

The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan

also known as "Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan", "Huei teocalli"

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Entry tags: Mexica, shrines, Archaeological Site, Archaeological monument, Mesoamerican Religions, Aztec Religions, Religious Place, Religious Group, Mesoamerica, Temple, Tenochtitlan, Basin of Mexico

The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan was built by the Mexica (Aztecs) once they settled on an island (Tenochtitlan) in the Basin of Mexico during the Late Postclassic Period (1200-1521 CE). This temple was built to honor their patron deity, the sun and war god, Huitzilopochtli. This temple was placed at the center of the Mexica universe and religious cosmovision. It was rebuilt at least seven times during the several reigns of Mexica Emperors ("tlatoani"). It was approximately 47 m high and there were two shrines at the top, one dedicated to Huitzilopochtli and another to Tlaloc, the god of rain and earth's fertility. Since its discovery in 1978, the Templo Mayor Project team (PTM-INAH) have excavated this temple and its surroundings, uncovering over 200 sacred offerings filled with archaeological artifacts, ecofacts, and human remains. Each offering has its own meaning and representation in space and time (i.e., "cosmograma" in Spanish), depending on the type of ritual and the deity it was dedicated to. It's a very complex site with a lot more to find since part of it remains underneath the downtown core of present-day Mexico City making its excavation a challenge. All in all, this was the most sacred temple of the Mexica and everything revolved around this place as their most sacred precinct.



Date Range: 1325 CE - 1521 CE

Region: Tenochtitlan

Region tags: Mexico, Mesoamerica, Basin of Mexico

Tenochtitlan was an island located in the Basin of Mexico, surrounded by five lakes. The Mexica settled there in 1325 CE and remained there until the invasion of the Spanish in 1521 CE.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists

General Variables

Sources and Excavations

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: López Luján, Leonardo, 2006, *La Casa de las Águilas: un ejemplo de la arquitectura religiosa de Tenochtitlan*, México, Harvard/INAH/Conaculta/FCE.
- Source 2: López Luján, Leonardo, 2005, *The Offerings of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.
- Source 3: López Luján, Leonardo y Ximena Chávez Balderas (eds.), 2019, *Al pie del Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan: Estudios en honor de Eduardo Matos Moctezuma*, México, El Colegio Nacional.

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- Source 1: Chávez Balderas, Ximena, 2017, *Decapitación ritual en el Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan: estudio tafonómico*, México, INAH.
- Source 2: Dahlgren, Bárbara, Emma Pérez Rocha, Lourdes Suárez, y Perla Valle, 2009, *Corazón de Cópil. El Templo Mayor y el recinto sagrado de México-Tenochtitlan según fuentes del siglo XVI*, México, Conaculta-INAH.
- Source 3: Broda, Johanna, 1987, "Templo Mayor as Ritual Space", en Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Johanna Broda, y David Carrasco (eds.), *The great Templo Of Tenochtitlan. center and Periphery in the Aztec World*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 61-123.

