



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

William J. Thomson photograph collection of
Easter Island Rongorongo boards, circa 1880-1890

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National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	William J. Thomson photograph collection of Easter Island Rongorongo boards
Date:	circa 1880-1890
Identifier:	NAA.PhotoLot.75-13
Creator:	Thomson, William J. (William Judah), 1841-1909
Extent:	7 Drawings 15 Prints (albumen)
Language:	Undetermined .

Administrative Information

Provenance

These photographs were found in the anthropology processing lab and transferred to the NAA in 1975.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Photographs of Easter Island by Thomson can be found in the National Anthropological Archives in Photo Lot 97.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Easter Island specimens donated by Thomson, including original Rongorongo boards and casts of others, can be found in the Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, in accessions 020078 and 023098.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Additional photographs of the USS Mohican expedition can be found in the National Anthropological Archives in Photo Lot 76-26.

Preferred Citation

Photo lot 75-13, William J. Thomson photograph collection of Easter Island Rongorongo boards, 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

William J. Thomson (1841-1909) was the United States Navy paymaster on the USS Mohican expedition to Easter Island in 1886. The expedition's purposes included archeological surveying and excavation, the creation of geographical charts, and ethnographic research. Two moai (Easter Island stone figures), Rongorongo boards, and a variety of other artifacts for the Smithsonian Institution were collected during the trip.

Scope and Contents

Photographs depicting Rongorongo "boards," wooden objects incised with glyphs that originated on Easter Island. The boards shown include the Oar, Keiti, Aruku Kerenga, Mamari, Echanree, Small Santiago, and Large Santiago. The material was probably collected by William J. Thomson for his report "Te Pito Te Henua, or Easter Island."

Bibliography

Drawings and photographs published in "Te Pito Te Henua, or Easter Island," USNM Annual Report, 1888-'89, pg. 447-552.

Local Call Number(s)

NAA Photo Lot 75-13

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Rongorongo boards -- Easter Island
Rongorongo script

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Photographs

Names:

Mohican Expedition

Places:

Easter Island