Information

Languages

Alexander von Humboldt - biography

Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt, known as Alexander von Humboldt, was born in Berlin on September 14, 1769 and died there on September 6.May 1859.He was the younger brother of Wilhelm von Humboldt.

Family

Alexander von Humboldt was the second son of the Prussian major retired. D. and Chamberlain Alexander Georg von Humboldt and his wife Marie-Elisabeth von Hollwede, née.Colomb, born in Berlin.His wealthy family enabled him and his brother Wilhelm von Humboldt to receive a comprehensive education.Excellent tutors were available for the two children in the family castle in Berlin-Tegel.

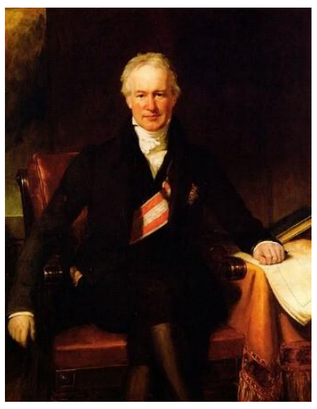

Fig.: A. v. Humboldt

Education and career

Humboldt showed an interest in natural history and plant science from an early age.He studied at the Commercial Academy in Hamburg and in 1791 enrolled at the Freiberg Mining Academy under the famous geologist Abraham Gottlob Werner.His professional career began in February 1792 in the Prussian mining department as an assessor cum voto.

Humboldt undertook several years of research trips to Latin America, the USA and Central Asia.During this time he collected thousands of plants, dried them and sent them to Europe for further study.

Scientific work

Humboldt conducted scientific field studies in the fields of physics, geology, mineralogy, botany, vegetation geography, zoology, climatology, oceanography and astronomy.Further research concerned economic geography, ethnology, demography, physiology and chemistry.He exchanged ideas with numerous experts from various disciplines and thus created a scientific network.

Alexander von Humboldtwas considered “the greatest naturalist of [his] time.”.The Prussian Academy of Sciences honored him as “the first scientific great of his age,” whose world fame surpassed even that of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.The Paris Academy of Sciences gave him the nickname “The New Aristotle.”.

Throughout his life he made many discoveries and inventions. What is very formative here is that Humboldt first tested all of his inventions on himself (e.g. electricity experiments) and so often narrowly escaped death.

Legacy

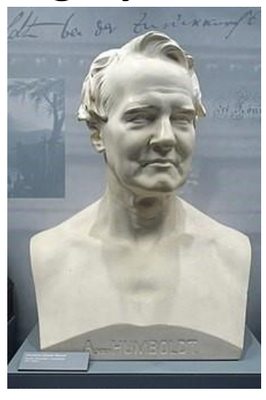

Fig.: Bust of Humboldt

The complexity of Humboldt's work and life meant that after his death, numerous social and political movements referred to him for their respective goals.Today, many animals, around 900 plants, mountains and rivers bear Humboldt's name. For example, the Humboldt Current (cold ocean current that flows along the west coast of South America) or the Humboldt Mountains in Antarctica.

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