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Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://youtu.be/AfspJ8UCwn0>
- Source 1 Description: 5 metros abajo 1502: los contextos de excavación
- Source 2 URL: <https://youtu.be/StFvRSjlf-g>
- Source 2 Description: Lugar del recipiente de las águilas: Cuauhxicaco
- Source 3 URL: <https://youtu.be/Iw-57weFXCI>
- Source 3 Description: Oro para Coyolxauhqui: la Ofrenda 167
- By: Diana Moreiras
- Source 1 URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0278416521000295>
- Source 1 Description: https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0071-16752015000100002
- Source 2 URL: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aas9370>
- Source 2 Description: <https://arqueologiamexicana.mx/mexico-antiguo/objetos-de-madera-localizados-en-el-templo-mayor-de-tenochtitlan>
- Source 3 URL: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ancient-mesoamerica/article/abs/producciones-palaciegas-tenochcas-en-objetos-de-concha-y-lapidaria/9AA0869DDA7D04351D89C42707EDA2EF>
- Source 3 Description: <https://books.google.de/books?hl=en&lr=&id=1kqDAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT13&dq=info:oPTdaBXgj28J:scholar.google.com&ots=UsGAsRwj87&sig=iXCFgEFO0CnO9qnBLEzbxmsDdxg&redir>
- By: Israel Elizalde Mendez
- Source 1 URL: <https://youtu.be/Fh4Bc3k8xW4>
- Source 1 Description: Un infante con insignias de Huitzilopochtli: la Ofrenda 176
- Source 2 URL: https://youtu.be/h_dQ7DIL5TA
- Source 2 Description: El estudio de los restos óseos infantiles la Ofrenda 176
- Source 3 URL: <https://youtu.be/lMw2ftocwp8>
- Source 3 Description: El mundo oceánico: las estrellas de mar
- By: Diana Moreiras
- Source 1 URL: https://youtu.be/lds_sT-tJU4
- Source 1 Description: Laboratorio de conservación arqueológica: el hospital de los materiales
- Source 2 URL: <https://youtu.be/jxI2PIWfCZg>
- Source 2 Description: Laboratorio de conservación arqueológica: el proceso de embalaje
- Source 3 URL: <https://youtu.be/LtAOZMd3Lcs>
- Source 3 Description: Laboratorio de paleobotánica, UNAM: el polen arqueológico
- By: Diana Moreiras
- Source 1 URL: <https://youtu.be/87icepCSJtk>
- Source 1 Description: Un cartílago rostral de pez sierra: la Ofrenda 174
- Source 2 URL: <https://youtu.be/7NnqvFyEbva>
- Source 2 Description: Laboratorio de arqueobotánica: los macrorrestos vegetales
- Source 3 URL: <https://youtu.be/qFeQxnwylOI>
- Source 3 Description: El esqueleto del lobo: armado y estudio
- By: Diana Moreiras
- Source 1 URL: <https://youtu.be/hburPMu2q4l>
- Source 1 Description: Arquitectura y color en el Templo Mayor: registro gráfico
- By: Diana Moreiras

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

— Yes

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↳ Type of excavation:

— Scientific

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↳ Years of excavation:
— Year range: 1978-2022
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↳ Name of excavation
— Official or descriptive name: Templo Mayor Project
Notes: Excavations have also been carried out by the Urban Archaeology Program (PAU) and the Department of Archaeological Salvage (DSA)
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Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape:
— Water source
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Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:
Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.
— Yes
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↳ Type of feature
— Leveling of ground
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Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:
— Yes
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↳ Is there a distinct boundary between the place and the urban fabric:
— No
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Is the place situated in a rural setting:
— No
By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:
— No
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Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:
Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.
— Yes
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↳ A single structure
— No
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↳ A group of structures:

— No

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↳ A group of features:

— No

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↳ Is it part of a larger place/sanctuary:

— Yes

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↳ What is the function of the structure/feature or group:

Answer "Yes" once for each distinct function

— Other [specify]: Ritual

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↳ Is the structure/feature finished:

— Yes

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↳ Was the structure/feature intended to last beyond a generation:

— Yes

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↳ Was the structure/feature modified through time:

— Yes

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↳ Was the structure/feature destroyed:

— Yes

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↳ How was the structure/feature destroyed

— Other [specify]: It was destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors

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↳ Was it destroyed deliberately:

— For religious reasons

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↳ Was it destroyed by accident/natural phenomena:

— Other [specify]: Spanish Conquest at 1521

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↳ Has the structure/feature been reconstructed:

— No

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Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:

— Yes

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Dedicated to more than one supernatural being:

— Yes [specify]: The main building was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and Tlaloc, god of rain.

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Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:

— No

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Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:

— No

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Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:

A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.

— Yes

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Specify

— King or emperor

Notes: The main temple of Tenochtitlan is made up of seven construction stages, each one was ordered to be done by a Mexica sovereign.

