztecs called the great avenue at Teotihuacan " the Street of the Dead." It was really the way of Ancestors.

Mixcoatl's temple at the eastern gate associates the god with origins and places him between the north and the south, to where he eventually led his followers. His wife was Coatlicue, another name for Cihuacoatl, whose temple we have observed, was at the northern gate, another place of origins. And one of his children was none other than Quetzalcoatl who gave man corn and the arts of culture and civilization.

*51R + 50L

Here we see the back of the Temple of Culhuacan and the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. To our right is the skull rack of Mixcoatl called the Mixcoateopantzompantli. Sahagun says that the skulls faced south. Surely this is the other large tzompantli clearly shown to the north of the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc in the Nuremberg Map.

*52R

The oddly shaped small temple to the right of the Culhuacan Temple is Tochpan, the shrine of the Centzon Totochtin, the Pulque Gods. Remember that this alcoholic drink came from the heart of the Maguey, a desert plant which at times was the only source of liquid available in the harsh, dry northern country.

On top of the stepped platform in the middle ground is the

* 514

walled enclosure of the Teotlalpan, a cactus garden that served as a model of the desert where Mixcoatl and the Aztec ancestors originated. The Aztec nobility performed ceremonies here before they departed for their yearly animal hunt near Culhuacan during the festival of Quecholli.

* 53R

Next is an elevated view of the same place. In the background you can see the base of Mixcoatl's temple, the temple of the Pulque Gods and the western end of the Mixcoatl skull rack. In the middle ground is the Tlillapan where the priests of Mixcoatl bathed at night after incensing their god. From here they retired to their monastery at Tlillan to the north. To the left is where Scott placed the Ichpocacalli, a sort of nunnery where the daughters of important people lived for a year performing services at the temples.

* 52L

There are other areas of the Templo Mayor that I wish I could talk about, especially the precinct of Xipe Totec called Yopico and the temple enclosure of Pochtlan, the precinct of the Merchants. There just simply isn't enough time. Quite honestly I could make an hour's lecture about any one of the temples in this model, but I have tested your patience enough.

SHOW OTHER SLIDES

After all these years of study, after the more than five years it took for my brother to build the models you have seen tonight, I can say that we have just begun to draw and paint the Aztec world of the One Reed Year. I do not know when our book will be completed. We hope to finish within the next five

years. It all depends on how much time we can spare from our regular obligations as artists, for we are primarily painters of still lifes, landscapes and portraits which we must do of necessity to pay for our Aztec project. We have financed it entirely by ourselves and would have it no other way. Still, it has been a very expensive undertaking, since none of our Aztec work is for sale. We are going to keep all of the drawings and paintings and models intact in one collection.

When our project is finally completed, we hope to be able to loan to museums and other venues a complete exhibition that will be truly unique. It will offer an exciting and, we hope, thought-provoking glimpse of the lost world described so magnificently by Bernal Diaz del Castillo and the other early chroniclers. In a very real way I believe that we are adding another chapter to Diaz's book along side the chapters already contributed by dedicated scholars for almost five hundred years. What started as a selfish venture, a gift to ourselves to satisfy our own desire to actually see the wonders he described, has become a gift to all those who have cared about such things, a gift to the world and especially our gift to the people of Mexico. Thankyou.