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Lebanese archaeologists work at an excavation site where Phoenician pottery was found



## Phoenician-era cemetery found in Lebanon

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TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — A Phoenician-era cemetery has been uncovered in Lebanon's coastal town of Tyre, officials said on Wednesday, adding that the find could provide key information about the seafaring civilisation.

"This discovery represents for now the most important source of information to better understand the history of the Phoenicians in this region," said Ali Badawi, an archaeologist and head of antiquities in Tyre, which was a major Phoenician seaport from about 2000 BC onwards through the Roman period.

He told AFP that the cemetery, found nearly intact at the eastern edge of the town, dates to between the ninth and seventh centuries BC.

"The importance of this cemetery is that it is located in one of the main Phoenician towns," said Maria Aubet, a professor of archaeology who headed a team from Barcelona's Pompeu Fabra University which investigated the find along with Lebanese colleagues.

Badawi said that more than 60 pieces of hermetically sealed earthenware 50 centimetres (20 inches) deep were found scattered across a 300-square-metre (3,228-square-foot) area at the site. Inside the jars were charred bones.

"It was traditional in Phoenician times to burn the cadavers and the bones of the dead," Aubet said.

Researchers hope the bones will help shed some light on the diet and the social status of those buried at the site.

The site was first discovered in 1997 and an archaeological dig began four years ago but was interrupted in 2006 because of the July-August war between the militant Shiite Hezbollah group and Israel.

Tyre was the main city-state in ancient Phoenicia, which covered roughly the same area as modern-day Lebanon. Among the other main centres of the civilisation were Byblos, Sidon and what is now Beirut.

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