

Time Sifters

February 2014



A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 6:00 PM

Selby Library, Downtown Sarasota

Dr. Robert Tykot, University of South Florida

Bronze Age Sardinia: The Nuragic People and their Towers, Giants' Tombs, and Use of Metals



Dr. Robert Tykot received his M.A. in Classical Archaeology from Tufts University, and M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology from Harvard University. He has taught at USF since 1996, where he is a full professor. In 2011, Dr. Tykot was elected as an American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow for his distinguished contributions to archaeological materials science, notably obsidian and marble, and bioarchaeology, especially maize and paleodiets, and for service to American and Italian archaeological societies. He has well over 100 formal publications and has served numerous times on the boards of local, national, and international professional societies.

Dr. Tykot has been doing research on Sardinia since 1982, when as an undergraduate at Tufts University he became interested in problems surrounding the Monte Arci obsidian sources. As part of his dissertation research at Harvard, he eventually conducted an extensive survey of the sources, determined through chemical analyses that five distinct sources were used to make stone tools, and analyzed several

thousand artifacts to reconstruct Neolithic distribution patterns and exchange systems. He continues to work on obsidian from various sites in the Mediterranean, including Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Cyprus.

Dating to the Bronze Age, the island of Sardinia has thousands of unique ancient stone towers known as nuraghi, large burial chambers or giants' tombs with hundreds of individuals, and important maritime trade of metals and ceramics with other parts of the Mediterranean. But was the Nuragic way of life the result of Minoan or Mycenaean civilizations in the Aegean, or even Egypt and the Levant



Nuraghe Nuracale



during the New Kingdom? The latest interpretations of the Nuragic people will be presented, including results from my own excavations at three nuraghi and analyses of metal finds and museum objects.

Copper "oxhide" ingots in the Cagliari National Archaeology Museum

Notes from a Time Sifter

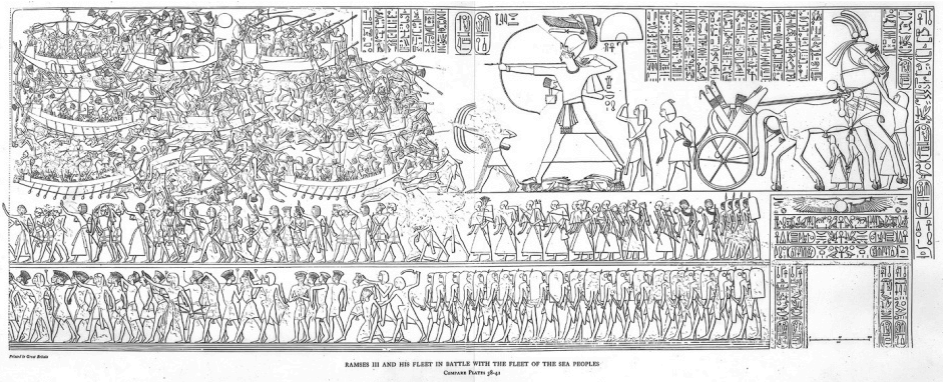
Climate change, much in today's news, has happened many times and has affected human society tremendously. Humans, like animals, were foragers, supporting themselves by what the environment provided. Fluctuations in temperature caused changes in the environment and often some animals become extinct. But humans have the marvelous ability to adapt. For example, humans began to spread into Asia from Africa when, about 130,000 years ago, a warm spell created navigable rivers and lakes where impassible deserts had been. The same opportunity became available to humans nearly 40,000 years ago when a very cold period opened a land bridge from Asia to North America.

Stone tools are evidence for the way humans adapted to climate change. Stone points indicate that a hunting economy was necessary about 27,000 B.P. because the animal flesh provided fat and protein for the energy required in such a very cold environment (K. Milton, 2000 American Society for Clinical Nutrition). The climate warmed about 12,000 B. P. causing an increase in vegetation and a change in human diet and foraging methods. By about 10,000 B.P., a shift had begun from foraging to planting and harvesting, bringing about the "Agricultural Revolution." But climate change didn't always just create new lifestyles; sometimes it brought disaster.

