

# NOVEMBER - 2015



## November Program

November 18 - at 6:00 PM - Selby Library,  
1331 First St., Sarasota 34236

### **The Pre-Columbian Maize Deity: Art Historic Evidence for a Yucatan-Florida- Caribbean Connection**

**Sandra Starr, M.A.**

*Starr Research*

*Senior Researcher, Emerita*

*Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian*



Dear Member:

Last month was a great introduction to cutting-edge practices in interpreting the past. Our speaker this month has used more traditional methods in analyzing artifacts from across a wide swath of the Americas to analyze origins and connections between pieces of indigenous art. It can be a controversial topic, but Ms. Starr is a good presenter and it should be an interesting talk.

**Time Sifters Travel:** The Viking Trail, a trip to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in summer of 2016: We are booking a small-group tour (about 20 participants) with a focus on archaeological sites. Details should be available at the November meeting, and will also be emailed that week.

If you are due to renew, you may mail us a check, pay by credit card on our website, or pay at the meeting.

Hope to see you soon!

Sherry Svekis, President

[ssvekis@gmail.com](mailto:ssvekis@gmail.com)



### **The Pre-Columbian Maize Deity: Art Historic Evidence for a Yucatan-Florida-Caribbean Connection** **Sandra Starr, M.A.**

Sandra Starr has returned to her home state of Florida after 10 years as the Senior Researcher at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC where she was responsible for providing scholarly research content for exhibitions, collections, programs and publications. She

currently does business as Starr Research, continuing to perform collections and art historic research for museum exhibitions and programs, and private collectors. Her personal gathering art historic references as proof of a singular deity of maize in the Pre-Columbian Western Hemisphere has spanned 14 years.

Similarities in iconography found within Pre-Columbian American Indian art has led to scattered

speculation about the origins, migration paths, and trade routes of their indigenous creators. The possible expanse of pre-contact trade networks is still being explored, but the discovery of objects and ideas at locations far beyond their known lands of origin is well-documented. One of the most alluring iconic appearances within this art is that of a flying man, a man often carrying a gift-like object in his hands. A man who can become a bird, and then simply a symbol whose image travels within textiles, and on

ceramics, metals, stone and shells from the Southern Andes to Mississippian Georgia and Arkansas, from the coast of ancient Western Mexico to the Caribbean, whose presence represented creation, fertility and power. After studying over one thousand photographs and objects over fourteen years, Ms. Starr suggests that certain coded artistic devices became hemispherically-shared and formed an inherited memory.



Tallant Collection, South Florida Museum



Mixtec, Mexico 1300 AD



Jay I. Kislak Collection, Miami

## Notes from a Time Sifter

# Flags, Symbolism, and Identity

During the summer of 2015, flags became a topic in the news when it was decided to remove the Confederate flag from the grounds of the Capitol in Columbia, South Carolina. Flags are strong symbols representing many things and so provoke intense feelings among people. They have been used for that reason for a very long time. The word “flag” comes from “fflaken”, an Old Saxon word meaning “to fly” and have been used as a way to identify a group or an idea since prehistoric times. Cloth flags “fly” in the breeze but not all flags were made of cloth.

The earliest flags appear to have

been made of wooden poles with carvings at the top. Egyptian Nome leaders carried standards as early as the Early Dynastic Period (31st century b.c.e.). (Narmer Palette). Others were made of metal attached to a pole. The oldest metal “flag” is made of bronze and dates to the 4th millennium b.c.e. It was found in Kerman, Iran. (Archaeological & Cultural News of the Iranian World). Other images of “flags” have been found on ancient Greek and Phoenician coins indicating the common use of flags.

As far as we know, the Romans were the first to fly a cloth flag. More than 2,000 years ago,

Romans fastened a piece of colored and decorated fabric to the end of a spear. It was called a “vexillum” which means “guide” and was used to keep the unit together because the soldiers could see it above the battle. Later Romans tied cloth flags to a pole creating the flag we know today. Flags were also carried onto the battlefields so that one could tell the difference between friend and foe. The flag’s symbols were painted on shields for the same reason, and by the Middle Ages, painted on suits of armor to demonstrate the ancestry of the knight who wore it. This

**Notes continued next page ...**



## Last Month ...

October 21:

Sherry introducing Dr. Ed Gonzalez-Tennant (standing left) for his great presentation on virtual heritage. It was a full house and there were lots of great questions at the end.



