



DECEMBER-2024

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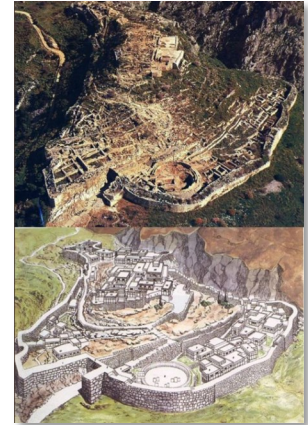
Dear Member:

Things are getting back to normal!!! Big Thank You to Board Members Jack Brown & Ken Woodworth for filling in for me at the November meeting. Good job!

Our lead story this month is the third of the Grant Winners Field School Reports. Sarah Hassam of USF tells us about her experiences in Malta.

The Spring 2024 - 2025 Season starts next month with *"The Year in Review"* by Dr. David Miano. Please join us every month for coffee, cookies and powerful lectures.

Darwin "Smitty" Smith, President
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Mycenae Bronze Age citadel built on a hill 900 feet above sea level, Greece, 1600-1100 BC.

Cornelia Futor Memorial Student Research Grant

The Melite Civitas Romana Project: Field School in Rabat, Malta

By Sarah Hassam, Grant Winner



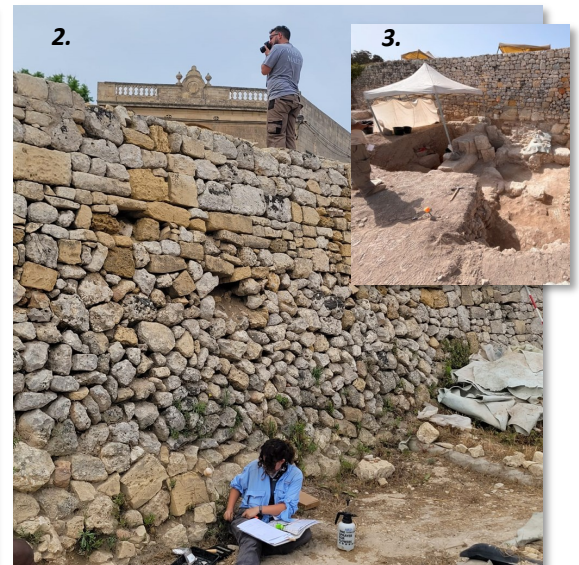
I arrived at Valletta International Airport (the Maltese islands' sole airport), located in the capital city on

the northeastern coast of Malta. With two other supervisors from the **Melite Civitas Romana Project** for the 2024 season, I hitched a taxi to Rabat, the city where I would be spending the month of June. Rabat, the city formerly settled by the Romans as "Melite", is where Malta derives its name.

The organizing bodies of the excavation of the Roman domus in Rabat are *Heritage Malta*, the nation's agency for cultural heritage management, and Intercontinental Archaeology, the international



Photos: University of South Florida



Photos:

1. **Partially excavated domestic structure located downhill from the Roman Domus**
2. **At the base of Medieval and Roman wall, Sarah Hassam works on documentation**
3. **USF's assigned trench. Excavations began in 2022 and will continue into 2025**

organization created by the archaeologists who direct the excavation. For three weeks we began excavation at the *Melite Civitas Romana project* (trans. "Roman City of Melite") at 7AM.

Continued on page 4 ...

Politics of the Past

Digging Up Hope: Israelis and Palestinians as Cousins

By Dr. Uzi Baram, UBHeritage LLC, Time Sifters Member

Increasingly, archaeologists are writing about community-building, social justice, and caring. There has always been an idealist strand among professional archaeologists, believing revealing the past will benefit society as differentiated from those seeking treasures and fame.

I write this short essay with unabashed idealism, focused on a part of the world that has received tremendous archaeological attention and has suffered soul-crushing cycles of violence and conflict, heightened by the horror of October 7th when thousands of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) militants invaded Israel to kill, rape, burn, and kidnap civilians and the too many months of war, civilian displacement, and massive casualties in Gaza. Yet, as an archaeologist I can state that what is occurring is not an eternal conflict, not an intractable battle.

The common representations stress differences. Yes, there are arguments for whether hummus is Palestinian or Israeli cuisine but Israelis and Palestinians both enjoy the chickpea dish as well as zaatar, pita, olive oil, and other foods of the region. Arabic and Hebrew are semitic languages. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are Abrahamic religions.

In the 1990s, I took on the archaeological question of what we can learn from the material culture of the Ottoman Empire (1513-1922). Across several publications, archaeological evidence drew attention to commonalities among the people of the eastern Mediterranean. Recent genetic studies have traced Y chromosome haplogroups for Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians



Photos: Wikipedia & Clara Amit, Israeli Antiquities Authority



back to the Bronze Age. The studies remind us that there are common ancestors for today's peoples, that Israelis and Palestinians are cousins.

The cousins have disagreements. The most prominent example consists of about 35 acres of Jerusalem. Known as Har haBayit - the Temple Mount, Haram al-Sharif - The Noble Sanctuary, the Mountain of the House of the Lord, and Jerusalem's holy esplanade, the hill is contested in every dimension imaginable, including history, symbolic meaning, even its name. As UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova famously stated in 2016: "*Different peoples worship the same places, sometimes under different names. The recognition, use of and respect for these names is paramount.*" That Jews, Christians, Muslims, and the international community all recognize this small artificially extended plateau as sacred is significant and is a lasting legacy of previous generations.

