

# Passageway discovery in Mexico could lead to Aztec ruler's tomb

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Tourists visit the Templo Mayor archaeological site in Mexico City, Mexico, Dec. 1, 2015. AP/Eduardo Verdugo

MEXICO CITY, Mexico — A tunnel-like passageway that could lead to the resting place of an Aztec ruler has been found in Mexico. The Aztecs were a powerful group of people in what is now Mexico and Central America.

The Aztecs ruled from 1325 to 1521. They are believed to have cremated, or burned, the remains of their leaders. However, the final resting place of the remains has never been found. Experts said the new passageway discovery could change that.

The dig was at Templo Mayor in Mexico City. The site was a temple for prayer. Today they are ruins. A team discovered a 27-foot-long (8.4 meter) tunnel under the temple. The team was led by Leonardo Lopez Lujan, who studies the remains of ancient times. The tunnel leads into the center of a platform. Dead rulers were believed to have been cremated there.

## Tunnel Offers Hint Of Ceremony

The tunnel had been sealed tight by a 3-ton piece of rock. Experts lifted it in 2013. They found gold and bones inside. Humans might have been killed as an offering to Aztec gods.

One expert found signs that a passageway appeared to lead deeper into a platform. The platform was known as the Cuauhxicalco (pronounced kwow-she-KAL-koh). It was used for ceremonies. Written reports showed that rulers' remains were burned there.

The passageway was about 18 inches wide and 5 feet high. At the end of the passageway, there are two sealed doorways.

Workers filled the passageway with dirt, and it stayed like that for about two years. Work was going on at one of the other doorways to the ruins.

That work is almost finished. Lopez Lujan is hopeful he will be able to start digging again in 2016.

He wants to go into the passageway and find out what is behind the two sealed doors. His team guesses that there could be containers holding the remains of Aztec rulers. However, they could also be wrong, he said.

## Mexico's Pride

It would make sense for rulers' remains to be kept there. Templo Mayor was the most significant place of prayer in the Aztecs' most important city, Tenochtitlan. Archaeologists have been searching for graves there for years.

In 2007, experts found underground rooms. They were located below a huge stone block carved with a picture of Tlaltecuhli (tlahl-tay-KOO-tee), the Aztec god of the earth. At the time, Lopez Lujan thought a ruler's resting place might lie beneath. Such a place was not found.

Any artifacts linked to a ruler would bring great pride to Mexico. The country has tried to have some Aztec artifacts returned. Museums in other countries have some of them.

## The Great Aztec Rulers

Lopez Lujan is being careful. He says the idea of graves at the end of the passageway is still a guess.

Lopez Lujan and his team hope they will find two small rooms, he said. The rooms might hold the remains of some rulers of Tenochtitlan, like Moctezuma I.

Moctezuma I, the second Aztec king, ruled from about 1440 to 1469. Moctezuma II came after him. He was the ruler who first fought against Hernan Cortes, the Spanish explorer. Cortes led the Spanish into Mexico. The Spanish conquered the Aztecs. Soon after, the Aztec Empire ended.

**Quiz**

- 1 Which paragraph in the section "Mexico's Pride" tells how the people of Mexico would react to finding the remains of Aztec leaders?
  
- 2 According to the section "Tunnel Offers Hint Of Ceremony," what has been found in the tunnel?
  - (A) bones and gold
  - (B) remains of a king
  - (C) ruins of a temple
  - (D) another passageway
  
- 3 Which sentence from the section "The Great Aztec Rulers" BEST summarizes the article's main idea?
  - (A) He says the idea of graves at the end of the passageway is still a guess.
  - (B) The rooms might hold the remains of some rulers of Tenochtitlan, like Moctezuma I.
  - (C) Moctezuma I, the second Aztec king, ruled from about 1440 to 1469. Moctezuma II came after him.
  - (D) He was the ruler who first fought against Hernan Cortes, the Spanish explorer.
  
- 4 Which of the following selections from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
  - (A) However, the final resting place of the remains has never been found. Experts said the new passageway discovery could change that.
  - (B) It was used for ceremonies. Written reports showed that rulers' remains were burned there.
  - (C) It would make sense for rulers' remains to be kept there. Templo Mayor was the most significant place of prayer in the Aztecs' most important city, Tenochtitlan.
  - (D) Lopez Lujan is being careful. He says the idea of graves at the end of the passageway is still a guess.