



SEPTEMBER - 2020

PRESERVATION ♦ EDUCATION ♦ RESEARCH ♦ INSPIRE

Dear Member:

On August 19th we finished our **“Summer Series: Crusaders in the Holy Land”** presented by Dr. Steven Derfler on ZOOM. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. The video of August’s presentation is available on the website and also on our YouTube Channel.

We have decided that the entire Fall season will be presented on ZOOM. The Selby Library is unavailable for large groups and we agree that for safety reason we should present our lectures on ZOOM. Our September lecture is by Dr. Davide Tanasi of USF. A short description follows this letter.

In this issue we continue our series of stories by local archaeologists titled **“Early Experiences”**. This month, Dr. Laura Harrison tells us about her adventure finding Dispilio.

Thank you for being a Time Sifters member.

Darwin “Smitty” Smith, President

hmsbeagle22@gmail.com

September 16 - at 6:00 PM - ZOOM. Meeting ID: 847 4352 8509, Passcode: 309557

Explorers, Traders, Soldiers: Aegean presence in Sicily before the colonization



Dr. Davide Tanasi,
*Associate Professor of Digital Humanities
& Director of the Institute for Digital Exploration (IDEx), University of South Florida.*

The relationship between Sicily and the Aegean from the middle of the 3rd to the end of the 2nd millennium BCE represents one of the most intriguing facets of the prehistory of the island. The frequent and periodical contact with foreign cultures were a trigger for a gradual process of socio-political evolution of the indigenous community.

From those 1,500 years, a very large quantity of Aegean materials have been identified in Sicily alongside examples of unusual local material culture traditionally interpreted as resulting from external influence. Such evidence has been used by scholars to characterize the nature of the Aegean presence in Sicily. Whether or not those foreigners were explorers, traders or soldiers seeking fortune in the

west, their long term agency marked the cultures of the Sicilian Bronze Age and prepared the ground for the Greek colonization in the late 8th century BCE.



Early Experiences

Finding Somewhere in the Middle of Nowhere

By Dr. Laura Harrison - University of South Florida and
Time Sifters Member

I got on the bus fully expecting to get lost. My expectations were surely met.

I had asked the bus driver if he could let me know when we reached the town of **Dispilio**.

Little did I know, he hadn't understood a word of my question before nodding yes. And then I fell asleep for a very long time.

When I woke up, the bus was empty and we were rattling through an arid, hilly region. It was as desolate as the surface of the moon. I woke up feeling like a space traveler emerging from a stasis chamber, confused and wondering what year it was.

I scrambled to the front of the bus with my Greek phrase book and my map. I needed some answers from the bus driver. He motioned to sit back down and I resigned myself to a future of oblivion. At this point I had been travelling for 24 hours straight and the hopelessness of my situation was settling in.

Eventually the bus bucked to a halt near a signpost on a desolate, narrow street. **The bus doors creaked open, which I took as a sign to disembark.** The signpost said **Δισπηλιό**. I had no idea what it meant.

Things got worse when I got off the bus. There was no sign of life anywhere except some mangy stray dogs roaming about. Everything was the color of dust. All I had to guide me was the name of a Greek person who I had sent my field school application to several months prior. I didn't know how to find him, didn't know where I was, and had no idea if he would be here. Our last communication had been an ambiguous conversation a few weeks ago. We had discussed my arrival logistics with emails sent over a dial-up Internet connection. Reviewing the conversation in my mind, I recalled that key details like time and location were not settled – the only thing that seemed certain was the date.

Report to Dispilio on August 1.



Reconstruction of the lakeside Neolithic settlement of Dispilio, in northern Greece.

What had seemed so straightforward over email was suddenly anything but. I was starting to think I should have stayed in New York.

I spotted **a little brown sign** on the street with a symbol of what looked like a Greek temple, and an arrow pointing to the right.

