

DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Escape the Present Into the Past

“If ever the humanities were necessary, if ever they should be recognized as inherently realistic essentials of life, it is in this epoch of disintegration and dislocation.”

These words that Mildred Bliss wrote to Paul Sachs on May 9, 1942 are engraved in large letters on a wall facing the south side of the Dumbarton Oaks Library, as a constant reminder for the daily passersby that their research is not just academic. Written amidst the horrors of the Second World War, these words resonate more strongly today than they may have done a decade ago. Now they feel less like a message from the past, but a foreboding of the future. In the light of a raging pandemic, growing science scepticism, and political uncertainty, it seems more important than ever to understand human history. And as COVID-19 is taking a particularly high toll of lives in indigenous communities, we are more responsible than ever to uncover the past of this continent and make the voices of their ancestors heard. There is much to learn from how human societies in the Americas shaped their environment and managed resources, how they created knowledge and values, how they governed and dealt with crisis. In this Fall Newsletter, you can read about our new fellows and their research topics and about our upcoming programming at Dumbarton Oaks. Don't feel guilty if you try to escape the American present by looking at the Americas past. There is a purpose to it!

Frauke Sachse
Program Director of Pre-Columbian Studies

Meet the Fellows 2020-2021



2020-2021 PCS Fellowship cohort with Program Director and Program Coordinator

Due to the pandemic, Dumbarton Oaks is currently unable to welcome any fellows onsite in Georgetown. Some of the scholars who were offered a fellowship for the academic year 2020-2021 have chosen to defer to the coming year. A greater number joined us for a remote fellowship! We thank these fellows for making this decision and giving Dumbarton Oaks a chance to continue its mission to support forefront research on the Ancient Americas.

The fellowship cohort in Pre-Columbian Studies 2020-2021 includes:

- Marie Elizabeth Grávalos (University of Illinois in Chicago, The Field Museum)
 - Project: "Tracking Recuay Traditions: Prehispanic Craft Learning and Social Networks in Highland Ancash, Peru"
- Patrick Hajovsky (Southwestern University)
 - Project: "Sculpting Across the Conquest: Indigenous Artistic Practice and Sacred Knowledge in Central Mexico"
- Mallory Matsumoto (Brown University)
 - Project: "Sharing Script: Transmission of Hieroglyphic Practice among Classic Maya Scribes"
- Jo Osborn (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)
 - Project: "The Development of Fishing Communities on the Peruvian Coast: New Insights from Excavations at Jahuay, Peru"
- Alejandra Roche Recinos (Brown University)
 - Project: "Regional Production and Exchange of Stone Tools in the Maya Polity of Piedras Negras, Guatemala"

The group is complemented by James Almeida and Felipe Ledesma-Núñez from Harvard University, who are Tyler fellows in their second year, and postdoctoral fellow Iyaxel Cojtí Ren, who is also working in her second year in the Image Collection and Fieldwork Archive.

You can find out more about the Pre-Columbian Studies fellows and the entire fellowship community on the Dumbarton Oaks website -- [Meet our fellows!](#)

The academic year was kicked off on September 28, 2020 with Patrick Hajovsky's research report about Aztec sculptural practice and philosophy in preconquest and early colonial times. The fellows met the next day on Zoom for a lively discussion of the presentation. We are confident that we can defy the current adversities and build a community in the virtual space – connected by a common interest in the same subject.

Upcoming Events

Public Lecture 2020



Nicolas-Eustache Maurin (1799–1850), “Clémence de Fernand-Cortès,” 1860s, lithograph, 16¼ x 23½ in. image on 22½ x 29¾ in. sheet. Collection of Matthew Restall.

We are delighted to announce that the [public lecture](#) by Matthew Restall that had to be cancelled in the Spring has been rescheduled as Zoom webinar for November 4 at 4 pm. In his talk on “When Cortés Met Malinche, and Montezuma Met Cortés: Alternative Facts and Disturbing Truths.” Restall offers new theories and perspectives on the Spanish-Aztec encounter, arguing that it is time to upend the traditional tale of the so-called Conquest.

Matthew Restall is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Colonial Latin American History and director of Latin American studies at Penn State University, and the Greenleaf Distinguished Chair in Latin American Studies at Tulane University. A past NEH, JCB, IAH, LOC, and Guggenheim fellow, and a recent president of the American Society for Ethnohistory, he is editor of several journals and book series. Restall has published over twenty books, including *The Maya World*; *Maya Conquistador*; *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*; *The Black Middle*; *2012 and the End of the World*; *The Conquistadors* and the book he will draw on at this public lecture, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*.

We are delighted that Patricia McAnany (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), chair of the Dumbarton Oaks Senior Fellows in Pre-Columbian Studies, will join our discussion following the lecture.

