

Mexico to bury archaeological find because of virus costs

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The costs of dealing with the coronavirus pandemic have forced Mexican archaeologists to re-bury a unusual find that combined colonial and pre-Hispanic features.

The National Institute of Anthropology and History had announced in 2019 that it found a flood control tunnel on the outskirts of Mexico City that had Spanish construction techniques but carved Aztec symbols embedded in it.

The institute had planned to make an exhibit of the strange tunnel, which was apparently built in the early 1600s. It replaced an earlier Aztec flood-control system built in the 1400s to protect Mexico City, then an island surrounded by shallow lakes, against periodic floods. After the Spanish conquered the Aztec capital in 1521, they unwisely destroyed parts of the pre-Hispanic system.

But the institute said Thursday that archaeologists would simply cover the finds with dirt again, in hopes that someday it would have enough money to build a display for it.

The institute said in a statement that "it must be considered that the world-wide COVID-19 health emergency forced all levels of government to place priority on assigning money to health care for the population. For that reason, the archaeological project had to be postponed."

Mexico has had to expand its woefully inadequate hospital system and buy vaccines and medicines to deal with the pandemic, which has resulted in 237,626 test-confirmed deaths. Because the country has not wanted to buy large numbers of tests, many people have died without being tested, and the real death toll is believed to be around 360,000.

The tunnel was discovered in an ancient flood-control wall during the construction of a confined-lane bus service line.

Experts speculate the pre-Hispanic symbols may have been placed in the wall because Indigenous laborers were the main work force during its construction.

Carved pre-Hispanic stones were sometimes used in colonial-era churches and houses, in part because the Spanish used rubble from demolished Indigenous structures as building material. But the Aztec stones found in the [tunnel](#) appeared to be prominently and intentionally displayed in the structure.

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