

## The Edition

In 1799, Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland set out to determine whether the Orinoco River connected with the Amazon. But what started as a trip to investigate a relatively minor geographical controversy became the basis of a five-year exploration throughout South America, Mexico, and Cuba. The discoveries amassed by von Humboldt and Bonpland were staggering, and much of today's knowledge of tropical zoology, botany, geography, and geology can be traced back to von Humboldt's numerous records of these expeditions.

One of these accounts, *Views of the Cordilleras and Monuments of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas*, firmly established Alexander von Humboldt as the founder of Mesoamerican studies. In *Views of the Cordilleras*—first published in French between 1810 and 1813—von Humboldt weaves together magnificently engraved drawings and detailed texts to achieve multifaceted views of cultures and landscapes across the Americas. In doing so, he offers an alternative perspective on the New World, combating presumptions of its belatedness and inferiority by arguing that the “old” and the “new” world are of the same geological age.

This critical edition of *Views of the Cordilleras*—the second volume in the Alexander von Humboldt in English series—contains a new, unabridged English translation of von Humboldt's French text, as well as annotations, a bibliography, and all sixty-nine plates from the original edition, many of them in color.

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