



Miami Herald

1,600-year-old temple to mysterious Roman god unearthed in Germany. Take a look



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Torch lights flicker in the underground space, illuminating the stone statues and casting shadows on the gathering. Military men sit on brick benches and look at the stone carving. Looking back at them through the lantern light is their god — a figure simultaneously well-known and mysterious.

The cult scene feels part ominous, part reverent and entirely like part of a Netflix documentary. In reality, these shadowy gatherings took place across the ancient Roman world.

Archaeologists in Trier, Germany, recently uncovered a [1,600-year-old temple](#) where this Roman cult gathered, according to an April 12 news release from the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage in Rhineland-Palatinate.

The archaeologists unearthed a 4-foot-tall stone relief statue of a figure known as Cautes, experts said. Cautes was a torch bearer for Mithras, the ancient Roman god of light, and symbolized sunrises and sunsets.

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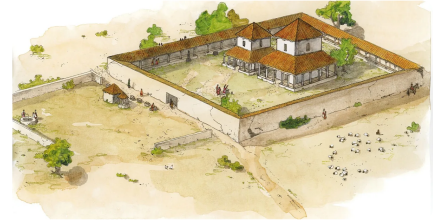


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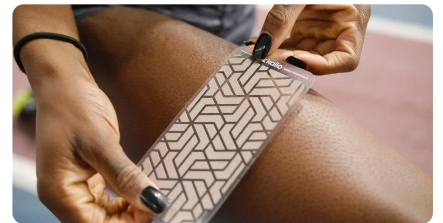
Live Science

The statue showed Cautes standing upright and looking left, photos from the [City Administration of Trier](#) show. His now-broken right hand is poised, perhaps mid-gesture or perhaps holding a long-gone object.



The statue of Cautes, a torch bearer of Mithras, found at the site.

Based on the statue and other Roman coins found nearby, archaeologists identified the site as an underground temple or cult space where people worshiped Mithras, the release said. The site was abandoned and destroyed by the end of the fourth century A.D.



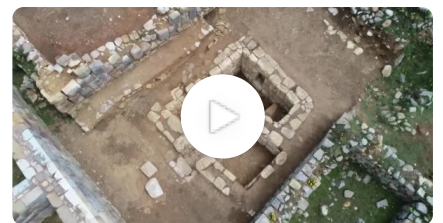
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The cult of Mithras was very popular among Roman military personnel, the release said.

Cult spaces were typically built in [caves or underground](#), according to Südwestrundfunk, a German news outlet. These sanctuaries usually included a depiction of Mithras slaying a bull.

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Archaeologists excavate the temple site.

The cult functioned under a shroud of secrecy, Südwestrundfunk reported. Despite Mithrac temples being found throughout the Roman empire, the exact beliefs and practices of the cult remain mysterious, the outlet reported.

Archaeologists in Trier have moved the statue to a museum for restoration and preservation, according to the release. Excavations of the temple began in February and are ongoing. The city plans to build a new fire station at the site.



Coins and other fragmented relics unearthed at the site.



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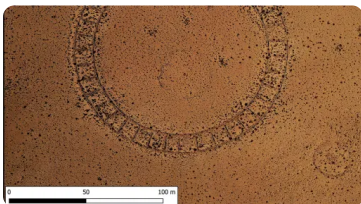
Rhineland-Palatinate, the City Administration of Trier and the article from Südwestrundfunk (SWR).

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