

There seems to be a long standing confusion <sup>as to</sup> ~~in~~ among commentators about the identification of the wall known as the Coatopantli. This is in fact related to several other fundamental ambiguities that ~~can~~ plague the clarifications of which have to be made before any study of the Ceremonial Precinct can <sup>begin</sup> proceed. ~~Some~~ Besides the problem of the Coatopantli there <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ the questions, just what does the term, <sup>the</sup> plaza of the temple of Huitzilopochtli mean? and when <sup>reference is made</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>one</sup> refers to the "great temple" as Cortez does, is he referring to a single building or to the entire complex?

<sup>cautiously</sup> ~~when~~ <sup>approaching</sup> ~~conclusions~~  
Although I am <sup>not</sup> ~~am~~ <sup>careful</sup> ~~cautious~~ about ~~these~~ <sup>to any of these but I have</sup>  
I have found it necessary to make informed assumptions upon which to build pending open the options for change should better explanations arise.

Some ambiguity <sup>among experts</sup> exists over the identification of the Coatopantli. Some translate it from the Nahuatl as "serpent wall" and from this assume that it referred to the great crenellated wall which surrounded the ceremonial precinct. Others, including myself, think that this term referred to the walls of the apertures of the <sup>to</sup> ~~great~~ temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Unlike the twin pyramids at Tenayuca surrounded on its sides and rear with rows of protective serpents, the temple of Mexico appears not to have had ~~this~~ a similar arrangement, but rather

expressed this principle with a row of projecting  
serpent heads projecting stud like from the vertical  
surface of its base platform. <sup>the nahuatl word</sup> Pantli may ~~also~~ <sup>also</sup> lie  
Mythical ~~names~~ <sup>names</sup> translated as "display", or  
~~presentation~~, and it is this meaning which I think  
best applies to this feature. It ~~functions~~ <sup>the pyramid</sup> these  
serpents function, as guardians of ~~this~~ <sup>the</sup> sacred  
structural ~~but~~ <sup>as well as</sup> giving this building its name  
"Coatlicue" or the ~~female~~ <sup>the</sup> Serpent mountain of mythical fame.  
They also, on the lowest level at least, identify the  
apetlac as the surfaces of the earth.

<sup>with</sup> As for the great Crenellated wall, a more fundamental  
and encompassing symbolic element is at work,  
the Cipactli or the great Alligator which symbolized  
the surface of the entire earth. Its serrated  
back scales, translated architecturally into the large  
Crenellations were symbolic of ~~the~~ mountains  
and as such resonated with the mountainous landscape  
surrounding the valley of Mexico. This great wall  
was never intended as a defensive measure of any  
kind is of real importance when we come to consider  
the architecture <sup>situated</sup> just inside it. Another clue may  
~~lie~~ lie in the fact that Hernan Cortes in his detailed  
account of the first few days of fighting during  
the siege of Mexico never mentions this wall, <sup>as</sup> being  
used for defense of the temple. In fact, neither  
do any of the <sup>other spanish accounts</sup> ~~native accounts~~ or for that matter  
~~the accounts~~ any of those of the indian defenders themselves,

after all, before the advent of the Spanish who would have dared such a thing?

Finally we come to the ambiguous references to the plaza of the temple of Huitzilopochtli. Although <sup>questions</sup> some of ~~these~~ remain ~~ambiguous~~ I have studied the subject sufficiently to satisfy myself as to the existence of a substantial plaza in front of this large twin pyramid, ~~of Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli~~ and that in its center was one of the two principle divine braziers, a ten foot high, thirty foot square platform with stairs on its four sides that marked the approximate center of the entire sacred enclosure.

Some ambiguity exists whenever the early writers mention the plaza of the temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. <sup>Three possibilities exist</sup> There is the great plaza itself, that <sup>within the crenellated</sup> entire area of the temenos ~~encompassing~~ <sup>surrounding and</sup> the wall. Focusing in more closely we come to the large ceremonial plaza <sup>in front of</sup> of the twin temple itself. This area corresponded to that intersection of the North South and East-West axes where one of the divine braziers was located. Finally there is the <sup>we arrive at</sup> apetlac area of the great pyramid itself located on top of this structure's supporting base platform, symbolic of the surface of the earth and location of the famous Coyolpaquin stone.