



SEPTEMBER - 2022

PRESERVATION ♦ EDUCATION ♦ RESEARCH ♦ INSPIRE

Dear Member:

Welcome back! We hope you had a good summer. We are energized and ready for the Fall/Spring season ... **Our Calendar is complete** (see the web page) and all the lectures will be in person at the Selby Library in Sarasota. We are working on the logistics of a simulcast via ZOOM also. Stay tuned.

We start the season with Dr. Davide Tanasi of USF who is returning from Malta **after a summer of excavating a Roman Villa**. He is going to tell us all about it. He has been sharing photos and the story on Facebook all summer. It should be really interesting.

Thank you for being a Time Sifters member.

Darwin "Smitty" Smith, President

hmsbeagle22@gmail.com

September 21 - at 6:00 PM at the Selby Library in downtown Sarasota



Melite Civitas Romana Project: *Excavation of a Roman Villa in Malta*

Dr. Davide Tanasi

Professor of Digital Humanities &

*Director of the Institute for Digital Exploration (IDEx), Dept. of History
University of South Florida*

In 1881, the remains of a large peristyle house containing rooms adorned with very fine mosaic floors in a late Hellenistic style were uncovered at Rabat in Malta. Excavation carried out in 1920-1925 pointed out that the **Domus Romana** must have been occupied in the mid-first century CE by a person who undertook the expense of adorning it with statues of the Emperor Claudius and his family.

In the summer 2019, after almost a century, a long term international collaborative interdisciplinary research project (**Melite Civitas Romana Project**) was formed to reassess the site. It started out

with an overall remote sensing campaign including **Terrestrial Laser Scanning and Drone Photogrammetry** of the entire archaeological site and **Digital micro-photogrammetry** to create **high quality 3D models** of the mosaic floors of rooms C, D, E and F. In addition, 128 archaeological artifacts kept in the *Archaeological Museum of the Domus Romana* were 3D digitized thus creating an online collection for global public enjoyment. The exploration finally resumed after two years in summer 2022, focusing on four areas in the lots of land adjacent the main site, recently



Photos: Davide Tanasi.

acquired by the Maltese government, and previously investigated through geophysical prospection, with the aim to define the full planimetric extent of the architectural complex.

Davide Tanasi is an archaeological scientist and digital archaeologist specialist of ancient Sicily and Malta.

Instructions for real time ZOOM viewing:

Register in advance for this meeting:

Go to the Time Sifters website, www.timesifters.org and click on the registration url.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Notes from a Time Sifter

Tel Ashkelon: Ancient City on the Mediterranean Coast of the Levant

By Evelyn Mangie, Time Sifters Board Member

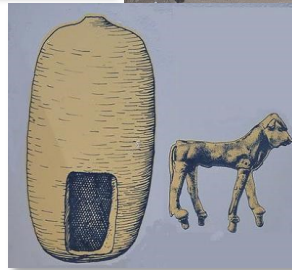
Tel Ashkelon is the mound of the remains of an ancient city on the Mediterranean coast of the Levant.

There is evidence for occupation there from as early as the Stone Age. After the Neolithic period, it grew into an impressive commercial center for maritime trade from Cypress and the Aegean.

Ashkelon's name probably comes from the same west Semitic root as "shekel" ("š-q-l") meaning "to weigh," attesting to Ashkelon's commercial activities that made it an immensely important city for more than 3,000 years.

Archaeologists have revealed its long history. **Lady Hester Stanhope** in 1815 was the first to excavate here, and the Palestine Exploration Fund sent **John Garstang** and **W. J. Phythian-Adams** who dug from 1920-1922, but it wasn't until 1985 that thorough excavations began. These were conducted by **the Leon Levy Expedition** that began 17 seasons of digs. They were led by **Daniel Master** of Wheaton College (1985-2006) followed by Harvard's **Lawrence Stager** (2007-2016).

They found that by the Middle Bronze period (2000-1550 BCE), Ashkelon was already a thriving seaport, **the oldest and largest in Canaan**. A 20 foot road led from the city gate to the harbor that linked the Levant to Mediterranean markets. In addition, Ashkelon sat along a trade road that carried goods from Egypt to Anatolia (Turkey). Ashkelon's 50 foot-high



walls enclosed a town of about 150 acres with a population of ca. 15,000 people. The walls were so thick (150 feet) that the eight-foot entrance to the gate was like a barrel vault, the oldest vault ever found.

