ANTH 2175 - **The Inca Quipu (Khipu)**   Gary Urton
Spring, 2020   Peabody Museum 557A-B
Wed 3:00-5:45, Peabody Museum 561   Office tel.: 617-496-8534
https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/64660   gurton@fas.harvard.edu

I - This course will explore one of the most remarkable, complex, and mysterious artifacts of the ancient Americas: the khipu (or quipu; Quechua-"knot"), the knotted-string devices used for record keeping in the Inca empire of pre-Columbian South America. The Spanish *conquistadores* and priests described this recording technology and its use in Inka administration in some detail; however, none of the Spanish commentators really understood how khipu recording and reading were performed. Recent studies (using an innovative mix of ethnography, ethnohistory, and computation/databasing) have revealed new insights into this hitherto mysterious system of record keeping, especially its grounding in the principle of binary coding.

        During the course of the semester, we will investigate such issues as: What were the precursors to Inca cord-keeping technology? Did khipu recording represent a system of writing? What were the principal sign-values used by khipu-keepers (known as khipukamayuqs – "knot makers/animators") to record information in these devices? How standardized were recording methods across the empire? To what extent did the structures and principles of khipu recording mimic the structures and organization of the Inka Empire itself? How did khipu recording compare to the writing/recording systems of other ancient civilizations, such as those of ancient Egypt, Sumeria, China and the Maya? And what became of the practice of recording on knotted cords following the Spanish conquest?

        Students will have the opportunity to make khipus, in order to understand how these remarkable objects were made and used, and we will study khipu samples in the Peabody Museum. Students will write a research paper on a topic worked out in consultation with the professor.

II - The required texts for the course, which may be purchased at the COOP (or online; or perhaps these are available online, as e-books) are:

- Jeffrey Quilter & Gary Urton (eds.), <u>Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu</u>. University of Texas Press. 2002.

- Gary Urton, <u>Signs of the Inka Khipu: Binary Coding in the Andean Knotted-String Records</u>. University of Texas Press. 2003.

- Gary Urton, <u>Inka History in Knots: Reading Khipus as Primary Sources</u>. University of Texas Press. 2017.

    * Links to digital, PDF readings, labeled **(WS)** in the "Schedule of Topics and Readings" beginning on the next page, will be found at the course website: ([https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/64660)](https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/64660).

III - Grades will be determined as follows:

	<u>Graduates</u>	<u>Undergraduates</u>
Class participation	- 50%	- 30%
Midterm Exam		- 20%
Research Paper	- 50% (min. 20 pp.)	- 30% (min. 10 pp.)
Final Exam		- 20%
	_____	_____
	- 100%	- 100%

Academic dishonesty of any sort will be referred to and dealt with by the Administrative Board. Please consult the Student Handbook (http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu) for information regarding academic dishonesty. Details concerning academic dishonesty in writing can be found in the "Writing with Sources" pamphlet on-line at http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources/.

Collaboration on Written Assignments:
Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

The schedule of topics and readings for the course begins on the next page.

Schedule of Topics and Readings
(Adjustments in number of readings will be made for undergraduates)

Introduction

Jan. 29 – The Inka Empire, its administration, and its khipu recordkeeping system

a) G. Urton, "A Brief Introduction to Tawantinsuyu." In Inka History in Knots; pp. 33-52.
b) G. Urton, "An Overview of Spanish Colonial Commentary on Andean Knotted-String Records." In Narrative Threads; pp. 3-25.

What is "Recordkeeping" and Why Is It Not Necessarily "Writing?"

Feb. 5 – a) J. DeFrancis, "What is Writing?" In J. DeFrancis, Visible Speech: The Diverse Oneness of Writing Systems. Univ. of Hawaii Press; pp. 20-64. **(WS)**
b) M. Ascher, "Reading Khipu: Labels, Structure, and Format." In Narrative Threads, Ed. by Quilter & Urton, pp. 87-102.
c) R. Ascher, "Inka Writing." In Narrative Threads. Pp. 103-118.
  * - In-class khipu making!

Cloth as a Communication Medium in the Andes

Feb. 12 – a) J.V. Murra, "Cloth and Its Function in the Inka State." In Cloth and Human Experience, ed. by Weiner & Schneider. Smithsonian Inst. Press (1989):275-302. **(WS)**
b) E. Harlizius-Klück, "The Importance of Beginnings: gender and reproduction in mathematics and weaving." In Greek and Roman Textiles and Dress, Ed. by M. harlow and M.-L. Nosch (2014):46-59. **(WS)**
c) W. Conklin, "A Khipu Information String Theory." In Narrative Threads, ed by J. Quilter & G. Urton: pp. 53-86.
  * - Viewing Andean/Inka textiles in the Peabody Museum collection

Structure, Memory and Information

Feb. 19 – a) R. Howard, "Landscape, Memory, and Discourse Structure in Quechua Narratives." In Narrative Threads. Pp. 26-47.
b) John Schechter, "The Inca Cantar Histórico: A Lexico-Historical Elaboration on Two Cultural Themes." Ethnomusicology 23, no. 2 (1979):191-204. **(WS)**
c) B. Mannheim, "Time, Not the Syllables, Must be Counted: Quechua Parallelism, Word Meaning, and Cultural Analysis." Michigan Discussions in Anthropology, Vol. 13 (1998):245-287. **(WS)**
d) G. Urton, "A New Twist in an Old Yarn: Variation in Knot Directionality in the Inka Khipus." Baessler-Archiv, Neue Folge, vo.. 42 (1994):271-302. **(WS)**