Colloquium 2020: "Heritage and its Missions"

The 2020 Colloquium “Heritage and Its Missions” that could not take place as planned in April has been rescheduled as a virtual event for December 11, 2020. The organizers Cristóbal Gnecco and Adriana Dias will bring together scholars to discuss the role of Catholic missions in heritage politics in the Americas. Please check out the [announcement and list of speakers](#). This event will not be open to the general public.

Pre-Columbian Symposium 2020/21: "Faces of Rulership in the Maya Region"



Seated male figurine excavated by Román Piña Chan on Jaina Island (photo: Jorge Pérez de Lara)

When we moved our symposium this year from October to March, we did so in the hope that we would at least be able to welcome the speakers onsite. But as the pandemic continues to make things difficult and unpredictable, all three academic programs at Dumbarton Oaks are

planning for their Spring conferences to take place as virtual events. The virtual symposium has been scheduled to take place between March 25-27, 2021. Organized by Patricia McAnany and Marilyn Masson, [Faces of Rulership](#) will explore the concept of kingship in the Maya region with an eye to how rulers inscribed their legacies on the landscape and how structures of authority were reconstituted through time. The symposium will cover a range of crosscutting themes, fostering comparisons and syntheses of scholarly approaches to understanding authority, power, and governance in different regions of the Maya world.

David Graeber (1961-2020) (Photo: Kalpesh Lathigra; permission David Wengrow)

We would like to share our grief about the recent and unexpected death of David Graeber on September 2, 2020. David was invited to give the keynote at the symposium – we are still in shock and the void he leaves cannot be filled.



Colloquium 2021: "Empire of the Ancestors"



Polychrome Kero in the Dumbarton Oaks collection. Wari, Middle Horizon (650-1000 CE) (PC.B.609). (Photo: Dumbarton Oaks)

We are looking forward to another Pre-Columbian Colloquium that has been scheduled on May 7-8 as a virtual event. "The Empire of the Ancestors: The Wari of the Middle Horizon" is organized by Mary Glowaki and Anita Cook and brings together scholars to explore alternative perspectives on Wari imperialism. The colloquium participants will discuss the role of ancestor veneration/agency in explaining the function and meaning of monumental

architecture at Wari sites. The final line-up will be announced in the course of the Fall semester on the Dumbarton Oaks website.

Kerr Archive Summer Forum



Detail of the “Vase of the 31 Gods” (K1386) – one of the rollouts discussed during the Summer Forum (Photo: Justin Kerr).

Over the summer, the Pre-Columbian Studies department and the Dumbarton Oaks Library with the Image Collection and Fieldwork Archive organized a series of five Zoom-meetings to discuss advances and standards for the cataloguing of the Kerr Archive of rollout photographs of Maya ceramics. The Summer Forum brought together leading scholars in the field of Maya iconography and writing, who shared ideas about how to make the catalogued images searchable through both HOLLIS and the future access portal on the Dumbarton Oaks website.

The event was intended to create transparency about the technical and conceptual details of the cataloguing process, but there was ample occasion to exchange thoughts about specific iconographic elements and revisit the interpretation of scenes and characters on particular Maya ceramics. Postdoctoral fellow Iyaxel Cojtí Ren stimulated the discussion by selecting images that pose challenges.

Invited participants included (in alphabetical order): Dmitri Belieav (Russian State University), Nicholas Carter (Texas State University), Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos (Yale University), James Doyle (Metropolitan Museum), Stephen Houston (Brown University), Simon Martin (Penn Museum), Mary Miller (Getty Research Institute), Megan O’Neil (Emory University), Christian Prager (University of Bonn), David Stuart (University of Texas at

Austin), Karl Taube (University of California at Riverside), Alexandre Tokovinine (University of Alabama), and Mark Zender (Tulane University). We were particularly delighted that Justin Kerr joined us for all five sessions.

The Summer Forum generated many important insights and results. Dumbarton Oaks is indebted to the attendees for their time and contributions. We will keep the public abreast of further developments and updates with respect to the steadily growing Kerr Archive.

Library

CONFESIONARIO
EN LENGVA MEXI-
CANAY CASTE-
LLANA.

Con muchas advertencias muy necesarias
para los Confesores.

Compuesto por el Padre Fray Ioan Baptista
de la orden del Seraphico Padre Sancto Francis-
co, lector de Theologia en esta provincia del sa-
cto Euangelio, y guardian del conuento de San-
tiago Tlatilulco.



CON PRIVILEGIO.
En Santiago Tlatilulco, Por Melchior
Ocharte. Año de. 1599.