Figuring that it might be a sign for an archaeological site, I decided to go down the sidewalk. My body was starting to remind me that it was **105 degrees** as I ambled down a dirt path to nowhere. The stray dogs followed some distance behind, unaware that I had nothing to offer them.

The sidewalk deteriorated into a dirt footpath after a single block. I had reached the city limits. In the distance, farther along the path, I spotted **another brown sign**, which encouraged me to keep going. I continued, passing fallow fields as I walked toward the horizon. When you are lost, you can't tell if you are walking closer to your destination or closer to the edge of the earth.

The pitched roofs of thatched

huts appeared against the relief of a beautiful mountainous landscape. Was this the archaeological site that the brown signs had been guiding me to?

Feeling more optimistic, I quickened my pace. Immediately I felt the weight of my backpack grow heavier on my shoulders.

Once I was close enough, I could discern that this place was a reconstructed archaeological site.

A metal fence encircled the complex, and **the gate was locked with a heavy chain and a padlock.** It was definitely closed.

Feeling a familiar tinge of uncertainty, I looked around and noticed a plume of dust rising in my peripheral vision. A beat-up red subcompact sedan was approaching. As it neared, it slowed down to a stop.

The driver, a Greek man, rolled down the passenger window and leaned over. **In clear English, he said "are you Laura?"** I had arrived at my first field school.

Notes from a Time Sifter

Smoke signals, drums, bonfires, trumpet blasts, shouting, or even whistling and yodeling.

By Evelyn Mangie Time Sifters Board Member

Greek historian Herodotus so admired the Achaemenid Persian postal system that he wrote, "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." This system was created ca. 540 BCE by **King Cyrus the Great** to get messages to all parts of his enormous empire, across which he built a 1500-mile road that provided relay stations along it for his horse bound mailmen. The mail tied the distant provinces together giving Cyrus control.

Long before Cyrus, long-distance communication was done through smoke signals, drums, bonfires, trumpet blasts, shouting, or even whistling and yodeling. A better method was physically taking the message from the sender to the recipient(s), like **Pheidippides** who supposedly ran 25 miles from Marathon to Athens to deliver the news of the Greek victory. In like manner, the Inca empire sent physically fit messengers along the vast system of roads and rope bridges in the Andes to deliver oral messages to distant reaches of the empire. So did the Aztecs, who sent runners that were provided with regular five-mile relay staging posts where another runner would take up the task.

Ancient Egypt was the first to document an organized mail system ca. 2400 BCE. **Old Kingdom Pharaohs** sent designated couriers who took messages throughout the 42 provinces uniting them under a single ruler in this very long and narrow kingdom.

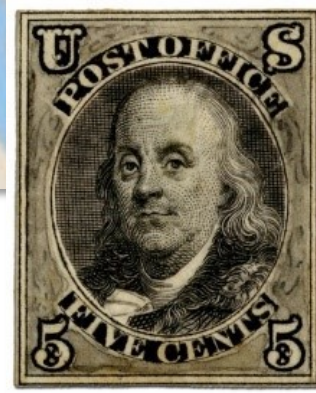
Organized systems were essential for maintenance of the military, for tax collections, and trade interactions so mail service was initiated by the leaders of all large states, each adding their own ideas to improve the system. **The Mauryan empire of India** (322-185 BCE) provided rest houses and public wells for the messen-



gers who used chariots to take messages throughout India. **The Han dynasty** (306 BCE-221 CE) used Silk Road traders to carry letters in paper envelopes to hide the messages from all but the intended recipient.

Emperor Augustus created the *cursus publicus*, a series of stations spread along the major road systems that were extremely important to the Roman military and administrative system. Letters from explorers like Columbus and Cortés were carried by ships across oceans during the 15th and 16th centuries to keep the monarchs informed of their explorers' discoveries.

