

Archaeologists discover link to Lebanon's commercial past

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SIDON: Archaeologists at the "Freres" excavation site near the fortress in Sidon have unearthed a plate that holds exciting clues to Lebanon's linguistic and commercial past.

Archaeology expert and field supervisor Dr. Claude Serhal announced the discovery of a small plate with cuneiform writing dating back to the fourth century B.C. She said it is the first discovery of its kind in Sidon and the third in Lebanon. The writing proves that cuneiform was used in

Sidon for trade operations, contracts, and correspondence.

According to preliminary studies by the British experts, the clay plate was made locally. It is five centimeters long and

|| Clay plate shows that cuneiform was used in Sidon for trade purposes

three centimeters wide and has writing on both sides. Deciphering has not yet been completed.

More than 30 Lebanese and British specialists, volunteers

and workers are currently working on the dig. The site is owned by the Antiquities Directorate General.

Excavation work is expected to be completed by the end of July, said Serhal. A documentary entitled "Sidon: 5,000 years" is currently under preparation about the location and the importance of the discoveries. The documentary is expected to be screened on November 25 at the British Museum.

During the past seven years, 60 graves dating back to the Canaanite era were unearthed in the area. These graves revealed that children were

buried in jars, whereas adults and warriors were buried in tombs of rock and clay with silver jewelry.

Important objects dating back to 1,400 B.C. were also unearthed. These items, such as a colored ceramic vase with hieroglyphs imported from Egypt, provide evidence of the existence of trade relations between Egypt and Sidon.

The excavations, which are financed and supervised by the British Museum with the help of the British Academy and British businessmen from London, have so far cost about 100,000 pounds sterling.