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COLLECTIONS AS RELATIONS

CONTESTATIONS OF BELONGING, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURES

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8 Challenging the Jacobsen Collections from the American Northwest Coast and Alaska

A Long Durée of Multilateral Engagement and Complex Relationships 1881–2021

Viola König

Introduction

The collections of the Norwegian brothers Adrian and Filip Jacobsen, housed in several German museums, have received an unusual amount of attention. For nearly 140 years, the thousands of objects collected on the Pacific Northwest Coast and in Alaska in the 1880s have inspired ongoing research and publications by international scholars, as well as reciprocal consultations by representatives of indigenous groups from the countries of origin.

The objects, which Adrian Jacobsen collected both in the coastal and the interior of the Alaskan subarctic are certainly not as spectacular as the impressive ceremonial objects from the Northwest Coast, but they are among the earliest known specimens ever from this region, and are becoming more and more important in view of the ongoing climate change that is particularly noticeable in the Arctic.

Adrian and Filip Jacobsen's collections are distributed among many renowned German anthropological museums, such as the museums in Hamburg, Leipzig Lübeck, Bremen, Köln, Freiburg, Frankfurt, but also outside Germany such as Oslo and Chicago. In this study, I will focus on the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin (EM/SMB), which stands out among all the others because of the mere size of its collections.

As Jacobsen collected objects from some 20 different indigenous groups, the representatives and their motivations for travelling from the northwest coast of Washington state, British Columbia, and Alaska to Germany to consult their ancestral heritage in the museums were quite diverse: Elders, Chiefs, artists, museum curators, university professors, film makers, and theatre directors.

Based on a chronology spanning 140 years, this article examines the background for building the Jacobsen Collection and the way it has been handled up to the present day. The objectives and, if applicable, the methods of the protagonists are analysed in their respective contemporary frameworks:

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1. What was collected and what was the purpose of this collection?
2. What role did commercial interests play?
3. What influence did aesthetic criteria have and who defined them?
4. What is the historical significance of the Jacobsen Collection?
5. "Visual repatriation"—Why is this collection so important?
6. According to which criteria was the Jacobsen Collection exhibited in Germany and the countries of origin?
   All these questions lead to the perspectives of a future use of the Jacobsen Collection, its present relevance, reowning knowledge, and forms of exchange:
7. Consequences and challenges for the future treatment of the collection.

The Berlin Jacobsen Collection from the 19th Century and the Purpose of Its Creation

Johan Adrian Jacobsen (1853–1947, Figure 8.1) is among one of several contemporaries of Adolf Bastian (1826–1905), the founding director the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin (Royal Museum of Ethnology), today Ethnologisches Museum (EM/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz), who contributed to the establishment of its huge collections at the end of the 19th century.

The new species "ethnological museum" had just been founded in Europe and North America, which caused a "scramble" for objects to an unprecedented extent (Cole 1985). Bastian's Museum took a leading role in the development of anthropological collections, also at the international level, gaining the envy as well as criticism of contemporaries. The director succeeded in attracting excellent and capable personalities to work with him. However, it was not only academicians who contributed towards the tremendous increase of the holdings of the EM (König 2007, 134–136). One of Bastian's suppliers was Johan Adrian Jacobsen, a mariner from Norway who collected no less than 11,000 objects.

Bastian had recognised in 1880, during his return voyage from Polynesia to Germany via North America, that the indigenous cultures of Northwest America, who had come into closer contact with Europeans only as late as the end of the 18th century, were already on the brink of extinction. Their complex social structure paired with a unique art style and perfection in carving moved Bastian to raise almost 25,000 marks to finance a collecting trip. He commissioned Jacobsen, who thereupon travelled along the Northwest Coast of America between 1881 and 1883. With a yield of 3000 objects from the Pacific Northwest Coast and 4000 objects from northern Alaska, Jacobsen compiled the museum's largest single collection from North America.

It is apparent that Adrian Jacobsen was well aware of Bastian's expectations for assembling an ideal ethnographic collection. Like him, Jacobsen recognised the aesthetic quality of contemporary art-making on the Northwest Coast, but also the high level of survival technology in northern Alaska.

Figure 8.1 Johan Adrian (1853–1947). © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum Berlin.