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Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:

— Yes

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Groups:

— Specialized labourers/craftspeople

Notes: Historical documents from the 16th century narrate that various tributary towns were in charge of supplying the construction materials and carrying out the construction of the temple.

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Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

— No

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Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

— Yes

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Specify

— Birthplace of high god

Notes: The Templo Mayor is the reconstruction of the creation myth of the birth of Huitzilopochtli on the hill of Coatepec.

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Was the place created as the result of an event:

— I don't know

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Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

— Yes

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↳ Is this sponsor of the same religious group/tradition as the main usage of the place:

— No

Notes: The materials came from the vicinity of the city, but many times they were the result of tribute or taxes that were required by the Mexica people as part of their expansionist policy.

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Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

— Expectation of favor in return

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Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

— No

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Design and Material Remains

Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

— Yes

Notes: According to Sahagún (2000, lib. 2) the sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan was made up of 78 religious buildings.

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Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

— Yes

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↳ In the average place, what percentage of area is taken up by built monuments:

— Percentage: 80

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↳ Footprint of largest single religious monument, square meters:

Please add dimensions in the comments, if known.

— Square meters: 59.83

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↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

— Height, meters: 33.87

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↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

— Square meters: 1998.33

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↳ Height of average monument, meters:

— Height, meters: 47

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Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

— Yes

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↳ Earth

— Yes

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↳ Is this material sourced locally:

— Yes

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↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

— No

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↳ Sand

— No

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↳ Clay

— Yes

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↳ Is this material sourced locally:

— Yes

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↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

— No

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↳ Plaster

— Yes

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↳ Is this material sourced locally:

— No

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↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

— Yes

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↳ Wood

— Yes

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↳ Grass

— No

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↳ Stone

— Yes

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↳ Is this material sourced locally:

— Yes

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↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

— No

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Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

— No

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Decoration

Is decoration present:

— Yes

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↳ Is decoration part of the building (permanent):

— Yes

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↳ On the outside:

— Yes

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↳ On the inside:

— Yes

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↳ Is decoration attached to the building, i.e. movable reliefs or tapestries

— Yes

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↳ Is the decoration figural:

A figural representation is defined here as one that contains the depiction of discernible human, anthropomorphic, animal, or zoomorphic forms. In general, it differentiates between animate and inanimate beings, as well as between narrative compositions and still life, landscapes, abstraction, etc. Answer [Yes] for each type of figure depicted

— Yes

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↳ Are there gods depicted:

— Yes

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↳ Are there other supernatural beings depicted:

— Yes

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↳ Are there humans depicted:

— Yes

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↳ Are there animals depicted:

— Yes

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↳ Are there animal-human hybrids depicted:

— No

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↳ Is the decoration non-figural:

— No

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↳ Is the decoration hidden or restricted from view:

— No

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↳ Are there statues present:

— Yes

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↳ Cult statues:

— No

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↳ Statues of gods/supernatural beings:

— Yes

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↳ Statues of humans:

— No

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↳ Are there reliefs present:

A relief as opposed to sculpture carved on the round is a work of sculpture in which the figures project from a background support, generally a flat surface. Reliefs can be carved out of stone, clay, or a similar material.

— Yes

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↳ Reliefs representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

— Yes

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↳ Reliefs representing mythological narratives:

— No

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- ↳ Reliefs representing human/historical narratives:
 - Yes

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- ↳ Are there paintings present:
 - Yes

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- ↳ Are they panel paintings [movable]:
 - No

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- ↳ Are they wall paintings:
 - Yes

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- ↳ Type
 - 'True' fresco

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- ↳ Paintings representing the gods worshipped at the place:
 - No

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- ↳ Paintings representing mythological narratives:
 - No

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- ↳ Paintings representing human/historical narratives:
 - Field doesn't know

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- ↳ Are there mosaics present:
 - No

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- ↳ Are there inscriptions as part of the decoration:
 - No