These early systems were all intended for government use. It was not until the 17th century that personal mail became popular. **Charles I of England** opened his postal service to the general public in 1635 in an effort to make money. It was successful and the idea spread to the continent. The cost was usually paid by the recipient but in 1653 a Parisian businessman set up a postal system that required the sender to pay. He sold envelopes and set up mailboxes for collection. It worked well until someone put live mice in the mailboxes. That turned customers away, but the practice of charging senders continued, except for official government mail that was free



after 1660, when England adopted franking (from the French *affranchir*, meaning "free"), for official government mail. The system was carried to the American colonies

and by 1673, a Boston tavern became the official site for mail delivery across the Atlantic. Ten years later, **William Penn** established Pennsylvania's first post office and several other colonies followed.

In 1737, Benjamin Franklin was named postmaster in Philadelphia. He estimated rates based on weight and distance, established more efficient routes, and cut delivery time to 24 hours between Philadelphia and New York by having the mail travel both day and night by relay teams. His success in Philadelphia prompted the British Crown in 1753 to appoint him joint postmaster for all 13 colonies. He held that post for 20 years during which he established post roads along the entire Eastern Seaboard and established a home delivery system.

The British dismissed Franklin in 1774 because he supported the American colonial cause but after the battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775, the Second Continental Congress asked Franklin to establish a national postal service that proved vital to

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Smoke signals ...

the victory for the new American Confederation. As the first U.S. postmaster general, Franklin established regular service between Maine and Georgia and arranged for small ships to carry mail to and from Canada and the West Indies.

Franklin left his postmaster position in 1776 when he was sent to France as a U.S. ambassador, but the U.S. post office continued to improve and expand. **The new Constitution (Article 1, Section 8)** provided for the establishment of Post Offices and Post Roads and **by 1789 there were 75 post offices in the new U.S.**

Prepaid adhesive **postage stamps were invented in 1840** by an Englishman who was knighted for his efforts. The U.S. adopted the idea in 1847 and honored Ben Franklin by putting his portrait on the first 5-cent stamps. Prepaid stamps made the mail process practical as a non-profit, self-supporting agency and was adopted by the Universal Postal Union (headquarters in Berne, Switzerland) in 1874. The U.S. Postal Service was a cabinet-level department until 1970 when Congress passed the Postal Reorganization Act that abolished the U.S. Post Office Department and created the U.S. Postal Service, an independent agency *“to be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government...to provide prompt...postal services. The costs of establishing and maintaining the Postal Service shall not be apportioned to impair the overall value of such service to the people.”* Franking for government officials is under review but continues.

Today there are nearly 40,000 post offices in the U.S. The value of this service to our democracy was stated in 1914 by the architects of New York City’s General Post Office building when they chiseled **Herodotus’ admiration** of the postal service across the entrance, *“Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the*



Heritage Monitoring Scouts ...

Interested in learning more about this program, or want to sign up to become an HMS Scout? Go to this link (<https://www.fpan.us/projects/HMSflorida.php>) and click the “Apply to Become a Scout” button to sign up for the program. You will get monthly emails about upcoming trainings and meet ups, as well as interesting information on different sites to visit. We plan on setting up a special HMS training for Time Sifters members this Fall, so keep an eye out in future newsletters for more information and dates.

Time Sifters Presents

September 16, 6:00 PM - On ZOOM

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Dr. Davide Tanasi
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Instructions for real time viewing:
1. Go to www.zoom.com
2. Click on “Join Meeting” at top of page
3. Type in Meeting ID - 847 4352 8509
4. Type password - 309557
5. Enjoy presentation.

Time Sifters Archaeology Society - A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society - P. O. Box 5285, Sarasota, FL 34277
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Time Sifters member Saretta Sparer washing artifacts at the New College Public Archaeology Lab. Saretta is volunteering in support of the Manatee Mineral Spring Archaeological Project, excavations completed in January, seeking evidence of daily life at the Angola Maroon Community.

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We send newsletters to people who have attended or expressed interest in our lectures and given us their email address.