

Excavation planned for Phoenician city

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A Phoenician settlement on the Italian island of Sardinia may soon yield some of its secrets to archaeologists.

The port of Othoca is believed to lie at the bottom of a lake separated from the Mediterranean by a narrow spit of land, the Italian news agency Ansa reported. The modern town of Santa Giusta also occupies some of the ancient city.

Carlo del Vais of Cagliari University plans to dig in a small section of the lake, an area where about 100 amphorae -- or large clay jars -- appear to rest on a wooden platform. The Phoenician layers are covered by a thick layer of mud.

The Phoenicians spread into the western Mediterranean from their home on the coast of what is now Lebanon, Syria and Israel. They established trading posts that sometimes evolved into major cities, the best-known being Carthage.

Previous excavations at Othoca turned up 50 amphorae and the first Phoenician chamber tomb found in Italy.

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