Recent Rare Book Acquisition

Jacobo Zannichelli’s *El hypocastano, ó castaño de Indias* (1774)

A recent addition to the Dumbarton Oaks Rare Book Collection sheds light on the eighteenth-century search to discover substitutes for rare and valuable medicinal plants—in this case, horse chestnut as a substitute for cinchona (quinine). In his 1774 essay, *El hypocastano, ó castaño de Indias, verdadero sucedáneo de la quina, arbol del Oriente*, botanist Jacobo Zannichelli (1695–1759) proclaims the good fortune and glory of having discovered a new febrifuge. Zannichelli details his observations and experiments, conducted over a period of more than three years; this research convinced him that the horse chestnut was a suitable substitute for the *cinchona* plant in fighting fever in human beings.

Both the new acquisition on the horse chestnut and a work dedicated on the cinchona plant can be viewed in the online library exhibit “The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century.”

Read more about this fascinating volume here.
Upcoming Public Lecture in Pre-Columbian Studies

Gary Urton, Harvard University
“To Write or Knot: Recent Advances in the Study of Andean Knotted Cord Records” | Thursday, December 5, 2013

The khipu (quipu) was the main device used for administrative recordkeeping in the Inca Empire of Pre-Columbian South America. Researchers have gained a good understanding of the principles of khipu recording and accounting for administrative purposes. However, Spanish observers of Inca recordkeeping at the time of the conquest stated that this knotted-cord device was also used for documenting narrative events of the past. This lecture reviews what we have learned about khipu recordkeeping and speculates on how we may investigate the still undeciphered narrative contents of these extraordinary records.

Gary Urton is the Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University. Read more about Gary here.

A Collaboration between Dumbarton Oaks and the National Gallery of Art

“Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections”
National Gallery of Art, October 6, 2013-March 2, 2014

Dumbarton Oaks is very pleased to cosponsor, with the National Gallery of Art, a program of lectures related to Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections. The exhibition will be on view at the National Gallery until March 2, 2014, and will then travel to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California, from April 9 through August 25, 2014.
Read more about the events here.


Pre-Columbian Studies Symposium

Making Value, Making Meaning: Techné in the Pre-Columbian World
October 11–12, 2013

The Pre-Columbian Studies symposium, “Making Value, Making Meaning: Techné in the Pre-Columbian World” drew area specialists from the United States, Mexico, Peru, and the United Kingdom, as well as a constituency of craft practitioners interested in the Pre-Columbian technologies deployed in creating distinctive objects in a wide range of materials. These ranged from the fiber arts to mural painting, ceramics, metallurgy, and monumental stone sculpture. The presentations elicited animated discussion that assured the undivided attention of all who participated and rendered them largely oblivious to the unremitting deluge that coincided with the symposium weekend! The sessions comprised a rich blend of reports on new field research along with the results of analytical materials research. These featured groundbreaking work on mural pigments and a presentation on the celebrated and much-valued thorny oyster (Spondylus princeps), which was complemented by a tertulia offered by project grantee Carolina Vilchez earlier in the week.

Tyler Fellows in Residence

Nawa Sugiyama
is currently a doctoral candidate in anthropology at Harvard University.

During the first year of the Tyler Fellowship, I completed data collection for my dissertation, “Ritualized Animals: Understanding Human-Animal Interactions at Teotihuacan.” I analyzed the faunal materials from dedicatory caches in the Moon Pyramid and the Sun Pyramid at Teotihuacan to investigate how ritual performances contributed to the concretion of state ideologies through the participation of carnivores (eagles, pumas, jaguars, wolves, and rattlesnakes) as sacrificial victims and as ritual
paraphernalia. These research goals are being achieved by reconstructing the life histories of the animals—not just the chaîne opératoire (the process of acquiring, preparing, using, and discarding each animal) but also the human-animal interactions. Data from isotopic analysis conducted at the Paleodiet Laboratory at the University of California, San Diego, in collaboration with Andrew Somerville and Margaret Schoeninger, has already yielded evidence that some of the fauna deposited in these burials consumed an artificial diet that included a high proportion of C4 grasses (such as corn).

Read more about Nawa and her project [here](#).

Above right: Puma head next to a Tlaloc vessel from Burial 6, Moon Pyramid. © Moon Pyramid Project.
Bottom: Complete eagle skeleton after reconstruction and restoration of individual from Burial 6.

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**From the Archives**

The Cost of Ambassadorial Entertaining:
The Bliss Tableware with the Department of State Great Seal
In the pre-World War II era of Foreign Service postings, U.S. foreign ministers and ambassadors were expected to provide for their own housing, entertaining, and living expenses.

As U.S. ambassador to Argentina, Robert Woods Bliss encountered a similar situation. In 1928, Mildred Barnes Bliss complained to her friend, Royall Tyler, that “this Argentine chapter is simply ruinous!” As material attestation to the Blisses’ entertainment responsibilities in Argentina, the Dumbarton Oaks Archives holds a 142-piece collection of Minton porcelain tableware and a 127-piece collection of Baccarat cut-crystal tableware (AR.BL.1927.1-21). These pieces were acquired during Bliss’s ambassadorship in Argentina, and each piece is embossed with the gold great seal of the U.S. Department of State. Because the Blisses had paid for this expensive tableware “out of pocket,” it was sent back to Dumbarton Oaks when Robert Woods Bliss retired from diplomatic service in 1933.

Read more about the Blisses’ ambassadorial tableware [here](http://example.com).

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**October Tradition**
Every October, the fellows at Dumbarton Oaks take a break from their research and gather at the Director's residence for some artistic enjoyment—carving pumpkins for Halloween. Their efforts this year produced a beautiful array.

See more of their handiwork [here](#).

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**Friends of Music**

The Knights | October 7 and 8, 2013

*The Knights performing in the Music Room at Dumbarton Oaks.*

The opening of the 2013-2014 season was noteworthy in a number of ways. First, it marked the Washington, D.C., debut of the New York-based orchestra The Knights, who, with twenty-three
musicians, were the largest ensemble ever to perform in the Music Room.

Although the concert embraced a wide variety of musical eras and styles, the centerpiece of the program was Igor Stravinsky’s Dumbarton Oaks Concerto, in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of its premiere in 1938. The work was commissioned by Mildred Barnes Bliss to celebrate her thirtieth wedding anniversary. A copy of the original two-disc, 78-rpm recording is preserved in the Dumbarton Oaks Archives. Revisiting the work in the same lovely space where it was first introduced to the music world added considerable appeal to the event.

Read more about the concert here.

Good Ink

Robert Battey reviewed the Friends of Music concert by The Knights in the Washington Post.

The October 15 issue of the International Numismatic eNewsletter featured a report on the fifth Summer Program in Byzantine Numismatics and Sigillography.


Four Seasons of Flowers, by Linda Lott, was featured in the Harvard Magazine piece “Centuries of Flowers.”

Miracle Tales from Byzantium (edited and translated by Alice-Mary Talbot and Scott Fitzgerald Johnson), in the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, was recently reviewed by James C. Skedros in Speculum.

Now on View