



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to MS 2037 Drawings of
ceremonial dry paintings, 1897-1904

National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	MS 2037 Drawings of ceremonial dry paintings
Date:	1897-1904
Identifier:	NAA.MS2037
Creator:	Stevenson, Matilda Coxe, 1850-1915 (Collector) Unknown (Artist)
Extent:	4 Drawings (visual works) (pencil and watercolor)
Language:	English .
Container:	Box 2037 / 2038, Folder 1-3; Box 2037 / 2038, Folder 1-3

Administrative Information

Related Materials

The National Anthropological Archives holds Matilda Coxe Stevenson's papers in MS 4689.

The Smithsonian Institution Collections and Archives Program's Cross-Collections Guide to Matilda Coxe Stevenson, written by Abby Clouse-Radigan, PhD, provides information on object collections related to Stevenson, as well as additional biographical information and notes on Stevenson's correspondence in the National Anthropological Archives.

Preferred Citation

MS 2037 Drawings of ceremonial dry paintings, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Access to the collection requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Historical Note

Sand paintings were made by the Zuni and Navajo as part of healing rituals or ceremonies. The artist would use naturally colored grains of sand, pouring them by hand to create elaborate "paintings."

Biographical Note

Matilda Coxe Stevenson (1849-1915; though her birth year is often erroneously listed as 1850) was the first woman to study the American Southwest and the first (and for a long time the only) female anthropologist hired by the US government. Born Matilda Coxe Evans in 1849 in San Augustine, Texas, Stevenson was brought to Washington, D.C., as an infant. She was educated at Miss Anable's English, French, and German School in Philadelphia and through private studies with her father and Dr. William M. Mew of the Army Medical Museum. In 1872 she married James Stevenson, a geologist with the US Geological Survey of the Territories. From 1872-1878, Matilda joined James on Ferdinand V. Hayden's geological surveys to Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah, and assisted him by compiling geological data. When the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) was created in 1879, Matilda Stevenson was appointed "volunteer coadjutor [sic] in ethnology" and she went with James on his BAE expeditions to the Southwest.

After James Stevenson's death in 1888, BAE Director John Wesley Powell hired Matilda Stevenson to organize her husband's notes. In 1889, Stevenson became regular BAE staff. From 1890 to 1907, Stevenson did substantial individual fieldwork at Zuni and published "The Zuni Indians: Their Mythology, Esoteric Fraternities, and Ceremonies" in the Bureau of American Ethnology's Twenty-Third Annual Report (1901-2). Starting in 1904, Stevenson conducted comparative studies at Zia, Jemez, San Juan, Cochiti, Nambe, Picarus, Tesuque, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, and Taos. In 1907 she purchased a ranch (Ton'yo) near San Ildefonso, which became her base for fieldwork. Stevenson died in Maryland on June 24, 1915.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of four (4) drawings of Zuni dry paintings, or sandpaintings, collected by Matilda Coxe Stevenson.

A note on one of the drawings reads: "drawn by Nick; described by Nick in Great Fire Society." A description of the dry painting which this drawing illustrates was published in Stevenson, Matilada C. "The Zuni Indians: Their Mythology, Esoteric Fraternities, and Ceremonies," *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1901-1902. (1904) 507.

The remaining three drawing are unidentified. Two of the drawings represent the same design, but there is no identification of the artist or the ceremony in which the painting is used. All three of the unidentified drawings resemble the drawing by Nick in style and in details of the design.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Local Numbers

NAA MS 2037
INV 08631001
INV 08631002
INV 11014800
INV 11014900

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

A:shiwi (Zuni)
Sandpaintings

Cultures:

A:shiwi (Zuni)

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Works of art

Places:

North America