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Iconography

- Are there distinct features in the places iconography:
 - Yes

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- ↳ Eyes (stylized or not)
 - Yes

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- ↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic)
 - Yes
 - By: Israel Elizalde Mendez
- ↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic)
 - Yes
 - By: Israel Elizalde Mendez
- ↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic)
 - Yes
 - By: Israel Elizalde Mendez
- ↳ Supernatural beings (abstract)
 - Yes
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- ↳ Portrayals of afterlife
 - Yes
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- ↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols)
 - Yes
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- ↳ Humans
 - Yes
 - By: Israel Elizalde Mendez
- ↳ Supernatural narratives
 - No
 - By: Israel Elizalde Mendez
- ↳ Human narratives
 - Yes
 - By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Beliefs and Practices

Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

— Yes

Notes: There is evidence that some Mexica emperors may have been buried inside the Templo Mayor. Cremated human remains are present, which was the appropriate burial treatment for the Mexica elite.

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Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

— No

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Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

— No

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Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

— Yes

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↳ Human:

— Yes

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↳ How many humans are present:

— Number of human sacrifices: 500

Notes: Close to 200 individuals have been recovered from multiple offerings within the Templo Mayor ceremonial complex. At least another 300 or so have been estimated to be present on the Huei Tzompantli (skull rack) discovered in recent years by the PAU team.

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↳ Out-group humans are sacrificed:

— Yes

Notes: Based on the findings from stable and radiogenic isotope studies (Barrera Huerta 2014, Moreiras Reynaga et al. 2021) of sacrificial victims recovered from multiple Templo Mayor offerings, we know that some individuals were indeed non-local to the Basin of Mexico, while others may have been foreigners who lived for a prolonged time (6+ years) in Tenochtitlan before their sacrificial death.

Reference: Barrera Huerta, Alan. *Isotopía De Estroncio Aplicado a Material Oseo Humano Localizado En Ofrendas Del Templo Mayor De Tenochtitlan*. Mexico City: Unpublished BA thesis. Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2014.

Reference: Moreiras Reynaga, Diana K., Jean-François Millaire, Ximena Chávez Balderas, Juan A. Román Berrelleza, Leonardo López Luján, and Fred J. Longstaffe. "Residential Patterns of Mexica Human Sacrifices at Mexico-tenochtitlan and Mexico-tlatelolco: Evidence from Phosphate Oxygen Isotopes". *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 62 (2021): 101296. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaa.2021.101296>.

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↳ In-group humans are sacrificed:

— Yes

Notes: Moreiras Reynaga et al. (2021) have reported the possibility of locals who made up some of the sacrificial victims deposited in offerings within the Templo Mayor ceremonial site.

Reference: Moreiras Reynaga, Diana K., Jean-François Millaire, Ximena Chávez Balderas, Juan A. Román Berrelleza, Leonardo López Luján, and Fred J. Longstaffe. "Residential Patterns of Mexica Human Sacrifices at Mexico-tenochtitlan and Mexico-tlatelolco: Evidence from Phosphate Oxygen Isotopes". *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 62 (2021): 101296. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaa.2021.101296>.

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↳ Other humans are sacrificed:

— Other [specify]: A range of humans were chosen for particular ritual ceremonies depending on their physical, social, cultural, geographic traits. Not sacrificed just to accompany the elite Mexica in the afterlife, but to honor specific deities like Huitzilopochtli, Tlaloc, Mictlantecuhtli, Tezcatliopca, etc. in specific ceremonies in the Mexica ritual calendar and in exceptional one-time ceremonies (e.g., famine, drought).

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↳ Animal:

— Yes

Notes: Cremated faunal bones have been recovered in association with cremated human remains. A diverse range of fauna has been also recovered from multiple temple offerings, some of which show evidence of sacrificial and post-sacrificial practices (e.g., heart extraction, defleshing, boiling, etc.). There is no accurate minimum number of individuals due to the wide

diversity and amount of animal remains present in the many offerings. There are 6 phyla and over 500 animal species represented.

