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Aztec pyramid ruins found in Mexico City



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Archaeologists have discovered what they think are ruins of an Aztec pyramid razed by vengeful Spanish conquerors in what is now one of Mexico City's most crime-ridden districts.

Construction workers unearthed ancient walls in the busy Iztapalapa neighbourhood in June, and government archaeologists said on Wednesday they believe they may be part of the main pyramid of the Aztec city, destroyed by conquistador Hernan Cortes in the 16th century.

Iztapalapa, now infamous for violent crime and drug dealing, has grown into a sprawling, poor district of the capital, obscuring the ruins.

"We knew the general location but couldn't explore because it's a big urban area," said government archaeologist Jesus Sanchez, who is director of the site.

Iztapalapa's ruler, Cuiclahuac, nearly annihilated Cortes and his Spanish troops in 1520 in what became known as the Sad Night. After eventual victory, Cortes destroyed the city.

Sanchez hopes he has found the city's main pyramid just below the neighbourhood's central plaza and garden. He and his team will spend more than a year investigating before deciding whether to excavate.

Mexico City is littered with pre-Hispanic ruins. In October, archeologists in the city's central Zocalo square unearthed a 15th century Aztec altar and a 12-ton stone idol just yards from choking downtown traffic.

The Aztecs, a warlike and deeply religious people who built monumental works, ruled an empire stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean and encompassing much of modern-day central Mexico.

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