

Phoenician temple found in Sicily

28 February 2006

Archeologists say they have found the remains of a "unique" ancient Phoenician temple in Sicily.

"You have to go all the way to Amrit in Syria to find a similar one," Lorenzo Nigro of the Rome University archeology team told the Italian news agency ANSA.

The temple was discovered last year when part of a lagoon near the Phoenician city of Motya -- now called Mozia -- was drained.

The "monumental" temple was found on the westernmost tip of Sicily near Marsala. Archeologists say they've also found columns of a type used by the Phoenicians on Cyprus, as well as fragments of an obelisk.

Motya, which means "wool-spinning center," was founded in the 8th century B.C., about a century after the founding of the most famous Phoenician colony in the ancient world, Carthage, in Tunisia, ANSA reported.

Archaeologists say the Phoenicians were a trading people who formed a massive commercial empire across the Mediterranean from their bases in modern-day Lebanon. Among cities they founded are Palermo, Sicily; Cadiz and Malaga, Spain; Tangiers, Morocco; and Tripoli in Libya.

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