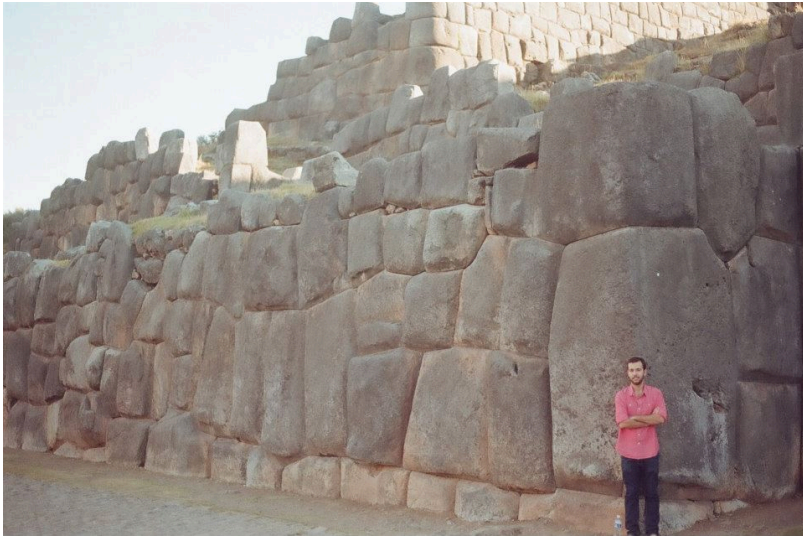
In Mesopotamia in 4300 B. P., a drying trend began that turned the green fields of Akkad to dust, beginning a slow 300 year dry period that brought an end to the Akkadian Empire in 4025 B. P. Three thousand years later, a severe drought in the east Mediterranean severely diminished the number of trees thereby affecting olive production. This was probably at least part of the reason for the great migration that drove the famed "Sea Peoples" to invade Ramesside Egypt. The massive migrations also caused the demise of the Hittite Empire and left Mycenaean Greece in a dark age for 300 years. The fall of these great empires left a power vacuum in the Levant that allowed the development of small kingdoms such as Israel, Philistia, Phoenicia, Moab, Aram, and others (PBS Nova, Oct. 22, 2013).

Climate change affected the western hemisphere also. Moche, the largest cultural center in ancient Peru was abandoned in 600 C.E. when sand dunes choked the irrigation channels during an abrupt change in climate. Another warming period lasting from about 900 and 1300 C. E., affected the Mayan civilization that eventually collapsed because of diminished rainfall, and in 1280 a great drought in the North American southwest that lasted for 26 years was probably the reason for political divisions, warfare, and the eventual abandonment of Pueblo villages. But these warm centuries also allowed Norseman Eric the Red to sail to Greenland and plant settlements. However, a cold period followed, and by the 14th century, the settlements were abandoned because an increase in sea ice closed the trade routes between Greenland and the European mainland (R. Prentice, "Cultural Response to Climate Change in the Holocene").

Climate change, then, played a huge role in human development. Those societies that could adapt to the change survived. Modern methods gave us better means to adapt, yet the brief 6-year Dust Bowl of the 1930s caused an economic disaster. History tells us how climate change affected past human society but it only hints at how we might react in the warming decades to come.



Update from the New College Public Archaeology Lab: New Intern will liaise with Time Sifters



My name is Aric Archebelle-Smith and I am a third year anthropology student at New College of Florida. I was recently granted a position as an intern with the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) and the New College Public Archaeology Lab (NCPAL). I'm interested in pursuing a career in archaeology and I would really like to focus on the study of burial practices. I'm incredibly excited to have been given the opportunity to work in collaboration with both FPAN and NCPAL.

I have a good deal of experience in engaging with the general public about

archaeology. Last year, I volunteered to assist Professor Uzi Baram with the events "A Day at the Lab" and "Archaeology Fest". Over the summer, I attended the PIARA bioarchaeology field school in Hualcayan, Peru. The field school director emphasized the importance of communicating with the village residents about the work we were doing and the artifacts we were excavating. While I was there we organized a pop-up museum to display our finds to the village residents and university students from the nearest town. I also helped organize and lead tours of our work sites so that people from the village could see exactly what we were working on. I look forward to using the skills I have acquired at field school and working with NCPAL in the past to further the great public outreach work that NCPAL and FPAN are doing.

What is on the Time Sifters website this week?

Evidence that Human Ancestors Used Fire One Million Years Ago

OUR WEBMASTER, JIM MECKLER, POSTS THE LATEST AND MOST INTERESTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Scientists have identified the earliest known evidence of the use of fire by human ancestors. Microscopic traces of wood ash, alongside animal bones and stone tools, were found in a layer dated to one million years ago at the Wonderwerk Cave in South Africa. The work was led by an international team from the University of Toronto and the Hebrew University.

"The analysis pushes the timing for the human use of fire back by 300,000 years, suggesting that human ancestors as early as *Homo erectus* may have begun using fire as part of their way of life," said U of T anthropologist Michael Chazan, co-director of the project and director of U of T's Archaeology Centre.

Wonderwerk is a massive cave located near the edge of the Kalahari where earlier excavations by Peter Beaumont of the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, South Africa, had uncovered an extensive record of human occupation. A research project, co-directed by U of T's Chazan and Liora Kolska Horwitz of Hebrew University, has been doing detailed analysis of the material from Beaumont's excavation along with renewed field work on the Wonderwerk site.

For more of the story go to www.timesifters.org



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February 19, 6pm: Dr. Robert Tykot, University of South Florida - Bronze Age Sardinia: The Nuragic People and their Towers, Giants' Tombs, and Use of Metals

March 19, 6pm: Student Grant Winners

April 16: Curt Bowen, Advanced Diver Magazine Foundation - Hidden Relics

May 21: John Jaffer and Valerie Jackson Bell - The Holocaust and The Lost Synagogue of Gargzdai

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

Your renewal date is above; please remit if due.
Please contact us if you think there is an error.