

Time Sifters

November 2013



A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

PO Box 5283, Sarasota FL 34277

Editor: Sherry Svekis • ssvekis@gmail.com • (941) 359-0683

Production: Sherry Svekis and Jack Brown

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, November 20, 2013, 6:00 PM

Selby Library, Downtown Sarasota

Dr. Julie Langford and Jenni Royce **Roman Imperial Women as Propaganda**



Julie Langford teaches Roman History at the University of South Florida and is particularly interested in why the Roman Empire didn't fall, or rather, why it took so long for the Empire to fall. She attributes the Empire's longevity in part to intricate negotiations between the emperor (and the imperial administration) and important populations such as the Senate, military, the inhabitants of the city of Rome and provincial elites. She posits that emperor and these important populations engaged in complex and individualized rituals that acknowledged the importance of each party through the exchange of honors and favors. An important aspect of these negotiations was communicating the emperor's individual priorities and interests to his subjects so that they could learn how to praise and honor him in a way that would be most pleasing and result in the biggest rewards. The

communications emanating from the imperial palace (otherwise known as propaganda) involved statements not just about the emperor, but his family and especially his successor. Propaganda reached its target populations through a variety of media such as sculpture, coins, monuments, state art, and imperial edicts. Responding correctly to emperor's self-presentation was a high priority for subject populations since the rewards for doing so were great indeed. Emperors funneled vast imperial resources to those subject populations who enthusiastically supported him and his priorities. Imperial gifts such as the construction of theaters, fora, aqueducts, baths and the like enhanced the wealth, political standing and physical comfort of his supporters. She calls these complex rituals and negotiations the "construction of ideology." The topics of these negotiations often concern the legitimacy of an emperor and his successor, and the imperial claims and subject responses can best be understood by examining Roman notions of masculinity and the supposed superiority of Roman ethnicity and religion.

In her upcoming presentation to Time Sifters, Prof. Langford and her student researcher Jenni Royce examine a peculiar twist to these complex negotiations between the emperor and (continued on page three)

Notes from a Time Sifter

Thanksgiving, as a celebration of good harvest, is common throughout the world, but the American Thanksgiving Day is different in that it is a symbol of endurance because of the valiant survival of the Pilgrims, cooperation between the settlers and the resident Indians, and new beginnings because Plymouth settlement was part of a foundation that became the United States.

Plymouth has been thoroughly excavated. Archaeologists have discovered evidence of Indian populations living there for over 6,000 years. The Pilgrims, English Calvinists, arrived in the early 17th century and met the local people who in that time called themselves the Wampanoag, which were divided into several subgroups such as the Patuxit, Nantucket, and Chappaquiddick, names that are still found as city names in New England. The local Indian tribes were farmers who lived in villages but their population had been severely reduced by European diseases and only a few survivors remained in 1620. One of these was Tisquantum (the English called him "Squanto"), who had an unbelievable history. He had been captured by the English in 1614 and sold to the Spanish. He escaped and made it to London where he joined an exploratory expedition that returned him to North America in 1619. In the process, he learned to speak English. When he reached his home village it was empty, all of the occupants including his family had died of disease (Archaeology Archive).

When the Pilgrims landed in December of 1620, they found fields that had been cultivated but were now empty, villages that were deserted. The settlers were able to build their first town which they called "Plimoth Plantation" on these already cleared areas. A diary from one of the settlers tells that they found a place "where there is a great deal of land cleared, and hath been planted with corn three or four years ago...what people inhabit here we yet know not, for as yet we have seen none." Squanto and a few other Indian survivors appeared several days later, joined the exhausted settlers and showed them how to plant maize, beans and squash. These were North American vegetables with which the Europeans were unfamiliar but enabled many to survive to celebrate the first American Thanksgiving in October of 1621. One of the settlers, Edward Winslow, described the event in a letter to friends back in England. He said that there were about 50 colonists who "gathered the fruits of our labors." They were joined by about 90 Indians who "killed as much fowl as...served the company almost a week...and five deer which they brought to the plantation." Winslow's letter mentions that there "was not enough furniture" for so many people but also says they "rejoiced together" (quotes from Mourt's Relation, Dwight Heath, ed., New York: Corinth Books, 1963). Archaeologists have found scraps of wool cloth in many colors dispelling our notion of the somber black outfits for Pilgrims. In other words, this was a joyful occasion and they had fun.

