



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to MS 2205 Copies of Alexander
von Humboldt collection of Mexican
pictographic manuscripts, circa 1904

National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	MS 2205 Copies of Alexander von Humboldt collection of Mexican pictographic manuscripts
Date:	circa 1904
Identifier:	NAA.MS2205
Creator:	Humboldt, Alexander von, 1769-1859 (Collector) von den Steinen, Wilhelm, 1854-1934 (Artist)
Extent:	18 Drawings (pencil, ink, watercolor) 2 Photocopies (photostats)
Language:	Captions are in Spanish, Nahuatl, and English.

Administrative Information

Location of Originals

The Alexander von Humboldt collection, also known as *Manuscripta americana*, is held by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Germany) and the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków (Poland).

Related Materials

The National Anthropological Archives holds material related to the publication of these materials in BAE *Bulletin 28* in MS 3251 Miscellaneous material used in Bulletin 28, Mexican and Central American Antiquities, Calendar Systems and History.

The British Museum holds copies of the Humboldt collection drawn by Agostino Aglio for Lord Kingsborough in MS 8882.

Preferred Citation

MS 2205 Copies of Alexander von Humboldt collection of Mexican pictographic manuscripts, 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.

Biographical Note

Alexander von Humboldt was a Prussian naturalist and geographer who traveled extensively in Central and South America. The records and studies he made during his travels helped establish physical geography and geophysics as disciplines. His writings such as *Voyage de Humboldt et Bonpland* and *Kosmos* also contributed to make him one of the foremost scholars of the 19th century.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of 18 drawings and 2 photostats. The drawings are copies of fragments of Aztec manuscripts collected by Alexander von Humboldt and donated to the Royal Library of Berlin (now the Berlin State Library or Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) in 1806. The drawings were made by Wilhem von den Steinen from the originals in the Royal Library. They were commissioned by Eduard Seler and the Bureau of American Ethnology to illustrate Seler's article "Mexican Picture Writings of Alexander von Humboldt" in the *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, 28, (1904).

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 2205

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aztec (archaeological culture)

Cultures:

Aztec (archaeological culture)

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Works of art
facsimiles (reproductions)

Names:

Seler, Eduard, 1849-1922

Places:

Mexico
North America

Container Listing

Box 2205, Folder 1	Humboldt Fragment I, Part 1 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 10.75 x 14.5 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment I, Part 1; Signed W. V. D.(?) Steinen, Berlin Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882000
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment I, Part 2 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 10.25 x 40.25 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment I, Part 2 Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882100
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment I, Part 3 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 10.25 x 40 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment I, Part 3 Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882200
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment I, Part 4 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 10.5 x 39 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment I, Part 4 Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882300
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment I, Part 5 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 11 x 38.5 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment I, Part 5 Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882400
Box 2205, Folder 1	Humboldt Fragment II 1 Photocopy (photostat; 9.5 x 14.5 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment II Photostat Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment II Photostat Notes: NAA INV 08883800
Box 2205, Folder 1	Humboldt Fragment III 1 Photocopy (photostat; 10 x 14 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment III Photostat Notes: NAA INV 08883900
Box 2205, Folder 1	Humboldt Fragment IV 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 19.75 x 13.25) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment IV; Signed W. V. D. (?) Steinen, Berlin Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883700
Box 2205, Folder 1	Humboldt Fragment V 1 Drawing (pen, ink, watercolor; 8.5 x 19.25 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment V Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883400

Box 2205, Folder 1	Humboldt Fragment VI 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 10.5 x 9.75 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment VI; Signed W. V. D. (?) Steinen Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883100
Box 2205, Folder 2	Humboldt Fragment VII 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 9.5 x 13.25 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment VII Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883300
Box 2205, Folder 2	Humboldt Fragment VIII 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 13.7 x 10 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment VIII Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882500
Box 2205, Folder 2	Humboldt Fragment IX 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 9.5 x 19.75 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment IX Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882700
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment X 1 Drawing (9.5 x 24.75 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment X Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882900
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment XI 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 10 x 24 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment XI Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882800
Folder 2205	Humboldt Fragment XII 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 9.75 x 31 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment XII Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883000
Box 2205, Folder 2	Humboldt Fragment XIII 1 Item (pencil, ink, watercolor; 12.25 x 17.5 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment XIII Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08882600
Box 2205, Folder 2	Humboldt Fragment XIV 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 8.25 x 15 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment XIV Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883600
Box 2205, Folder 2	Humboldt Fragment XV 1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 19.25 x 13.5 inches) Image(s): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment XV Drawing Notes: NAA INV 08883500

Folder 2205

Humboldt Fragment XVI

1 Drawing (pencil, ink, watercolor; 21.25 x 16.5 inches)

[Image\(s\): Mexican Painting-Humboldt Fragment XVI Drawing](#)

Notes: NAA INV 08883200