Excavations also revealed Canaanite religious traditions (El/Baal, Astarte). The city was growing into a major commercial port under its own government until Egyptian New Kingdom (1539-1075 BCE) took over Canaan, and **the Egyptian king, Thutmose III** (1479-1425) put this important city under Egyptian control. As a vassal state, Ashkelon kept its Canaanite traditions but had to swear their allegiance to the Pharaoh (see 14th century BCE

Amarna letters from King Yidya). Egyptian influence was strong until a major social collapse between ca. 1200 and 1150 BCE changed the political and economic life of the entire east Mediterranean area. Invaders that the Egyptians called the "Sea Peoples" descended upon all of the eastern Mediterranean kingdoms. Egyptian pharaoh, Rameses III claimed to have defeated the

invaders, but in reality, all Egypt did was survive. Other kingdoms, like the Mycenaeans and the Hittites, did not survive, and all (including Egypt) lost their hold on foreign territories.



Photos: Wikipedia; Ashkelon National Park

That left a vacuum in the Levant that was filled by small independent kingdoms (**Philistia, Judah, Israel, Phoenicia**). Southern Canaan was occupied by the Philistines (possibly one of the Sea Peoples) in 1150 BCE. They created a confederacy of the five independent city-states (**Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath**). A market from this Philistine era has been uncovered at Ashkelon, with shops and warehouses for international

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A Time Sifters Book Review

The Dawn of Everything

A New History of Humanity by: David Graeber & David Wengrow

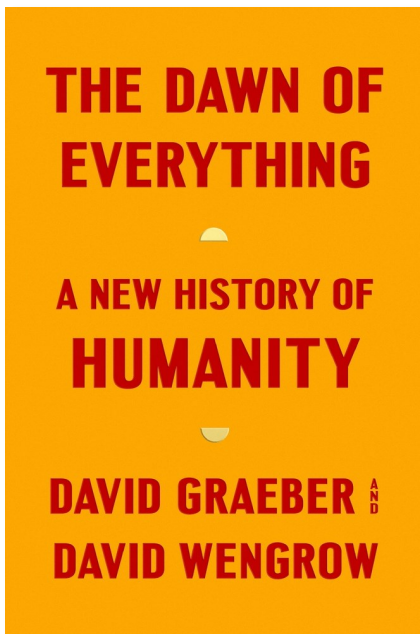
Publisher: Allen Lane; Pages: 704; ISBN: 978-0-241-40242-9 ... Review by: Dr. Uzi Baram, Time Sifters Member

Archaeology is not just for archaeologists, as members of Time Sifters know. **David Graeber**, who developed the reputation for thinking expansively in anthropology on wide-ranging topics like the history of debt, contemporary employment, and anarchism, became intrigued by the details from archaeological publications that conflicted with the typical story for humans evolving from egalitarian gather-hunters to the back-breaking labor of farming to urbanites ruled by kings and queens to our present-day inequalities.

Graeber teamed up with archaeologist **David Wengrow** to organize the archaeological insights into a new history for humanity. Not a modest endeavor. Titled *The Dawn of Everything*, Graeber and Wengrow use 700 pages to advocate for an up-to-date empirically based history that upturns previous assumptions on history's trajectory.

The Dawn of Everything is worth reading, as positive reviews in dozens of publications ranging from the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* to *The Atlantic* and *The Nation* all indicate. The *Guardian* review is subtitled "inequality is not the price of civilization".

Graeber and Wengrow take on *Enlightenment* ideas on human nature. For several generations, educated people looked at human history through either the lens of Thomas Hobbes—"the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" or Jean-Jacques Rousseau—"Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains".



believe the most ancient period as egalitarian. And from early cities, they highlight communal decision-making. There are enlightening details on sites like the ancient cities of Taljanky, Maidenetske, Neblivka in today's Ukraine; rich descriptions contrast Tlaxcala with Tenochtitlan. *The Dawn of Everything* is the chance to learn about those places and people in a new light.