This celebration was so much a part of our history that, in 1777, George Washington proclaimed it a national holiday. Abraham Lincoln, in 1863, suggested that it should be celebrated on the last Thursday of November, and in 1941 Congress made it permanent on the next to the last Thursday of November. It is still one of America's favorite family holidays.



Plimoth Plantation has a small but rich collection of original artifacts that show daily life between 1550 and 1700. The artifacts come from places such as New England, Great Britain and the Netherlands, and represent the material culture that the Pilgrims and Wampanoag would have known. Museum researchers and artisans use the artifacts to help re-create the living history exhibits guests see at Plimoth Plantation. <http://www.plimoth.org/learn/MRL/discover/collections-archaeology>



Jenni Royce and Dr. Langford. Jenni had just presented her work at the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies in April 2013.

important subject populations: the relationship between the empress and the military. During the late 2nd and 3rd C CE, empresses often appeared in state media as the Mater Castrorum (Mother of the Camp). This ubiquitously advertised relationship with the army is surprising since Romans had long reserved the military camp as a masculine space; indeed, ancient authors are insistent that women who invaded this space wrecked havoc on the soldiers' discipline and thus posed a serious threat to the success of the army. Why then, would an emperor choose to advertise his wife's presence and relationship with the military to his subjects? Langford and Royce will contextualize this anomaly in Roman military ideology by examining three empresses, Faustina the Younger (wife of Marcus Aurelius and mother of Commodus), Julia Domna (wife of Septimius Severus, mother of Caracalla) and Otacilla Severa (wife of Philip the Arab). Each of these case studies demonstrates the imperial manipulation of truth claims, the flexibility of imperial negotiations, and the plucky initiative of subject populations.

¹ Langford recently published on the phenomenon in Langford, Julie. 2013. "Not Your Momma: Problematizing Julia Domna as the Mater Castrorum." *Maternal Megalomania: Julia Domna and the Imperial Politics of Motherhood*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Langford and Royce's findings will be published in the forthcoming "Mothers of the Camp: Imperial Women and the Military" in *Roman Women and the Military* edited by Lee E. Brice and Elizabeth M. Greene. Cambridge University Press.

Historical Society of Sarasota County's
Pirates & Pioneers Day
 Saturday • November 16, 2013
 10am to 4pm
Pioneer Park
 12th Street
 Sarasota

Admission: Canned goods per person for the Mayor's Feed the Hungry Campaign
 Pirate Costumes Recommended

A Fun Filled Day for the Whole Family

Stop by the Thieves Market

Antiques	Krisztina's Games of Balance and Skill
Arts & Crafts	Dig for Buried Treasures (children under 5)
Meet Local Authors	Commemorative Bricks Dedication
Tours of the Whitaker Cemetery	Historic Trolley Tour
D.A.R. Open House	

Enjoy Pirate Tales & Lore

Spun By:
 Bill Schustik, "America's Troubadour" & Rosemary Dilgard

Visit with Shelter Pets

The Humane Society of Sarasota County's Big M.A.C. (HSSC's Mobile Adoption Center) will be onsite!

For more information:
www.HSOSC.com
 941.364.9076
HSOSC@yahoo.com

New College Public Archaeology Lab will be showing off its new educational video game, "Sarasota Bay Rancho!", at the Historical Society's Pirates and Pioneers Day.

The role-playing video game, developed by Dr. Uzi Baram and Sherry Svekis, was brought to life by game designer Jameson Wilkins. It is distributed to schools to inspire local children to learn about the Cuban fishing industry of 19th century Sarasota Bay.





MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

November 16th

Pirates and Pioneers Day at Historical Society of Sarasota County 10am - 4pm
Pioneer Park, 12th Street, Sarasota

for more information: www.HSOSC.com

Membership

Individual:	\$20
Family:	\$30
Sustaining:	\$50
Student:	\$10

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2013 MEETING CALENDAR

November 20, 6pm: Julie Langford, Roman Imperial Women as Propaganda **Selby**

December 11, 6pm: Holiday pot-luck and party

January 14, 6pm: Lecture at Selby - Speaker to be announced

Selby Library: downtown Sarasota, Central Ave and 2nd Street

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