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Are grave goods present:

— Yes

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↳ Personal effects:

— No

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↳ Valuable/precious items:

— Yes

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↳ Significant value:

Gold, jade, intensely worked objects, or meaningful symbolic value

— Yes

Notes: There are green stone beads, turquoise and gold artifacts such as pendants (perhaps used for decorative purposes), and animal remains such as jaguars, eagles, hawks, and crocodiles (e.g., bone awls, claws, pelts) (López Luján 2005; Chávez Balderas 2007).

Reference: López Luján, Leonardo. The Offerings of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Reference: Chávez Balderas, Ximena. Rituales Funerarios En El Templo Mayor De Tenochtitlan. Mexico City: INAH, 2007.

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↳ Some value, valuable or useful objects:

— No

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Are formal burials present:

— Yes

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↳ As cenotaphs:

— No

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↳ In cemetery:

— No

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↳ Family tomb/crypt:

— No

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↳ Domestic context:

Interred beneath floors of house, or in areas of domestic activity

— No

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↳ Other

— Other [specify]: cremated human remains inside stone boxes and ceramic urns.

Reference: Chávez Balderas, Ximena. *Rituales Funerarios En El Templo Mayor De Tenochtitlan*. Mexico City: INAH, 2007.

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Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

— Yes

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↳ Are they anthropomorphic:

— Yes

Notes: The temple was built to honor two deities: patron, war and sun god Huitzilopochtli and god of water, rain, and earth's fertility, Tlaloc.

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↳ Are they sky deity:

— Yes

Notes: Both Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc are associated with the sky. Huitzilopochtli is associated with the sun and the hummingbird. In his birth story, his mother Coatlicue conceived him when a ball of hummingbird feathers fell from the sky that she kept in her chest. Tlaloc is associated with the sky and the rain as well as the fertility of the earth.

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↳ Are they chthonic (underworld)

— Yes

Notes: Tlaloc was associated with the afterlife and underworld. He was linked to the underworld realm known as "Tlalocan", where individuals who died of drowning, lightning, or specific diseases ended up. He is also linked to underground caves and the earthly level just as Tlaltecuhltli, the goddess of the earth.

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— No

Notes: Huitzilopochtli is associated with the Sun and the upper levels of the afterlife since fallen warriors and women who died during their first labor would go to this level, would go to the sun.

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↳ Are they fused with king/kingship role (king = high god)

— No

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↳ Are they the monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

— Field doesn't know

Notes: This is not certain. However, it is important to note that López Luján (2006:289-299) has a hypothesis on this topic. The rulers (including the Mexica emperor or "tlatoni") were sequestered in the precinct known as the "House of Eagles" or "Casa de las Águilas", a place that recreated the universe in miniature. In its North wing called "Tlacoachcalco" (Mictlan), we see the depictions of the underworld deity, Mictlantecutli, suggesting to the scholar that this area symbolized the underworld. In the East wing "Tlacatecco" (where the sun rises) were depictions of eagle men, which suggest that this area represented the auroral region. The rulers or "tlatoque" entered from the North wing, and after four days of penance, they came out from the East wing to represent the rise of the sun, symbolizing a new sunrise/beginning and "in this way, the House of Eagles was erected as an effective paradigmatic mechanism for the transfer of real power".

Reference: López Luján, Leonardo. *La Casa De Las Águilas: Un Ejemplo De La Arquitectura Religiosa De Tenochtitlan*. Mexico City: Harvard/INAH/Conaculta/FCE, 2006.

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↳ Are they kin relation to elites:

— No

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are they other type of loyalty or connection to elites:

— Field doesn't know

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↳ Are they unquestionably good:

— No

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↳ Are they other:

— Other [specify]: There are other Mexico deities represented in the sacred precinct including: Tlaltecuhli, Tezcatlipoca, Mictlantecutli, Cihuacoatl, Coyolxauhqui, Xipe Totec, Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, Mayahuel, Xiuhtecuhtli.

