

Ancient goddess sculpture found by farmer in Gaza Strip

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A Palestinian farmer found a rare 4,500-year-old stone sculpture while working his land in the southern Gaza Strip, ruling Hamas authorities announced Monday.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said the 22-centimeter (6.7-inch) tall limestone head is believed to represent the Canaanite goddess Anat and is estimated to be dated to around 2,500 B.C.

"Anat was the goddess of love, beauty, and war in the Canaanite mythology," said Jamal Abu Rida, the ministry's director, in a statement.

Gaza, a narrow enclave on the Mediterranean Sea, boasts a trove of antiquities and [archaeological sites](#) as it was a major land route connecting [ancient civilizations](#) in Egypt, the Levant and Mesopotamia.

But discovered antiquities frequently disappear and development projects are given priority over the preservation of archaeological sites beneath the urban sprawl needed to accommodate 2.3 million people packed into the densely populated territory.

In 2017, the militant Hamas group, which had seized control of the Gaza Strip a decade earlier, destroyed large parts of a rare Canaanite settlement to make way for a [housing development](#) for its own employees.

And to date, a life-size statue of the Greek god Apollo that had surfaced

in 2013 and then disappeared has yet to be found.

In January, bulldozers digging for an Egyptian-funded housing project unearthed the [ruins of a tomb](#) dating back to the Roman era.

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