Commercial Interests in Collecting

Collectors and Businessmen—The Jacobsen Brothers

Adrian Jacobsen was born on 9 October 1853, on the island of Risö near Tromsö in Norway. He came from an ordinary fisherman's family and did

not receive any proper school education, but attended the school of navigation in Tromsö. In 1874, he travelled to Hamburg, where his brother owned a business. Soon thereafter, Jacobsen undertook his first long voyage to Valparaíso, Chile. Upon returning to Hamburg in 1877, he acquired an ethnographic collection from Greenland for Carl Hagenbeck.

In 1878, Jacobsen travelled to Berlin with this collection. He was accompanied by indigenous Laplanders and three individuals from Patagonia. Adrian Jacobsen was already a proven businessman by this time, though he had not always been successful. The following tour, one of the then popular "Völkerschauen" (ethnic shows), included eight Lab

rador Inuit. It ended in a disaster. Not being vaccinated, the Inuit died one by one from smallpox. Shocked by this experience, Hagenbeck and Jacobsen stopped all further travel with "exotic," indigenous peoples for a while (Haberland 1987, 33). Bastian's offer, therefore, came at the right moment.

Departing from San Francisco, Jacobsen travelled along the entire Canadian Northwest Coast and Alaska (Figure 8.2). Among others, he purchased objects from the Kwakwaka'wakw (formerly named Kwakiutl), Haida and Tlingit. He acquired even more items from the Yup'ik, Iñupiat, and others in the far North of Alaska.

Stays at places on his journeys could last 1 hour or several weeks. Most objects were purchased from local artists, or from middlemen and local dealers. These objects were soon viewed as representative, even unique, so that critical voices arose in the United States and Canada against this "selling off" to a European (Cole 1985, 37). Adrian Jacobsen, for his part, complained about competition with other travellers in search of curios, and even with indigenous people, who still made the items for their own use:

> Unfortunately, a scientific collector must take these circumstances into account and console himself with the fact that in the future the objects will become much more expensive
>
> (Jacobsen 1884, 2)

Even in the far North, Adrian Jacobsen encountered a competitor, the naturalist Edward Nelson, who had travelled on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution immediately before Jacobsen (1877–1881).

After his collecting trips for Berlin, Jacobsen continued travelling to North America, to Siberia, East Asia (1884–1885), and to Indonesia (1887–1888). Later, he returned to Carl Hagenbeck and the "Völkerschauen." Adrian Jacobsen died on 18 January 1947.

The businessman and self-made ethnologist Adrian Jacobsen wrote quite a few articles about his trips, but the greatest and most sustained attention was given to a work published in 1884 in cooperation with the journalist A. Woldt. He transferred Jacobsen's records, such as field diaries and notes, into an easy-to-read monograph titled "Capitain Jacobsen's Reise an der Nordwestküste Amerikas, 1881–1883, zum Zwecke ethnologischer