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Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

— Yes

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↳ In waking, everyday life:

— Field doesn't know

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↳ In dreams:

— I don't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ In trance possession:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Through divination practices:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Only through religious specialists:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Only through monarch:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Are previously human spirits present:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Nonhuman spirits can be seen:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Nonhuman spirits can be physically felt:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ In waking, everyday life:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ In dreams:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ In trance possession:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Through divination practices:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Only through religious specialists:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Only through monarch:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is the cult statue visible:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is the cult statue hidden:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Supernatural Interactions

Is supernatural monitoring present:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Ritual and Performance

Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there animal sacrifices:

—Yes [specify]: multiple animals have evidence of ritual sacrifice including super predators such as felines, wolves, eagles, etc. There is a diverse range of animal species that were placed inside the many Mexica offerings at this main temple. While not all of them show signs of sacrifice, it is important to note that there are thousands of faunal remains associated with Mexica ritual activities.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there human sacrifices:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Adults

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is biological sex available from evidence:

— Male

— Female

— Other/InD

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Children

— Yes

Notes: Many children have been found in multiple Templo Mayor offerings. Their biological age ranges from 1 to 11 years old and many of them suffered from illnesses and nutritional stresses that left a mark on their skeletons. While war captives were a known source for sacrifices, the archaeological and bioarchaeological evidence suggests that children were also considered for specific sacrificial rituals and child sacrifices were commonly practiced at the temple.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is biological sex available from evidence:

- Male
- Female
- Other/InD

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Foreigners and/or slaves

— Yes

Notes: Based on the latest bioarchaeological evidence from oxygen and strontium isotope analyses (Barrera Huerta 2014; Moreiras Reynaga et al. 2021), it is possible that some individuals were foreigners who lived their last years of life at Tenochtitlan before their sacrificial death and some could have been foreigners and sacrificed soon after their arrival to Tenochtitlan.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is biological sex available from evidence:

- Male
- Female
- Other/InD

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Elites

— Field doesn't know

Notes: More bioarchaeological research is needed to answer this question.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are the sacrificed humans associated in some way:

- Yes [specify]: It is possible that the individuals were taken from several vulnerable groups: captives from war and war-spoils, slaves from the markets or from tribute for the State, children from poor households.

By: Diana Moreiras

Are there self-sacrifices present:

— Yes

Notes: It is represented as objects such as bone awls in the offerings and the iconography displayed in the House of Eagles ("Casa de las Águilas"). The image shows warriors taking a pilgrimage to Zacatapayolli (a place or container to deposit the blood on the earth) and offering a type of grass or "zacate" ball with multiple awls embedded in it. It has been linked to a self-sacrifice scene.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Suicide

— No

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Bloodletting

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Mutilation

— No

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is self-sacrifice common and/or expect of elites:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is it an elite prerogative:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is it a kingship prerogative:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

Are material offerings present:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are material offerings mandatory:

— Field doesn't know

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are material offerings composed of valuable objects:

— Yes

Notes: Jade, green stone, some gold and shell artifacts have been recovered in the offerings. However, there are other artifacts that the Mexica considered valuable that we may not necessarily such as decorated obsidian knives that have also been recovered. There is a wide variety of objects that have been found in offering contexts, all placed intricately by the Mexica in association with a particular deity, myth and recreation of the different levels of their cosmos.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are material offerings composed of daily-life objects:

— No

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are material offerings interred at this place (in caches):

— Yes

Notes: Many offerings were placed carefully inside stone boxes or containers and buried within different areas of the sacred precinct. To date, there are over 200 offerings that have been recorded and excavated and more likely remain to be identified and excavated.

