



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to Klah Tso paintings of Diné
(Navajo) ceremonial subjects including
reproductions of sandpaintings, circa 1905-1912

National Anthropological Archives
Museum Support Center
4210 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, Maryland 20746
Business Number: Phone: 301.238.1310
Fax Number: Fax: 301.238.2883
naa@si.edu
<http://www.anthropology.si.edu/naa/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical Note	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	2
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Klah Tso paintings of Diné (Navajo) ceremonial subjects including reproductions of sandpaintings
Date:	1905-1912
Identifier:	NAA.MS138501
Creator:	Klah-Tso (Artist)
Extent:	32 Paintings (visual works) (paint on cotton cloth)
Language:	No linguistic content; Not applicable .

Administrative Information

Provenance

The paintings were made by Klah Tso for Mathew M. Murphy, Navajo Agent, over a period of seven years beginning about 1905. They were purchased by the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) from Eleanor Murphy Montague, daughter of Mathew M. Murphy, with funds provided by Mary Vaux Walcott, widow of Charles D. Walcott, in 1932. In 1936, they were transferred from the BAE to the United States National Museum (USNM) Department of Anthropology. In 1978, they were transferred the object collections of the Department of Anthropology to the National Anthropological Archives.

Related Materials

The National Anthropological Archives holds the following related collections:

MS 3924-A: Notes about the paintings taken by Matthew Stirling and Frank H.H. Roberts from a Diné (Navajo) delegation who visited Washington in 1935.

MS 3924-B and MS 4435: Research notes by Franc J. Newcomb, who was hired by the BAE to work with the Diné (Navajo) in New Mexico in 1938-1939. She was supplied with photographs of the paintings and obtained information regarding them from her informants.

Preferred Citation

Klah Tso paintings of Diné (Navajo) ceremonial subjects including reproductions of sandpaintings (MS 138501), 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

Klah Tso (also known as Tl'atsoh, Big Lefthanded, Big Lefthanded Cho) (mid-19th – early 20th century) was a Diné (Navajo) painter who lived near Indian Wells or Tuba City, Arizona.

Historical Note

Sandpaintings (also known as sand paintings, drypaintings, or iikááh) are used in Diné (Navajo) ceremonials. They are created by a medicine man (Hataalii) by pouring colored sand, crushed dried plants, crushed stone, or other powdered pigments onto the ground. Sandpaintings are symbolic representations of different stories in Diné (Navajo) mythology and are created in conjunction with the performance of certain chants. They may depict objects like the sacred mountains where the gods live, legendary visions, or dances or chants performed in rituals.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of thirty-two (32) paintings made by Klah Tso between 1905 and 1912. Twenty-eight (28) are reproductions of sandpaintings and four (4) depict Diné (Navajo) ceremonies. Klah Tso painted on dyed tan cotton cloth. He used a sharpened stick to apply native pigments and commercial gouache, and a brush to add commercial oils.

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.

Arrangement

The paintings are arranged in the order created by the donor.

Local Numbers

NAA MS 138501

USNM Accession 138501

Publication Note

The paintings are reproduced in:

Wyman, Leland C. *Sandpaintings of the Navaho Shootingway and The Walcott Collection*. Contributions to Anthropology, no. 13. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970.

Conservation Note

In 1950, all paintings in this collection were sprayed with Krylon plastic as a preservative. In the late 1990s or early 2000s, the paintings underwent conservation treatment to stabilize the pigments and were rehoused in conservation mats.

Variant Titles

Sandpaintings

The Walcott Collection

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Diné (Navajo)

Cultures:

Diné (Navajo)

Types of Materials:

Paintings
Works of art

Places:

Arizona
North America

Container Listing

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Folder 1 | Big Snake People, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (24 x 27 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08620000
USNM Catalog 377450
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B1
Original No. 1 |
| Folder 2 | Mixed Snake People, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (25 x 26 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08620100
USNM Catalog 377451
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B2
Original No. 2 |
| Folder 3 | Slayer Twin Quartet with Flint House and Mountains, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (26 x 27 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08620200
USNM Catalog 377452
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B3
Original No. 3 |
| Folder 4 | Whirling Tail Feathers, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (25 x 27 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08620300
USNM Catalog 377453
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B4
Original No. 4 |
| Folder 5 | First Dancers, Nightway
1 Paintings (visual works) (27 x 25 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08620400
USNM Catalog 377454
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B5
Original No. 5 |
| Folder 6 | The Skies, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (29 x 28 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08620500
USNM Catalog 377455
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B6 |

