



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of the American Indian*

Rolf Tietgens photographs

Rachel Menyuk

2021

National Museum of the American Indian  
4220 Silver Hill Rd  
Suitland, Maryland 20746-2863  
nmaiarchives@si.edu  
<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/archive/>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Arrangement.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Museum of the American Indian
<b>Title:</b>	Rolf Tietgens photographs
<b>Date:</b>	1933-1934 1940-1944
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAI.AC.336
<b>Creator:</b>	Tietgens, Rolf
<b>Extent:</b>	47 Photographic prints
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection includes 47 photographic prints made by German born photographer Rolf Tietgens in 1933-1934 and 1940-1944 on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and in various locations across Arizona and New Mexico. Communities photographed in South Dakota include the Oglala Lakota (Oglala Sioux) and Sicangu Lakota (Brulé Sioux). Communities photographed in Arizona and New Mexico include—Laguna Pueblo, K'apovi (Santa Clara Pueblo), Diné (Navajo), Tesuque Pueblo, Hopi Pueblo, Taos Pueblo and Apache.

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Bequest of Rolf Tietgens, 1985 [P23675-P23709] and gift of Keith De Lellis, 1987 [P23663-P23674].

### Processing Information

Collection record written by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, 2021.

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Rolf Tietgens photographs, image #, NMAI.AC.336; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archives Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: [nmaiarchives@si.edu](mailto:nmaiarchives@si.edu)).

Some photographs restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

### Conditions Governing Use

NMAI does not own the copyright to these photographs. Permission to publish will need to be acquired from the Estate.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Rolf Tietgens was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1911. In 1933 Tietgens first visited the United States, where he made a series of photographs of Native Americans, published in Germany as a book, *Die Regentrommel* (The Rain Drum), in 1936. As a filmmaking student in Berlin, Tietgens worked for Leni Riefenstahl as a cameraman on *Olympia* (1936). He then moved to New York, where he opened his own photography studio (1938). His work was featured in "Photographing New York City," an exhibition of Photo League photographers at the New School for Social Research in 1939. Despite his successful career as a photographer for numerous American magazines, Tietgens was interred as an enemy alien in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1942–43, during World War II. Naturalized in 1944, he continued to work as a commercial photographer through the fifties until 1964 when he began a second career as a painter, a pursuit that he followed until his death in 1984.

---

## Scope and Contents

This collection includes 47 photographic prints made by German born photographer Rolf Tietgens on a brief trip to the United States in 1933-1934 and in 1940-1944 after moving permanently to New York. Some of the photographs that were made on his 1933-1934 trip were later published in a 1936 book called *Die Regentrommel* (The Rain Drum).

The photographs include outdoor portraits and landscape views on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and in various locations across Arizona and New Mexico. These were shot among the Oglala Lakota (Oglala Sioux) and Sicangu Lakota (Brulé Sioux) communities in South Dakota and among the Laguna Pueblo, K'apovi (Santa Clara Pueblo), Diné (Navajo), Tesuque Pueblo, Hopi Pueblo, Taos Pueblo and Apache in Arizona and New Mexico. One of the more famous portraits includes an image of Chief Blackhorn (Tahe Sapa/Hah-Sah-Pah/Black Horn) [Sicangu Lakota (Brulé Sioux)], likely shot in 1941. Many of the portraits remain unidentified.

Many the photographs depict ceremonial dances and have been restricted due to cultural sensitivity. There are also several duplicate images within the collection.

Catalog numbers include P23663-P23709.

---

## Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number.

---

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Apache
- Diné (Navajo)
- Hopi Pueblo
- K'apovi (Santa Clara Pueblo)
- Laguna Pueblo
- Oglala Lakota (Oglala Sioux)
- Sicangu Lakota (Brulé Sioux)
- Taos Pueblo

Tesuque Pueblo

Cultures:

Apache  
Diné (Navajo)  
Hopi Pueblo  
K'apovi (Santa Clara Pueblo)  
Laguna Pueblo  
Oglala Lakota (Oglala Sioux)  
Sicangu Lakota (Brulé Sioux)  
Taos Pueblo  
Tesuque Pueblo

Types of Materials:

Photographic prints

Places:

Arizona  
New Mexico  
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (S.D.)  
South Dakota