By: Diana Moreiras

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ By all the community

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ By specific individuals

— Yes [specify]: Mexica priests who were in charge of carrying out the ceremonies as well as the Mexica emperor or "huei tlatoni" had to be present as well.

By: Diana Moreiras

Is maintenance of the place performed:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is it required:
— Field doesn't know
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is there cleansing (for the maintenance):
— Field doesn't know
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there periodic repairs/reconstructions:
— Yes
Notes: The temple was rebuilt every time a new Mexica emperor ("huei tlatoani") came to power. The temple was expanded at least seven times and the new "huei tlatoani" engaged in the temple's consecration and inauguration ceremonies.
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is the maintenance performed by permanent staff:
— Yes
Notes: It is very likely that there were priests assigned to maintain the great temple.
By: Diana Moreiras

Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:
— Field doesn't know
By: Diana Moreiras

Is this place a venue for feasting:
— Field doesn't know
By: Diana Moreiras

Are festivals present:
— Yes
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Frequency of festivals
—specify: There were monthly festivals known in Spanish as "veintenas" that would take place at the temple. Each month was in honor of a deity and a particular theme or aspect.
Notes: The pictorial and historic texts have recorded these "veintenas". For instance, the first "veintena" known as "atlahualo" was dedicated to the "tlaloques" (helpers of the rain and fertility god Tlaloc) to request rain for the crops, while the next veintena known as "tlacaxipehualiztli" was associated with the deity Xipe Totec and the rituals involved the sacrifice of war captives. In total, there were 18 "veintenas" which covered the entire calendric year.
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Do all members of the society participate in the festival(s):
— All members
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are festivals a defining element in the construction/decoration of the place:
— Yes
By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Requires special maintenance/cleansing of the place:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Requires new construction/decoration of the place:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Requires maintenance/replacement of cult statue(s):

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is feasting part of the festival(s):

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Is food consumption limited to certain members of the population:

— Elites

— Non-elites

— Religious professionals

By: Diana Moreiras

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Divination by examination of the exta:

Animals remains, internal organs, answer this question and subsequent question once for each species

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Divination through human communication:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is a human being the vehicle for the oracle:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is a human being the interpreter of the oracle:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the oracle interpreters of a specified sex/gender:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the oracle interpreters of a specified ethnicity:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the oracle interpreters of a specified class:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is sex-deprivation required:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are intoxicants required:

— No

Notes: Drugs were occasionally used, but were not required at all events.

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Physical ordeal required:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Divination through animal-behavior:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Wild-animals

— Yes

Notes: The historic documents describe, for example, the use of snakes, reptiles were placed inside a vessel and depending on their behavior it was possible to determine if a person had stolen or not.

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Domesticated animals

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Captive animals

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Incubation

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Healing magic

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Cleansing

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Offerings of models of body parts:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Expiation

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Do large-scale rituals take place:

— Yes

Notes: This was the most sacred precinct for the Mexica so this is where the largest rituals took place.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Do small-scale rituals take place:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ How often do these rituals take place:

—specify: As part of the monthly festivals or "veintenas" and also in one-time events including: consecration and inauguration of the building, termination rituals, during exceptional situations such as in times of drought or famine, etc.

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there synchronic practices:

— Field doesn't know

By: Diana Moreiras

↳ Are there intoxicants used during the ritual:

— Yes

By: Diana Moreiras

Institutions and Scriptures

Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned

with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Present full time

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Present part time

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific sex/gender:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific ethnicity:

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific class/cast:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are religious specialists dedicated to the place for life:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the religious specialists stratified in a hierarchical system:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is access within the space segregated by this hierarchy:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Bureaucracy

Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

— Field doesn't know

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

Are there scriptures associated with this place:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are they written:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are they written at this place:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are they oral:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Is there a story associated with the origin and/or construction of this place:

— Yes

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are there religious specialists in charge of interpreting the scriptures:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

↳ Are the scriptures part of the building/place:

— No

By: Israel Elizalde Mendez

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