

Dumbarton Oaks

Research Library and Collection

Pre-Columbian Studies Program Newsletter



2018-2019 PCS Fellowship cohort with Director of Pre-Columbian Studies, Colin McEwan, and Program Coordinator, Adrienne Varitimidis

Image: Dumbarton Oaks

This past year, the Pre-Columbian Studies (PCS) program welcomed fellows, junior fellows, summer fellows, a Tyler fellow, short-term pre-doctoral residents, one-month research awardees,

and project grantees who thrived on interdisciplinary collaboration and related research interests.

We also would like to welcome new Program Director for Pre-Columbian Studies, **Frauke Sachse**, and Pre-Columbian Studies Librarian, **Flora Lindsay-Herrera** to the program.

Message from the Program Director



Pre-Columbian Studies Program Director, Dr. Frauke Sachse

Image: Angelique Tuszakowski

Dumbarton Oaks continues to be at the forefront of research on the cultures of the ancient Americas. Our fellowship program and conferences bring together scholars from a wide range of disciplines that undertake research in the archaeology, art, writing, and colonial history of Mesoamerica, the Andes, and other cultural areas. With its rich resources and collections, Dumbarton Oaks facilitates communication and exchange across the fields and provides the ground for new ideas to grow and thrive. We are delighted to welcome fellows from different countries and diverse backgrounds, including representatives of the origin cultures whose objects and concepts we study. It is my privilege to be able to serve this vibrant community of

researchers and I look forward to supporting and expanding the network of scholars who focus on the ancient Americas. With this newsletter, we hope to keep you informed about our current fellows, upcoming symposia and colloquia, updates regarding our collections, and recent staff changes in our program of study.

- Dr. Frauke Sachse

[Dr. Sachse](#) has a background in Mesoamerican Studies with a focus in language research and ethnohistory of Guatemala. She received her PhD in Linguistics from Leiden University and most recently served as an assistant professor at the University of Bonn in the Department of Anthropology of the Americas. She joined Dumbarton Oaks on September 3, 2019.

Looking Back

Remembering Bridget Gazzo



Bridget choosing an image from the Christopher B. Donnan and Donna McLelland Moche Archive in ICFA.

Image: Dumbarton Oaks

Bridget Gazzo, PCS Librarian passed away peacefully on November 3, 2018 after a brief battle with cancer. Bridget took a keen interest in everyone she met, especially each year's fellowship cohort. No request was too large or too small and countless researchers at all stages in their careers benefited from her profound knowledge of the library's resources. She was deeply invested in developing the collection and always happy and proud to serve the researchers who used it. A true friend and inspiration to so many, Bridget will be greatly missed.

Fall 2018 Symposium: Reconsidering the Chavín Phenomenon in the 21st Century

Our annual Pre-Columbian Studies symposium, "[Reconsidering the Chavín Phenomenon in the 21st Century](#)" held on October 5–6, 2018, was organized by **Richard Burger** and **Jason Nesbitt**

and addressed the impact of Chavín de Huántar on the emergence of ancient Andean civilization during the late Initial Period (1100–800 BCE) and Early Horizon (800–400 BCE). The pan-Andean influence of Chavín de Huántar has led some scholars to refer to a “Chavín Horizon” or “Chavín Interaction Sphere,” while others, feeling less certain about its nature, refer to a “Chavín Phenomenon.” Over the last fifteen years, a surge in archaeological research at Chavín sites throughout the Andes has generated a wealth of new data, making this a timely opportunity to undertake a critical reassessment of models of interregional interaction. The symposium highlighted these investigations to create an updated synthesis of Chavín as a regional phenomenon. The meeting also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the initial foundational conference on Chavín in 1968, which was presided over by the late **Elizabeth P. Benson**, the Founding Curator of the Pre-Columbian Art Collection and Founding Director of the Pre-Columbian Studies Program at Dumbarton Oaks. Just before the symposium, a memorial service was offered in remembrance of her career, during which staff, friends, and colleagues reminisced about her life in the field and her distinguished contributions to it in different capacities.

Spring 2019 Colloquium: Mesoamerican Codices: New Discoveries and New Directions

The annual Pre-Columbian Colloquium “[Mesoamerican Codices: New Discoveries and New Directions](#)” was held on March 12, 2019 at Dumbarton Oaks, and on March 13, 2019 at the Library of Congress and the National Museum of the American Indian. Colloquium organizers and PCS Senior Fellows, **Diana Magaloni Kerpel** and **Barbara E. Mundy**, brought together leading international scholars from the sciences and the humanities. The codices were the extraordinary creations of indigenous artists building on a millennium-long history prior to European contact. Research scientists working in laboratories in Europe and the Americas have deployed both invasive and noninvasive analytical techniques, and we now know more about the physical nature of substrates, surfaces, pigments, and binders than at any point since the moment of their facture. The colloquium fostered a productive conversation about the meaning of their iconographies and semantic systems, the reasons for their creation, the identities and social roles of their creators, and their biographies over time.

