



# AMERICAN TREASURES OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## Memory



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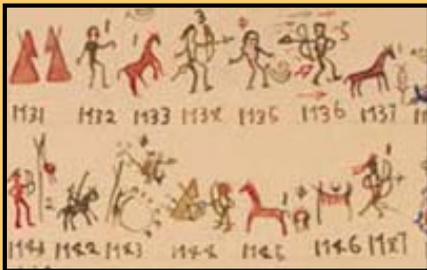
**Exhibition Sections:** Top Treasures - Memory - Reason - Imagination

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## The Winter Count



Battiste Good (1821-ca. 1907)

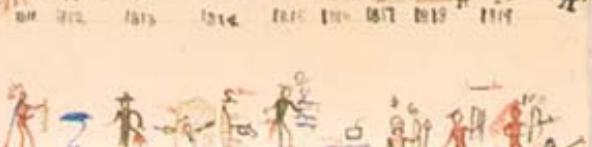
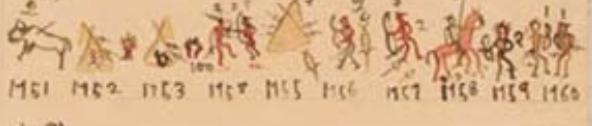
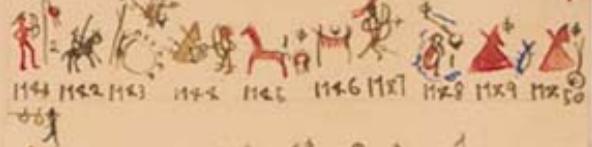
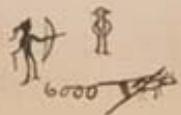
[Winter Count, 1230-1907]

Pictograph watercolor on  
paper panels, ca. 1907

Manuscript Division

A "winter count" was a Native American mnemonic device passed from one generation to another marked with pictographs that recorded noteworthy events in tribal life that took place each "winter" or year. Battiste Good, a Brulé Dakota living at the Rosebud Agency in South Dakota, probably made this winter count at the turn of the twentieth century based on original records kept on hides (he introduced Arabic numerals). Special characters denoted famines, the introduction of the horse, buffalo hunts, severe winter storms, smallpox epidemics, and other significant events.

Pictured is Chief High Hawk, Battiste Good's son, and who presumably finished the "winter count" after Good's death.





### Winter Count Calendar

Winter Count 900-1907 (History of the Brulé),  
detail including entry for 1492.

Recorded by Battiste Good, Brulé Chief (1821-1908?).  
Manuscript Division

Battiste Good was born during the year 1821-22 into the Sichangu nation, a Dakota-speaking people who are better known by the French rendering of their name, Brulé. In 1878 the Brulé were removed to the Rosebud Agency and there Battiste Good copied his winter count onto sheets of a paper drawing book for Dr. William Corbusier, a U.S. army surgeon, in 1879-80. In 1907, Good made another copy of the calendar, also on paper, which was eventually donated to the Library of Congress. This count spanned the years 900-1907.

Winter counts were used by the Brulé to mark significant events; each year (or "winter") of the calendar was characterized by a memorable incident which occurred during the period of recording, such as the death of a leader, meteoric disturbances, fights with neighboring peoples, or seasons of plenty and want. The counts were kept and recorded by chosen men, generally elders, who were regarded as knowledgeable in important matters and the trusted custodians of history. The count keeper often passed his record down through his family, who added to it and periodically recopied it to insure preservation.

The section shown depicts cycles of sixty years. In the period 1580-1640, horses were introduced among the Brulé -- a result of the Spanish *entrada* into the Southeast and Southwest -- and for the first time buffalo hunters were depicted both on foot and on horseback. The year 1492 was also noted.

1420 10  
1430 8

1440  
1450



1460  
1470

1480

1490 10  
600 8

1492



1510

1520

1530

1540

1550

1560

1570



10  
10

1580

1590

1600

700

1560

1610



15610

1610

1620

1630

1640



10

1650

1660

1670

1690

17000

