

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ
WORLD HERITAGE LIST N° 414

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : The pre-Hispanic city of Teotihuacan

Location : State of Mexico

State Party : Mexico

Date : December 2, 1986

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, II, III, IV and VI if a management plan for the valley is officially adopted by the authorities.

C) JUSTIFICATION

Located 48 kilometers northeast of Mexico City, Teotihuacan is one of the oldest known archaeological sites in Mexico. The first surveys date from 1864, and the first excavations from 1884. Certain monuments were restored in 1905-1910, such as the Pyramid of the Sun for which its discoverer Leopoldo Batres arbitrarily reconstituted a fifth tier. Since 1962, archaeological research has been coordinated by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) which, while encouraging spectacular discoveries (Palacio de Quetzalmariposa, the cave under the Pyramid of the Sun), has instigated a more rigorous policy concerning identification and supervision of excavations in the immediate environs of the ceremonial zone.

Although human occupation of the valley of Teotihuacan began before the Christian era, it was only between the 1st and the 7th centuries A.D. that the Teotihuacanos settled in concentrated numbers on the present site and gradually built up a holy city of impressive dimensions. The city was razed by fire and subsequently abandoned during the 7th century.

The location of the first sanctuary, the Pyramid of the Sun (built on a cave discovered in 1971), was calculated on the position of the sun at its zenith, and applied astronomical logic determined the organization of the space : the Avenue of the Dead was drawn out perpendicularly to the principal axis of the solar temple. The Pyramid of the Moon, to the north, the "Citadel" and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl to the southeast became one by one the borders of a processional avenue 40 meters wide and 2 kilometers long.

At the peak of its development (the archaeologists' period of Teotihuacan III, from c.300-600 A.D.), the city stretched out over 36 square kilometers. Outside the ceremonial centre, which, despite its imposing size, represents only 10% of the total surface, excavations have revealed palaces and residential quarters that are of great interest at Tetitla, Atetelco, Yayahuala, Zacuala to the west, and Xolalpan, Tepantitla and others to the east.

The exceptional quality of the archaeological site of Teotihuacan permits us to recommend its nomination on the basis of criteria I, II, III, IV and VI.

- **Criterion I.** The ceremonial ensemble of Teotihuacan represents a unique artistic achievement as much by the enormous size of the monuments (the Pyramid of the Sun, built on a 350 meter square terrace, measures 225 x 222 meters at the base, and is 75 meters high, for a total volume of 1 million cubic meters) as by the strictness of a layout based on cosmic harmony. The art of the Teotihuacanos was the most developed among the classic civilizations of Mexico. Here it is expressed in its successive and complementary aspects : the dry and obsessive geometry of the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon contrasts with the sculpted and painted decor of an exceptional richness of the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent.

- **Criterion II.** The influence of the first of the great Mesoamerican classic civilizations was exerted over the whole of the central region of Mexico, in Yucatan and as far away as Guatemala (the site of Kaminaljuyu) during the period of Teotihuacan III.

- **Criterion III.** Much larger than the narrow zone of the ceremonial centre, the archaeological site of Teotihuacan corresponds to a city of at least 25,000 inhabitants. Teotihuacan and its valley bear unique testimony on the pre-urban structures of ancient Mexico.

- **Criterion IV.** Lining the immense Avenue of the Dead, the unique group of sacred monuments and places of worship at Teotihuacan (the Pyramids of the Sun, the Moon, and Quetzalcoatl and the Palaces of Quetzalmariposa, of the Jaguars, of Yayahuala, and others) constitutes an outstanding example of a pre-Columbian ceremonial centre.

- **Criterion VI.** Following the destruction and abandonment of the city towards 650 A.D., the ruins were imbued with legend. The Aztec name of Teotihuacan means "the place where the gods were created". According to writings from the 16th century, sacrifices practiced by Moctezuma every twenty days on the site attested to the persistence of beliefs which made Teotihuacan a sacred place of exceptional value.

Very special protection ought to be given to this unique property. At an hour's drive from Mexico City, the beautiful valley of Teotihuacan is choice prey both to heavy development projects and

unbridled urbanization. An airport project which would have irreparably spoiled the site appears to have definitively been abandoned. However, there is a plan to create dormitory cities right in the valley of Teotihuacan and the presidentes municipales of the villages are still trying to attract residents within a zone which is as yet - but for how much longer? - relatively free of construction.

Having noted with satisfaction that the Government of the State of Mexico is fully aware of this critical situation, ICOMOS would like to see a management plan quickly adopted that would conform to the proposals of the INAH as published in 1984 in volume no.3 of the Cuadernos de Arquitectura Mesoamericana.

ICOMOS furthermore draws attention to the need to protect the slopes and the crests of the mountains that frame the Teotihuacan site, where the grandiose pyramids were conceived to blend with the scale of the landscape and the natural horizon. An environmental protection zone ought to be created, without encroaching on the various archaeological zones non aedificandi that are already planned.

ICOMOS, April 1987