Written in Knots: Undeciphered Accounts of Andean Life



Pendant khipu with color seriation, Wari, 779-981 CE

PC.WBC.2016.068

Image: Dumbarton Oaks

This installation was the first to assemble examples of Wari, Inka, and Colonial khipu. Khipus were sophisticated devices used by the Wari and Inka empires to record information, such as census data and labor obligations. Fewer than a dozen complete Wari khipu are known to exist in museum collections, and three were on show at the Dumbarton Oaks Museum, along with interactive displays designed to help visitors understand the way khipu worked, how they were made, and how information was encoded. More than 14,000 visitors came to see [Written in Knots: Undeciphered Accounts of Andean Life](#) while it was on view from April 2 through August 18, 2019. **Juan Antonio Murro**, Assistant Curator of the Pre-Columbian Collection, curated this exhibition with Dr. **Jeffrey Splitstoser**, an expert on Wari khipus and ancient textiles and Assistant Research Professor of Anthropology at George Washington University. Aside from the 14,000 plus museum visitors who saw the khipus, Juan Antonio Murro and Jeff Splitstoser also led Curator Tours throughout the duration of the exhibit.

Presented alongside the special exhibition, an additional installation called [Beyond Knotting: Wari and Inka Tunics from the Collection](#) examined the relationship between two components of the Andean woven world, tunics and khipus. Although different in function—tunics were worn as

clothing, while khipus encoded and transported information—both types of textiles were made of the same materials, were produced through many related techniques, and tell stories about their owners. The luxurious Wari and Inka tunics presented projected the worldviews and ritual behavior of each society’s most powerful actors.

Public Lecture: Anita G. Cook

The [Pre-Columbian Studies Public Lecture](#) was delivered on April 25, 2019 by **Anita G. Cook**, Professor and Chair in the Department of Anthropology at the Catholic University of America, who addressed “Keys to the Empire: Wari Religion and Politics in City and Country.” The event was timed to coincide with the museum exhibition, *Written in Knots: Undeciphered Accounts of Andean Life*. Professor Cook explored an alternative view of Wari centers as largely nonurban; while cities did exist, their role, activities, and functions remain open to debate. She offered a brief examination of different Wari-affiliated sites and revealed how vastly different architectural and ceremonial approaches characterized the Wari experiment in empire-building.

Visiting Scholar: María Teresa Uriarte



Visiting Scholar, Dr. María Teresa Uriarte

Image: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

In the spring we also welcomed **María Teresa Uriarte**, or Tere, as a Visiting Scholar in Pre-Columbian Studies. She has spent her entire professional career at the National University of Mexico (UNAM), having headed the Cultural Affairs Department and the Institute of Aesthetic Research, and currently serving as the Project Director of the Pre-Hispanic Mural Painting Project in Mexico. Dr. Uriarte gave an informal talk to the Dumbarton Oaks community on “Remarkable Women, the Mayas and Art History”, during which she discussed the frenzy for discoveries in the nineteenth-century and how women silently shaped the history of the time by treading new ground and providing us visual and written accounts of their findings.

Fall 2019 Symposium: Waves of Influence: Revisiting Coastal Connections between Pre-Columbian Northwest South America and Mesoamerica



Jar, 1200–1500 CE. Peru, Ica or Chincha Valley. Earthenware with colored slips. Collection of the Denver Art Museum: Gift of Frederick and Jan Mayer, 1970.230.1.

Image: Denver Art Museum

Organized by symposiarchs, **Christopher S. Beekman** and **Colin McEwan**, "[Waves of Influence: Revisiting Coastal Connections between Pre-Columbian Northwest South America](#)

[and Mesoamerica](#)", held on October 11 and 12, 2019, addressed the evidence for interaction along the contiguous coastal littoral from western Mexico to northern Peru. Participants considered the history of local and regional waterborne contacts, as well as long distance voyaging, as alternate modes of movement along the coast. Far from following a culture area model, individual centers emerged to form local, regional, and long-distance networks, which structured coastal communication and navigation. The scholarship presented offered perspectives on Pre-Columbian societies around dynamic and overlapping social networks that connected, rather than separated, different geographical areas. Registration for this event was fully booked, with nearly 150 people participating over the two days. 2019-2020 is the first year since Dumbarton Oaks expanded the [Bliss Symposium Awards](#), thus enabling five graduate students, including international students, to travel to Washington, DC to attend the symposium.