### Notes continued ...

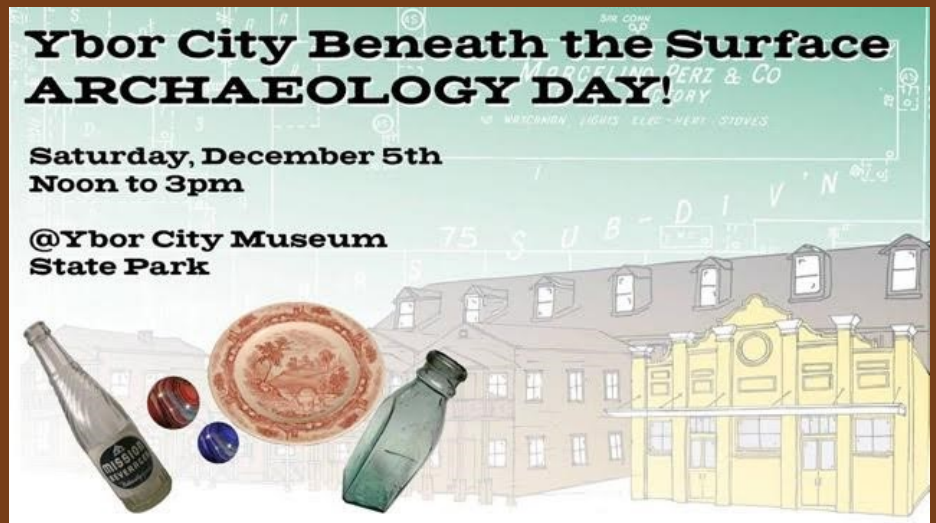
was the origin of the “Coat of Arms” “originally intended to protect and identify the wearer, and later used to brag about one’s heritage (medievalclassroom.com).

Flags also identified the owners of ships as they sailed the seas. During the “Age of Exploration” (15th – 17th centuries), rival ships attacked each other and pirates roamed the seas to steal cargo. Pirate flags warned of the consequences of resistance by raising their flags which were red, signifying blood, or black, signifying death. Sometimes the pirate flags carried the picture of a skull with crossed bones or swords beneath the skull to show that there was no mistake in their intentions. The pirate flag that we see in the movies with a white skull on a black background called the “Jolly Roger” is accurate except that the white skull usually had a red background. Its name comes from the French jolie rouge that translates as “pretty red,” but meant “don’t even think about resistance.” Colors were important and still are. Red still means danger and a black flag can mean death or determination. White flags meant peace and are still the universal symbol of surrender. Blue generally stands for truth and justice, and green signifies hope and love (vexillologymatters.org). Maritime international code flags spell out messages to alert sailors to distress.

Important leaders and regions have used flags as symbols also. The oldest state flag in the world that is still in use by an independent nation is the national flag of Denmark, the “Dannebrog.” It has flown since 1219 (funtrivia.com). By the 18th century, flags that were

used to identify the nations of the world became more common. Today, all nations have their own flags, now called vexilloids after the Roman flags, and they symbolize the same intense patriotic feelings they provoked so many thousands of years ago.

**D**iscover the history beneath your feet at the Ybor City Museum State Park. Florida Public Archaeology Network will be celebrating the opening of a new FPAN-created archaeology exhibit in the museum with lots of fun activities for people of all ages. Join us for a game of bolita, displays of artifacts found at the State Park, a walking tour of the archaeology of the block, and much more!



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Sarasota, FL. 34277

# Speakers & Events Calendar

All to be held at 6:00 PM  
Selby Library, 1331 First St., Sarasota 34236

## November 18

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## January 20

### **Archaeology Year in Review**

*Darwin Smith, Vice President, Time Sifters*

## February 17

### **CSS Georgia: The Ladies Ironclad**

*Michael L. Jordan, President, Cosmos Mariner Productions*

**Time Sifters Archaeology Society**

A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

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**Time Sifters Archaeology Society**  
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