



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Isabel T. Kelly collection of photographs
of Totonac people and archeological
sites in Mexico, circa 1947-1948

Sarah Ganderup

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National Anthropological Archives
Museum Support Center
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Isabel T. Kelly collection of photographs of Totonac people and archeological sites in Mexico
Date:	circa 1947-1948
Identifier:	NAA.PhotoLot.80-32
Creator:	Kelly, Isabel T. (Isabel Truesdell), 1906- (Photographer) Kelly, Isabel T. (Isabel Truesdell), 1906- (Collector)
Extent:	75 Mounted prints (silver gelatin)
Language:	Undetermined .

Administrative Information

Provenance

The photographs were donated to the National Anthropological Archives by Isabel T. Kelly through Clifford Evans, 1980.

The watercolor drawing and school workbook were donated to the Smithsonian by Amelia de Langenscheidt and were transferred from the object collections of the Department of Anthropology to the National Anthropological Archives in 1984.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Totonac artifacts collected by Kelly held in the Department of Anthropology collections in accession 365366.

Location of Other Archival Materials

The National Anthropological Archives holds Institute of Social Anthropology photographs (Photo Lot 4623) and the ISA records.

Processing Information

The watercolor painting and school workbook were originally described by the National Anthropological Archives under MS 7408. In 2022, these items were incorporated into Photo Lot 80-32.

Preferred Citation

Photo lot 80-32, Isabel T. Kelly collection of photographs of Totonac people and archeological sites in Mexico, 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

Isabel Truesdell Kelly (1906-1983) was an archeologist and social anthropologist who specialized in Mexican cultures and prehistory. Born in Santa Cruz, California, she developed a long-standing scholarly interest in anthropology while an undergraduate student at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB). She earned her BA (1926), MA (1927), and PhD (1932) in anthropology at UCB. From 1932-1934, Kelly conducted fieldwork with the Southern Paiute as a National Research Fellow in the Biological Sciences. She then went to Mexico as a research associate under the direction of Carl Sauer and Alfred Kroeber; while there, she directed archeological investigations in Culiacan, Sinaloa. In 1936, she returned to UCB as Carl Sauer's teaching assistant and then conducted research with the Gila Pueblo Archeological Foundation in 1937. With minimal funding from UCB's Anthropology Department, Kelly returned to Mexico for archeological reconnaissance in 1939. She gained Mexican residency in 1940, finally settling in Tepepan. In 1946, Kelly became Ethnologist-in-Charge of the Smithsonian's Institute of Social Anthropology (ISA) Mexico City office; she taught and conducted research among the Totonac Indians in Veracruz and conducted health care research in El Salvador and Mexico. From 1952-1960, Kelly worked with the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (forerunner to the Agency for International Development), studying in Mexico, Bolivia, and Pakistan. In 1960, she returned to research in Mexico with the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation, Wenner-Gren Foundation, and National Geographic Society.

Scope and Contents

Photographs made by Isabel T. Kelly in Tajin, Papantla, and elsewhere in Mexico. There are images of dances and dancers (including Volador "Flying" dance, Guagua, and Negrito dances), Totonac people, a Totonac wedding, and pyramids and relief sculpture at El Tajin Site. The photographs are enlarged prints, mounted and signed, that were made for an exhibit. In part, the images relate to work of the Institute of Social Anthropology and include photographs made by Isabel T. Kelly, George T. Smisor, Done Otto, Elena Guzman, Bertha B. Harris, and John McDonald; in some cases, multiple photographers documented the same event. Also included is a watercolor drawing "Palo de Voladores" and a school workbook "Silabario Metódico de San Miguel."

Local Call Number(s)

NAA Photo Lot 80-32

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Dance
- Flying dance
- Negritos
- Piaroa
- Totonac

Cultures:

- Negritos
- Piaroa

Totonac

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Done, Otto
Guzman, Elena
Harris, Bertha
Mcdonald, John
Smisor, George T.
Smithsonian Institution. Institute of Social Anthropology

Places:

Mexico -- Antiquities
Papantla de Olarte (Mexico)
Tajín (Mexico)
Tajín Site (Mexico)