Looking Ahead

Introducing 2019-2020 Pre-Columbian Studies Fellows



The 2019-2020 Fellows at Dumbarton Oaks.

Image: Dumbarton Oaks

[We are excited to welcome our new Pre-Columbian Studies fellows this year!](#)

Stephanie M. Strauss, University of Texas at Austin – Fellow

Saburo Sugiyama, Arizona State University – Fellow

Loa Traxler, University of New Mexico – Fellow

Gina Buckley, Pennsylvania State University – Junior Fellow

Victor Castillo, University of Arizona – Junior Fellow

Sarah Kennedy, University of Pittsburgh – Junior Fellow

Michelle Young, Yale University – Junior Fellow

David Colmenares Gonzalez, Columbia University – Summer Fellow

Mirjana Danilovic, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – Summer Fellow

Christopher Valesey, Pennsylvania State University – Summer Fellow

James Almeida, Harvard University – Tyler Fellow

Trenton Barnes, Harvard University – Tyler Fellow

Felipe Ledesma-Núñez, Harvard University – Tyler Fellow

For more information on Dumbarton Oaks fellowships, including how to apply, please visit our [website](#).

Spring 2020 Colloquium: Heritage and Its Missions



Ruin of the Mission of São Miguel church, Brazil

Image: Adriana Dias

The 2020 Spring Colloquium will be organized by **Cristóbal Gnecco** (Universidad de Cauca) and **Adriana Dias** (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul). Investigations on heritage have flourished in the last two decades, ranging from the empirical to the theoretical, from the local to the global. Interdisciplinary in scope and classed under the name “critical heritage studies,” these investigations make extensive use of ethnographic perspectives to examine heritage not as a collection of inert things (or intangibles, to use more recent parlance) upon which a general historical interest is centered, but as a series of active meanings that have consequences in social, political, and economic arenas. Such critical, relational approaches are beginning to have a bearing in studies of the meanings accorded to the standing remains of the pre-Republican Catholic missions in the Americas, most notably in California, Mexico, and the Southern Cone. Yet no academic event has been devoted to engaging those meanings in comparative terms, exploring issues that are important for a number of actors/collectives, not just those related to the states and the disciplines.

"[Heritage and Its Missions](#)" aims to discuss past and current meanings accorded to missions by

national and multicultural states, local communities (especially, but not exclusively, indigenous ones), international heritage agencies, and scholars (historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and heritage experts). Participants from several countries in the Americas show how different actors (local communities/collectives, indigenous peoples, archaeologists, scholars, and heritage institutions at the national and transnational level) and narratives collide or articulate around those varied meanings, some of which are decidedly counterhegemonic. The understanding of such struggles must show how global policies on heritage are performed locally, even if the purported heritage is of colonial origin, such as that of the Catholic missions. Participants address the following starting questions: (1) how heritage agents produce knowledge from their positioned perspectives, (2) how different actors/collectives/communities/publics relate to them, (3) how heritage representations are deployed (and many times countered) as social facts, and (4) how different conceptions of “heritage” collide, collaborate, and intersperse, in order to produce the meanings around which semiotic struggles unfold.

Library

Pre-Columbian Studies Librarian, **Flora Lindsay-Herrera** joined Dumbarton Oaks in mid-August. Flora brings nearly 15 years of work experience that combines library and information services, program management, user engagement, and a deep commitment to Latin American history and cultures. She worked as Library Assistant at Widener Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts for 6 years and received her undergraduate degree from Harvard College. In early 2008, Flora worked as Temporary Library Assistant at Dumbarton Oaks, assisting with the rare book move and donations processing. In her previous role, she was Director of the Latin American and Caribbean business unit for Chemonics International, where she supervised and collaborated with international teams for implementation of USAID-funded contracts in Latin America and conducted overseas assignments and research for project development worldwide. Flora’s background includes undergraduate and graduate studies in Latin American history, anthropology, and art history.