First page of Molina's Confessionario mayor... (1578)

The Library made several acquisitions of colonial-era primary sources to the Pre-

Columbian Rare Book collection, which contribute to the study of Nahuatl and Central Mexico.

A significant addition to our holdings in early colonial-era missionary sources in indigenous languages is Fray Alonso de Molina's *Confessionario mayor, en la lengua mexicana y castellana* (1565). A later edition, this fine 1578 copy comes bound with Molina's *Confessionario breve, en la lengua mexicana y castellana* (1577). Dumbarton Oaks already holds the second volume of the 1571 edition of Molina's *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana* (1555), the first known dictionary published in the Americas.

Another missionary text in Náhuatl we acquired is Juan de Mijangos' *Primera parte del sermonario, dominical, y sanctoral en lengua Mexicana* (Mexico, 1624). Sell (1991) calls the text by the Oaxaca-born Mijangos "one of the most important church-related publications in Nahuatl to appear during the colonial period."

A first edition copy of Francisco de Florencia's *La estrella de el norte de Mexico* was added to Dumbarton Oaks's substantial holdings on the religious life of pre-contact and early colonial Nahua communities. The text includes the story of the Virgin's apparitions to Juan Diego Cuauhtlatatzin, the first Catholic indigenous saint.

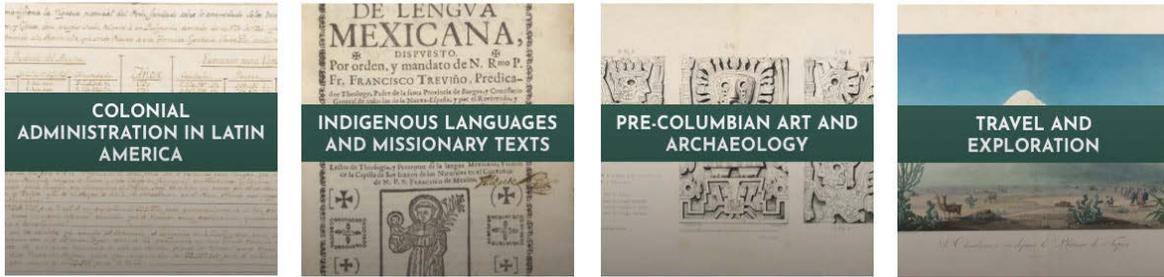
José de Ortega's 1732 *Confessionario [sic] manual, que en la lengua Cora* complements the range of holdings in early colonial-era *sermonarios* and confessional manuals in indigenous languages. Ortega, a Jesuit, lived among the Cora in the Nayarit region of Mexico for more than 25 years; Dumbarton Oaks also holds his history of Nayarit and 20th century studies of the Uto-Aztecan Cora language.

Another valuable addition is a rare 1628 edition of *Rerum medicarum Novae Hispaniae thesaurus, seu, Plantarum animalium mineralium Mexicanorum historia*, a natural history of the New World and medicinal uses of its plants produced by Francisco Hernández under Philip II of Spain. An important early natural history of Mexico, this volume contains particularly valuable botanical information as well as zoological observations. It also includes numerous Nahuatl terms, which give insight into the indigenous knowledge about plants and their categorizations.

Lastly, DO acquired a manuscript detailing a lawsuit between indigenous noblewomen over land in Cholula, including Nahuatl wills and testaments in the period 1632-95. The manuscript complements other items in our collection, such as the Ojo de Agua land dispute files, which illustrate tenure conflicts in early colonial Latin America. It also sheds light on the study of indigenous women in colonial Mexico.

Once digitized, these sources will be made available online and accessible through our new guide tool "Collection Strengths".

