

## MEXICO

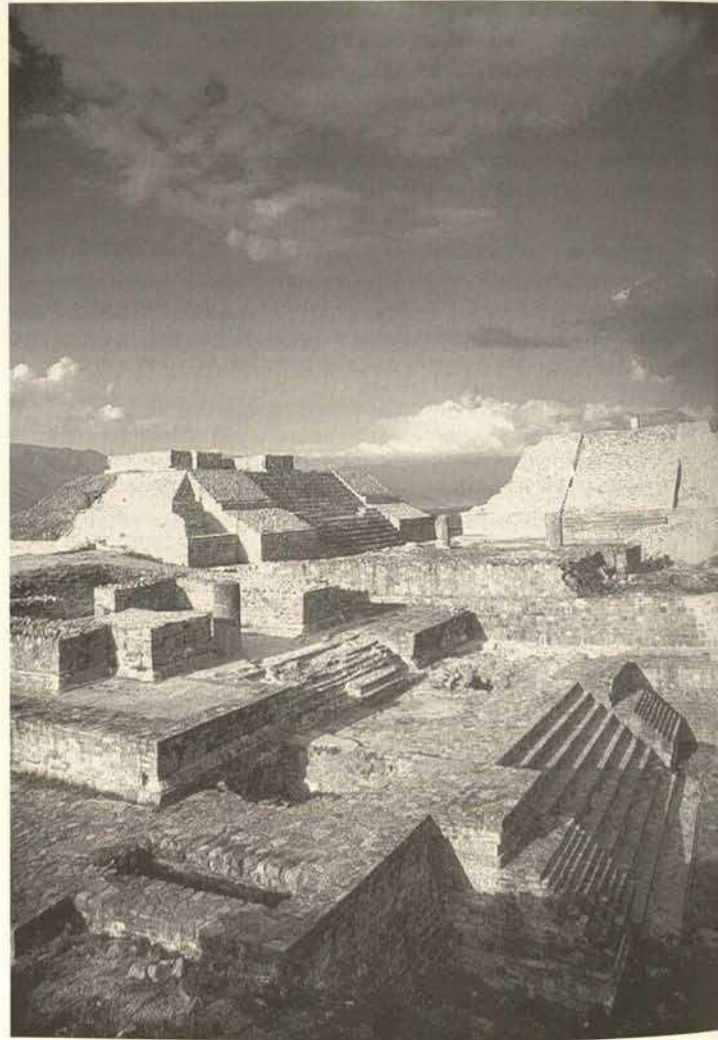
### World Heritage at Risk within Mexico

#### Historic Centre of Mexico City and Xochimilco

This World Heritage property was inscribed on the World Heritage List on 11 December 1987. It is found at the 'heart' of Mexico City, one of the largest and most populated cities in the world. These characteristics contribute to a number of problems that are threatening the conservation of monuments and buildings in the historic centre. The main concerns are commercial activities and the lack of tenants for many of the buildings, compounded by the subsidence of the old lakebed on which the city is built.

One of the most remarkable monuments in the historic centre is the Catedral Metropolitana. The construction of this important building commenced in the 16th century and continued through to the 19th century. It has suffered severe damage due to the subsidence of the subsoil of the city, but works are currently being undertaken to remedy this problem. The project 'Corrección Geométrica de la Catedral', which commenced 10 years ago, has achieved impressive success and we now consider that the structural stability of the building has been dramatically improved. The risk, however, has not been removed and the significant cultural value of the building is threatened due to technical difficulties in the restoration work, and the ongoing threat from seismic activity in the area.

Xochimilco lies 28 kilometres to the south and is the only remaining reminder of the lacustrine landscape of the Aztec capital. On the edge of the residual lake, and among a network of small canals, can still be found some 'chinampas' – the floating gardens so admired by the Spanish. This half-natural, half-artificial landscape is today an ecological reserve, which includes a 500-hectare heritage reserve. This area is threatened by its proximity to a large urban centre, which is expanding out of its existing boundaries. In addition, the landscape is being degraded by polluting material that originates in other parts of the city, threatening fauna and the delicate ecological balance. Efforts are currently being expended to prevent both urban expansion and pollution of the area, and to control development at a level more appropriate to the heritage value of Xochimilco.



Archaeological site of Monte Albán



Mexico City, Catedral Metropolitana

## The Earliest 16<sup>th</sup>-century Monasteries on the Slopes of Popocatepétl

The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List on 17 December 1994. It encompasses fourteen monasteries. Although a greater number of buildings survive intact, these examples were included in the listing for their representative character. Of the listed structures, the Franciscan monastery of Tochimilco lies the nearest to a volcanic crater that has recently become active. Although not in the area of greatest danger (within a radius of 5 kilometres) it lies within an area nominated as being of medium danger, and identified as Risk Type 2 in CENAPRED (more than 15 kilometres from the crater). Its situation is clearly critical, not only because of the potential of lava impact, but also due to the ongoing earth tremors associated with seismic activity. Financial assistance has already been provided through the World Heritage Fund, and this has been applied to improving the conditions of this important monument. The conservation work has been included in the Program for the Rehabilitation of Historic Monuments damaged by the 1999 earthquakes, sponsored through the resources of the FONDEN Natural Disaster Fund.

## The Historic Centre of Oaxaca and the Archaeological Site of Monte Albán

The archaeological site of Monte Albán, inscribed on the World Heritage List on 11 December 1987, is built over a mountain system near the city of Oaxaca de Juárez. Due to the proximity of the city, the site is being encroached by urban growth that is threatening to expand into territories that have potential archaeological value. At this time, ICOMOS is endeavouring to co-ordinate agreement for appropriate action and control across federal, State and municipal authorities – a particularly complex task as the archaeological area comes under the administration of four separate municipalities.

ICOMOS Mexico



Tower of San Augustin in Puebla after the earthquake of 1999 (see also *Heritage at Risk Report 2000*)

The same tower during its repair in 2001