[Iyaxel Cojti Ren](#) has been appointed the Post-Doctoral Fellow in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology. Dr. Cojti is working in the Images Collections and Fieldwork Archives (ICFA) contributing to the migration to HOLLIS Images and enhancement of the cataloging of Justin Kerr’s photographs of ancient Maya ceramics. Iyaxel recently completed her PhD in archaeology at Vanderbilt University with a dissertation on Maya settlements in the Guatemala highlands in the Post-Classic period. Iyaxel has participated in numerous archaeological excavations in Central America and directed an excavation in Chichicastenango, Guatemala. Since 2010, she has been involved in presenting annual workshops on ancient Maya epigraphy for modern indigenous Maya communities in Guatemala. Iyaxel comes from a K’iche’ Maya community in

the highlands of Guatemala and holds a BA from the Universidad del Valle, Guatemala City.

The Library made several important additions to the Pre-Columbian Rare Book collection, including a nineteenth-century manuscript “Costumbres de los indigenas que habiten en el Valle del Amazonas en el departamento de Loreto,” a large assemblage of sixteenth to eighteenth-century manuscript materials documenting a land dispute between a ranch owner and his Nahua neighbors, and a collection of drawings and watercolors of Mayan antiquities exhibited at the 1929 Ibero-American Exhibition in Seville, Spain. ICFA received **William and Barbara Conklin’s** research materials and documentary photographs of Pre-Columbian textiles as well as Betty Benson’s research materials and photographs.

Publications



The **Dumbarton Oaks Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology** monographs focus on specific themes and research in Pre-Columbian art and archaeology. The books highlight research drawing on archaeological, art historical, and ethnohistorical approaches to the Pre-Columbian past in Mesoamerica, Central America, and the Andes. Each one focuses on a theme or a collection of material that merits in-depth examination and presentation. Volumes 1 through 35 are now open access and available through [Dumbarton Oaks Publications](#).

Project Grants



Top Photo: Students and volunteers excavating a structure at Los Batanes with view of the lomas pampa and the Tacora volcano.

Bottom Photos: Excellent preservation allowed for the recovery of intact baskets and wooden artefacts from burials at Los Batanes.

Image: Sarah Baitzel

Spotlight: Sarah Baitzel

A unique research opportunity provided by Dumbarton Oaks, a Project Grant is meant to assist with scholarly projects that focus on archaeological investigation, as well as for the recovery, recording, and analysis of materials that would otherwise be lost. Applicants should provide evidence that such sites, landscapes, or objects are under immediate threat.

Pre-Columbian project awardees, such as **Sarah Baitzel**, are intended only to survey, excavate, and/or document sites, landscapes, or objects that are in imminent danger. Sarah's project, entitled "Battle at Los Batanes? Rescue Excavations at a Fortified Tiwanaku Colony in Sama, Peru", examined the intersection between state expansion and collapse, violence, and vertical exchange in the southern Andes from the perspective of the Los Batanes site, a recently

discovered fortified Terminal Middle Horizon settlement in the middle Sama valley, southern Peru. Thanks to the support from the Dumbarton Oaks Project Grant, Sarah is currently cooperating with the Ministerio de Cultural DDC Tacna to implement necessary protective measures at the local and administrative levels to protect the site from encroaching threats of agricultural and infrastructural development. To read more about Sarah's project, click [here](#).

Pre-Columbian Studies Award Opportunities

Bliss Symposium Awards

Dumbarton Oaks is proud to offer the newly expanded Bliss Symposium Awards, designed to engage advanced undergraduates and graduate students through supported attendance of annual symposia in Pre-Columbian Studies. Up to six awards will be made for each symposium. Up to three awards will be offered to students of Harvard University, with which Dumbarton Oaks is affiliated, and up to three awards will be offered to students from other US and international institutions.

One-Month Research Awards

Dumbarton Oaks offers One-Month Research Awards of \$3,000 to scholars holding a PhD or other relevant terminal degree and working on research projects in Pre-Columbian studies or related fields. The awards were established to make the intellectual community, as well as the library, rare book, garden, and museum resources, of Dumbarton Oaks more widely available to a broader range of scholars for shorter terms and with some flexibility in starting dates. Awards are intended especially for those who might not be able to avail themselves of a longer-term fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks, or scholars in related disciplines who seek greater exposure to our fields of study. Applications are due March 1, 2019 for the award period of July 1 through December 20.

Short-Term Predoctoral Residencies

Dumbarton Oaks offers a limited number of Short-Term Predoctoral Residencies for advanced graduate students who are preparing for their PhD general exams, writing their doctoral dissertations, or expecting relevant final degrees in the field of Pre-Columbian Studies. Students who plan to conduct research in the fieldwork and photo collections, the rare book collection, or the museum collections are particularly encouraged to apply.

For further information on all awards, please visit the Dumbarton Oaks [website](#).

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