Collection Strengths

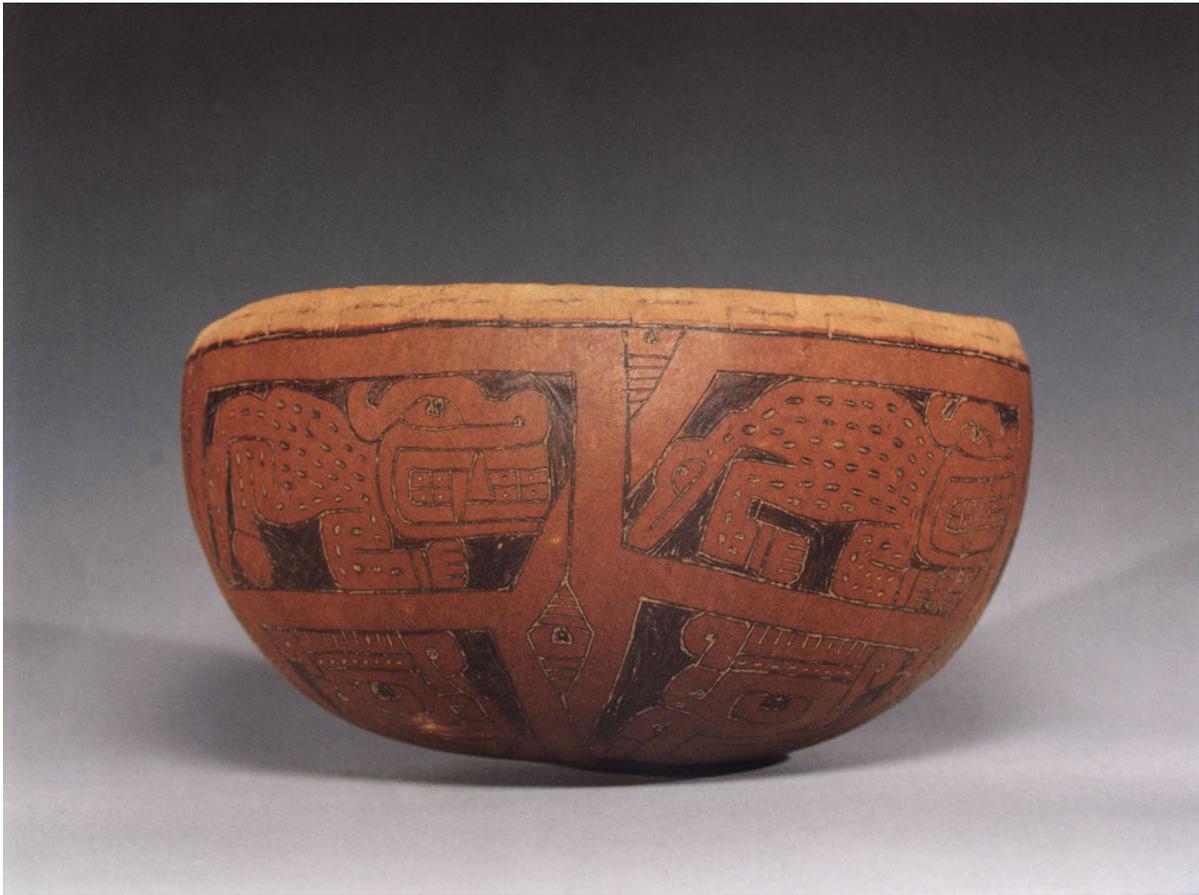


Selection from Collections Strengths Online Guide.

Dumbarton Oaks is delighted to announce the launch of a new access portal and guide to our collection of digitized rare books. [Collection Strengths](#) is a descriptive tool that offers a detailed overview of the collection's holdings in each of the programs of study and allows to explore intersections across the three fields through thematic categories such as travel, cartography, or technology. Some of the thematic categories hold specialized sources for researchers with interests in the Ancient Americas, including "Colonial Administration in Latin America", "Indigenous Languages & Missionary Texts", and "Pre-Columbian Art & Archaeology".

You may not believe it, but...

News from the Museum by Juan Antonio Murro, Associate Curator, Pre-Columbian Collection



ca. 3000-year old Andean gourd with engraving (PC.B.562) (Photo: Dumbarton Oaks)

To the envy of our Mayanist colleagues (*nuestros apreciados mayistas*), the Robert Woods Bliss Collection of Pre-Columbian Art holds a ca. 3000-year-old Andean pyro-engraved **gourd** in an almost pristine condition! The odds of having a perishable material artifact this old and in such good condition are extremely low and vastly impressive.



Carvings at Chavín Old Temple (Photo: Archive del Museo Nacional de Chavín)

This attests to the spread of the so-called Chavín phenomenon that dominated the Central Andes during the Early Horizon period all the way to the north coast of Peru, which is also suggested by this metal object from the Bliss collection, whose provenance can be traced back to the Lambayeque drainage.



Metal object from Lambayeque in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (PC.B.605) (Photo: Dumbarton Oaks)

Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks has a long-standing relationship with Chavín. Its second ever conference, the 1968 *Dumbarton Oaks Conference on Chavín*, was recently followed by the 2018 *Reconsidering the Chavín Phenomenon in the 21st Century*, showing a 50-year-old commitment to the field. Furthermore, last year's Junior Fellow Michelle Young, Ph.D. spent her year in residence researching *The 'Chavín Phenomenon' in Huancavelica, Peru: Interregional Interaction, Ritual Practice, and Social Transformations at Atalla*.

While the Dumbarton Oaks Museum remains closed, we invite you to visit our **[digital collection](#)**.

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection
1703 32nd Street NW
Washington, DC 20007

[unsubscribe from all emails](#) [update subscription preferences](#)