Original No. 6

Folder 7	Dancers with Lightnings, Mountain Shootingway 1 Paintings (visual works) (25 x 29 inches) Notes: NAA INV 08620600 USNM Catalog 377456 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B7 Original No. 7
Folder 8	Beautyway Dancers in Mountainway, Beautyway 1 Paintings (visual works) (21 x 18 inches) Notes: NAA INV 08620701 USNM Catalog 377457 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B8 Original No. 8 On same piece of cloth as "Dancers with Sun, Moon, and Wind Wands, Mountain Shootingway."
Folder 8	Dancers with Sun, Moon, and Wind Wands, Mountain Shootingway 1 Paintings (visual works) (21 x 18 inches) Notes: NAA INV 08620702 ANTHRO CAT 377457 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B8 Original No. 8 On same piece of cloth as "Beautyway Dancers in Mountainway, Beautyway."
Folder 9	Dancers with Cactus, Mountain Shootingway 1 Paintings (visual works) (18 x 24 inches) Notes: NAA INV 08620800 USNM Catalog 377458 OPPS NEG BAE 457B9 Original No. 9
Folder 10	Corn People, Male Shootingway 1 Paintings (visual works) (17 x 20 inches) Notes: NAA INV 08620900 USNM Catalog 377459 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B10 Original No. 10
Folder 11	Earth and Sky, Male Shootingway 1 Paintings (visual works) (21.75 x 24.75 inches) Notes: NAA INV 08621000

USNM Catalog 377460
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B11
Original No. 11

Folder 12 Star People and Endless Snake, Big Starway
1 Paintings (visual works) (20 x 23 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621100
 USNM Catalog 377461
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B12
 Original No. 12

Folder 13 Sun's House, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (22 x 17 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621200
 USNM Catalog 377462
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B13
 Original No. 13

Folder 14 Holy People Overcome Buffalo, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (30 x 29 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621300
 USNM Catalog 377463
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B14
 Original No. 14

Folder 15 Buffalo People and Holy People, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (26 x 26 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621400
 USNM Catalog 377464
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B15
 Original No. 15

Folder 16 Holy Man Captured by Thunders, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (24 x 32 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621500
 USNM Catalog 377465
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B16
 Original No. 16

Folder 17 The Farm, Plumeway
1 Paintings (visual works) (23 x 22 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621600
 USNM Catalog 377466

OPPS NEG BAE 2457B17

Original No. 17

Folder 18 Wind People Dressed in Snakes, Windway
1 Paintings (visual works) (25 x 29 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621700
 USNM Catalog 377467
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B18
 Original No. 18

Folder 19 Tail-Feathered Arrow People, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (39 x 38 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621800
 USNM Catalog 377468
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B19
 Original No. 19

Folder 20 Buffalo and Homes, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (34 x 37 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08619700
 USNM Catalog 377469
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B20
 Original No. 20

Folder 21 Dancers with Sun, Moon, and Winds, Mountain Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (38 x 37 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08621900
 USNM Catalog 377470
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B21
 Original No. 21

Folder 22 People of the Myth, Beautyway
1 Paintings (visual works) (37 x 37 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622000
 USNM Catalog 377471
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B22
 Original No. 22

Folder 23 Cloud Houses, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (39 x 37 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622100
 USNM Catalog 377472
 OPPS NEG BAE 2457B23

Original No. 23

Folder 24 Sky-Reaching Rock, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (38 x 44 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08619900
USNM Catalog 377473
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B24
Original No. 24

Folder 25 Fish People, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (34 x 35 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622200
USNM Catalog 377474
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B25
Original No. 25

Folder 26 Cloud Houses, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (38 x 44 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08619800
USNM Catalog 377475
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B26
Original No. 26

Folder 27 Sky-Reaching Rock, Male Shootingway
1 Paintings (visual works) (38 x 44 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622300
USNM Catalog 377476
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B27
Original No. 27
Double sandpaintings: Holy Man captures by Thunders and Holy Boy
swallowed by fish.

Folder 28 God Impersonators of Nightway
1 Paintings (visual works) (52 x 13 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622400
USNM Catalog 377477
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B28
Original No. A

Folder 29 Ye'i Sanctify the Patient in Nightway
1 Paintings (visual works) (16.5 x 14.5 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622500
USNM Catalog 377478

OPPS NEG BAE 2457B29

Original No. B

Folder 30

Male God Impersonators of Nightway
1 Paintings (visual works) (33 x 10 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622600
USNM Catalog 377479
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B30
Original No. C

Folder 31

Carrying the Rattlestick to the Receiver's Camp in Enemyway
1 Paintings (visual works) (20 x 9 inches)
Notes: NAA INV 08622700
USNM Catalog 377480
OPPS NEG BAE 2457B31
Original No. D
The Ride