Precursors of Inka Khipu

Feb. 26 – a) J. Splitstoser, "Practice and meaning in spiral-wrapped batons and cords from Cerrillos, a Late Paracas site in the Inca Valley, Peru." In <u>Textiles, Technical Practice, and Power in the Andes</u>, ed. by D. Arnold & P. Dransart. Archetype Publications (2014); pp. 46-82. **(WS)**

b) W.J. Conklin, "The Information System of Middle Horizon Quipus." In <u>Ethnoastronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the American Tropics</u>, ed. by Aveni and Urton (1982); pp. 261-81. **(WS)**

c) G. Urton, "From Middle Horizon cord-keeping to the rise of Inka khipus in the central Andes." <u>Antiquity</u> 88 (2014):205-221. **(WS)**

A Theory of Khipu Signs – Binary Coding

Mar. 4 – a) G. Urton, <u>Signs of the Inka Khipu</u>, pp. 1-164.

b) S. Hyland, "Ply, Markedness, and Redundancy: New Evidence for How Andean Khipus Encoded Information." <u>American Anthropologist</u> vol. 116, no. 3 (2014): 1-6. **(WS)**

Khipus in Inka Administration - I

Mar. 11 - a) G. Urton, <u>Inka History in Knots</u>:
Chapter 3 – pp. 53-62
Chapter 4 – pp. 63-84
Chapter 5 – pp. 85-100

Mar. 18 - **SPRING RECESS**
 * - Opening of major khipu exhibit; Museum of Art, Lima (MALI), March 19th

Khipus in Inka Administration – II

Mar. 25 – a) G. Urton, <u>Inka History in Knots</u>:
Chapter 8 – pp. 143-153
Chapter 9 – pp. 154-178

b) J. Clindaniel, "Deciphering the Logic of Inka Khipu Cord Color Signs," and "Investigating the Role of Color Banding and Seriation in Inka Khipu Semiosis," from <u>Toward a Grammar of the Inka Khipu: Investigating the Production of Non-numerical Signs</u>; pp. 64-115

Khipus in Colonial Administration

Apr. 1 - a) G. Urton, <u>Inka History in Knots</u>:
Chapter 11 – pp. 207-216
Chapter 12 – pp. 217-246

b) M. Medrano & G. Urton, "Toward the Decipherment of a Set of Mid-Colonial Khipus from the Santa Valley, Coastal Peru." <u>Ethnohistory</u> vol. 65, no. 1 (2018):1-20. **(WS)**

Khipu Writing / Khipu Narratives

Apr. 8 - a) G. Urton, "From Knots to Narratives…" <u>Ethnohistory</u> 45, no. 3 (1998):409-38. **(WS)**
b) G. Urton, "Recording Signs in Narrative-Accounting Khipu." In <u>Narrative Threads,</u> ed. by J. Quilter & G. Urton. Univ. of Texas Press (2002); pp. 171-96.
c) S. Hyland, "Writing with Twisted Cords." <u>Current Anthropology</u> vol. 58, no. 3 (2017):1-8. **(WS)**
d) J. Clindaniel, "Outlining a grammar of Inka Khipu Signs." From <u>Toward a Grammar of the Inka Khipu: Investigating the Production of Non-numerical Signs</u>; pp. 116-134.

Khipus and Confession in the Colonial Andes

Apr. 15 – a) R. Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario*: Khipu Knots and Confession." In <u>Narrative Threads,</u> ed. by J. Quilter & G. Urton. Univ. of Texas Press (2002); pp. 266-292.
b) J. Charles, "Unreliable Confessions: Khipus in the Colonial Parish." <u>The Americas</u> 64, no. 1 (2007):11-33. **(WS)**
c) G. Urton, "Sin, Confession and the Arts of Book- and Cord-Keeping: An Intercontinental and Transcultural Exploration of Accounting and Governmentality." <u>Comparative Studies in Society and History</u> 51, no. 4 (2009); pp. 801-31. **(WS)**

Ethnographic/Patrimonial Khipu

Apr. 22 – a) S. Hyland, "Knot Direction in a Khipu/Alphabetic Text from the Central Andes." <u>Latin American Antiquity</u> 25, no. 2 (2014):1-9. **(WS)**
b) F. Salomon, "Patrimonial Khipu in a Modern Peruvian Village: An Introduction to the 'Quipocamayos' of Tupicocha." In <u>Narrative Threads,</u> ed. by J. Quilter & G. Urton, Univ. of Texas Press (2002); pp. 293-319.
c) J. C. de la Puente Luna, "That Which Belongs to All: Khipus, Community and Indigenous Legal Activism in the Early Colonial Andes. <u>The Americas</u>. Vol. 72, no. 1 (2015):19-54. **(WS)**

A Look Beyond the Khipus and the Andes
Apr. 29 - (Last Class)
a) H. Saussy, "Interplanetary Literature" [i.e., interplanetary binary coding]. <u>Comparative Literature</u> vo. 63, no. 4 (2011):438-447. **(WS)**

* - **Brief presentations by students of research papers.**

May 8 - **Research Papers Due (5:00p.m.)**