Whether we believe the original nature of humans was dreadful or edenic, Graeber and Wengrow argue that both are wrong. They use archaeological evidence to show there is no linear history from egalitarianism to social inequalities or from ancient violence to today's warfare. The evidence from archaeology, they show, is clear: people experimented throughout our species' history with ways to be organized. The question is not the origin of inequalities but why we got stuck with hierarchies.

The Dawn of History is a theory book and organizes a tremendous amount of data. The argument is illuminated by the authors' embrace of what typically were considered exceptions, with a key example being **the Calusa of Charlotte Harbor** – better understood on their own merits than as an exception to the standard cultural evolutionary model for human history. From the Paleolithic, they point to the rich graves that

My archaeological research career, mostly focused on the recent past, has intersected with grappling with inequalities that ebbed and flowed through the centuries, pieces of the puzzle that did not fit the simple model of ever increasing inequality. This book points scholars toward new approaches and everyone to carefully consider the implications of asking better questions about deep human history. Reading the book is a commitment and definitely a worthwhile endeavor. The better we understand the human past the more likely we can avoid a nihilist approach to the trajectory of human history and suggest brighter futures for our social world.



Continued from page 2 ...

Tel Ashkelon ...

goods, and weights that determined the value of silver used in trade. Evidence shows that the Philistines continued with their Canaanite heritage but also adopted many Mediterranean customs, styles, and architecture. Philistine culture and DNA from burials indicate a diverse and integrated population. But in the early first millennium, new kingdoms in the east rose to power. **The Assyrians** brought the Philistine cities under their hegemony in 734 BCE. **Ashkelon, Ekron, and Ashdod** fought back, allying with Judah and other small Levantine kingdoms, but the rebellion failed, and all continued to pay tribute to the Assyrian kings. In 621 BCE, the Medes joined the Babylonians to conquer the Assyrians and all of their Levantine kingdoms, and in 604 BCE, **the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II** destroyed Ashkelon ending the Philistine era.

After that, the entire Levant fell to **the Persians** (539 BCE) under **Cyrus the Great**, then to **Alexander**



(332 BCE), then the Greek Ptolemies and Seleucids (312 BCE). Ashkelon gained its independence in 104 BCE and maintained it under several **Hasmonean** rulers of Judah. In 64 BCE, **the Romans** made it a vassal but allowed it to be a "free and allied city". **Herod the Great** (r. 37-4 BCE) rebuilt the city including the Roman basilica and other public buildings. **Byzantine Romans** (330 CE) made it the seat of a school of Hellenistic philosophy until the Arabs conquered it in 636 CE. The European Crusaders captured Ashkelon in 1153 CE and built a

citadel, but Saladin recaptured it in 1191. Christian and Arab armies continued to fight over the City until it was totally destroyed by Egyptian Mamluks in 1270 and it was abandoned. A small Arab

village grew up a mile north of the ruins called Majdal. In 1950 the new Israeli government

renamed it **Ashkelon**. The Arabs still call it **al-Majdal Asqalan**.

The Israel Nature & Heritage Foundation of America, the Israel National Parks Authority, and the Leon Levy Foundation are restoring Tel Ashkelon's ramparts, gates, statues, and other artifacts that tell its history. **The park is expected to open in 2023.** Type in "leon levy Ashkelon excavations" for pictures of artifacts, and see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBOPxEMGLPw> for a one-hour guided tour of the site.

Join Reflections of Manatee in celebrating the reopening of Manatee Mineral Spring Park

Saturday, September 10 11:00am -2:00pm
14th Street East and 2nd Ave East

- 11:00 am - Remarks from Public Officials
- 11:30 am - Musician at Gazebo - *Erol Oz*
- 12:30 pm - Angola Presentation by *Professor Uzi Baram and Vickie Oldham*
- 12:45 pm - Music at the Gazebo - *Combo Fusion*
- 1:15 - Old Manatee A to Z Book Presentation by *Ryan G. Van Cleve* and *Don Brandes* at book tent
- 11:00 - Reflections of Manatee exhibits by *Sherry Svekis* at Reflections of Manatee Museum (south side of park)
- 11:00 - Self-Guided Park Scavenger hunts available at the Realize Bradenton tent

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