The archaeology of Jerusalem is contested because the past is seen as the key to legitimacy of contemporary claims to the land and the stones. But archaeological excavations bring out material

culture, not politics. One example from excavation is the Ottoman period tobacco pipe recovered in 2011 with the inscription "*Heart is language for the lover.*" Starting after the Columbian Exchange, tobacco smoking crossed gender and ethno-religious lines across the region: we know that someone made the tobacco pipe with the decorative saying, someone purchased and probably gave the tobacco pipe as a gift, a silent witness to what makes us human, a moment of love and connection that, for whatever reason, was left near the Temple Mount centuries ago.

Recognizing common experiences comes from ethical, community-conscious archaeology; a message from the ages that offers hope that contemporary divides are temporary, and people will live in peace when their history is known and respected. The Israeli/Palestinian divide is not unique - there are many places where people have been separated and set against each other in what seems, incorrectly, like eternal struggles. When done with care, archaeological evidence orients the past toward hope for a better future.

Sources & Further Reading: Available upon request.

In the News

The “Lord of the Flutes” Magnificent Tomb Discovered in Panama

By Smitty, Time Sifters Board Member. Sources: Arkeonews, CNN, & Smithsonian Magazine.

Archaeologists digging in *El Caño Archaeological Park* in Panama have uncovered the grave of a religious leader buried over 1,200 years ago alongside a cache of gold objects – and numerous other human remains. The tomb is of a Coclé lord buried around 750 to 800 CE. He was believed to have been around 30 to 40 years old when he died. The tomb is especially intriguing due to the presence of sacrificial attendants buried alongside the lord, indicating multiple and simultaneous burial practices

The tomb’s contents included five pectorals, belts made of gold beads, several gold bracelets and necklaces, as well as earrings in the form of human figures, and others made from the teeth of a sperm whale. Another earring in the shape of a double crocodile and a set of bone flutes.

The presence of musical instruments within the burial site, rather than weaponry, leads the archaeologists to think that the lord was likely a religious leader, so the research team has dubbed the individual “*Lord of the Flutes*”. The archaeologists found the body buried face down and on top of the body of a woman which is common in this time period in this region. Other researchers reported the discovery of human remains dating back more than 1,000 years buried in similar positioning at a nearby site called *Sitio Sierra*, in the same province as *El Caño*.

The Coclé people were a native group who lived in the central region of what is now Panama from about 200 BCE to 1550 CE. They are known for their pottery and metalwork, vibrant cultural life and intricate ceremonial



rituals. *El Caño Archaeological Park*, was built around 700 CE and abandoned around 1000 CE, has yielded significant archaeological discoveries.

Photos: Ministry of Culture of Panama

In addition to the known monoliths, the site includes a cemetery and a ceremonial area with wooden structures.

Continued from page 1 ...

The Melite Civitas Romana Project ...

Starting early is key to avoiding many hours in the direct sun.

Malta was largely deforested in prehistoric times, and tree vegetation is still scant aside from fruit orchards and decorative urban areas. Our team of 11 students and freelance professionals worked together in a single large trench of Area 3 of the excavation site, located downhill and Northwest from the Domus and museum, the primary structure of the aristocratic domestic complex.

Our field season was incredibly fast-paced, physically arduous, and intellectually fulfilling as Area 3's team uncovered more of the Roman domestic structure that was unearthed in 2023. This field season, with the discovery of a door threshold and a staircase, we are closer to answering questions concerning the relation of the space to adjacent structures and possible function. Although speculation is ongoing, characteristics of the structure point to a possible earlier chronology and Phoenician origin. The resulting finds of the 2024 season are still unpublished but we remain enthusiastic about future findings and are already excited to return in 2025.

As the trench supervisor I did a little bit of everything: schedule-keeping, primary documentation, overseeing of equipment, trench reference photography, and communications between upper leadership and the volunteer team. Perhaps my most important task was monitoring

archaeological finds, ensuring they were properly labeled and bagged before processing.

Heritage Malta's pottery lab is located at St. Paul's Catacombs in Rabat, about a 20 minute walk from the site of the Domus. Our Area would process finds that primarily included pottery, but also glass, bone, organic materials (insect casings, shells, seed pods), and construction materials, and would prepare charcoal and soil samples for future testing.

The Melite Civitas Romana Project is the highlight of my summers. Malta is a small island nation in the middle of the Med with an incredibly diverse history and fortunate to have cultural heritage institutions that do

terrific work in promoting its sites. Malta has something for anyone who appreciates archaeology and history, from prehistoric gigantic stone structures to palaces of the early modern age.

I owe so much personal and professional enrichment to the Maltese, and to the support I received from *Time Sifters Cornelia Futor Memorial Grant* for making it possible for me to return for the 2024 season.





Speakers for 2024/2025

All are at 6:00 PM live at the Selby Library
1331 First St., Sarasota

Time Sifters Archaeology Society is pleased to announce our 2024 - 2025 Fall schedule of presentations. All lectures will start at 6:00 PM and are free. Each presentation will be about one hour with time for questions and answers. Please come and join us.

January 15, 2025
Year in Review: What's been Discovered & What's being Talked About
Dr. David Miano

February 19
3D imaging of Pompeii
Eric Prendergast, RPA

March 19
"The Steamship St. Lucie: Lost in October 18, 1906"
Joshua Marano, M.A., RPA

April 16
Roman Villas
Dr. Denise Cali

May 21
"Fantastic Archaeology: What Inquiring Minds Should Know"
Dr. Rob Tykot

Photos: José Miguel Pérez-Gómez, archaeology.wiki, floridamemory, sketchfab, Sardiniaeveled, Pinterest

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