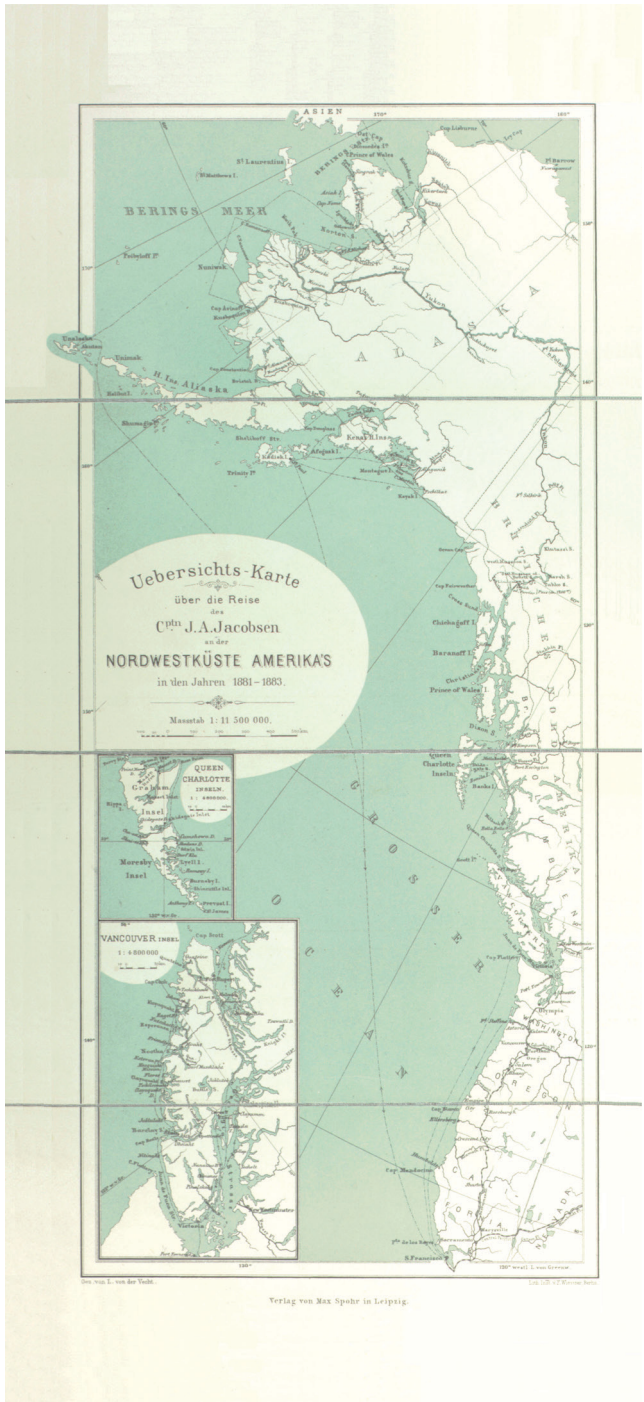

Figure 8.2 Map of Jacobsen's "Trip to the Northwest Coast of America in the Years 1981–1883" included in his publication 1884. © No copy-right required.

Sammlungen und Erkundigungen, nebst Beschreibung persönlicher Erlebnisse, für den deutschen Leserkreis bearbeitet von A. Woldt" (Jacobsen 1884; Gunther 1977; König 2013a). At the same time, Adolf Bastian published an illustrated catalogue on the American North West Coast (Bastian 1884).

Adrian's younger brother, Bernhard Filip Jacobsen (1864–1935), followed him from Norway to Germany in 1883 where he was employed by Carl Hagenbeck in Hamburg (Gerhard 1991, 97). Later, he helped to arrange Adrian's so-called first collection, which had been moved to the museum in Berlin. In the spring of 1884, Filip Jacobsen set-out on his first collecting trip to British Columbia. He visited the Kwakwaka'wakw, Heiltsuk (formerly named Bella Bella) and Nuxalk (formerly named Bella Coola). During his winter stay at Port Essington, he was able to extend his collection with Tsimshian and Tlingit objects. He reached the Tongass in Alaska and then returned to Bella Coola (Gerhard 1991, 45). In July 1885, he met with his brother Adrian Jacobsen to start another business. Nine Nuxalk men agreed to sign a contract to perform for a year in Germany in a "Völkerschau" financed by Hagenbeck (Figure 8.3).

After completing the engagement in 1886, Filip Jacobsen accompanied the group back to British Columbia where he continued to work as an independent collector until he died in Bella Coola in 1935. He sold a collection to Karl von den Steinen for the Berlin EM and published a few travel reports, descriptions of indigenous dances, and legends. In 1892, Filip collected for

Figure 8.3 The participants of the Nuxalk (Bella Coola) troupe 1884/85 at Berlin. © Photo by Carl Günther.

Franz Boas (1858–1942), whom he had met before in Berlin. Boas was commissioned by the Department of Ethnology at Harvard University's Peabody Museum to assemble a collection for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair (Cole 1985, 122). Fifteen objects of the collection, which Boas sold to the EM in 1887, had been purchased from Filip Jacobsen.

Academic Profiteers and Indigenous "Service Providers"

Adrian and Filip Jacobsen's collections, records, and publications served international scholars and members of indigenous communities as an important source. The aforementioned Franz Boas studied the Jacobsen Collection from the Northwest Coast as early as 1885, and for all his harsh criticism, Bastian's young assistant Boas was its first beneficiary. He complained about Jacobsen's poor descriptions, especially the lack of information on provenance (Bolz and Sanner, 1999, 183). Nevertheless, Boas was so strongly stimulated by the Jacobsen materials that he made use of the collection for his own studies and located a regional focus of his own research on the Northwest Coast. By hiring Jacobsen's translator George Hunt, Boas was able to make a direct comparison with Jacobsen's account on the Kwakwaka'wakw. Hunt was paid for his services.

Like his Berlin colleagues, Franz Boas took the opportunity to work with the nine Nuxalk during their stay in Berlin in January and March 1886. While Rudolf Virchow took physical measurements of the participants, Carl Stumpf made his first song recording, spending four sessions with the singer Nuskilusta.[1] Boas, for his part, spent weeks among the Nuxalk researching intensively, which enabled him to publish about their language and music (Cole 1982, 117; for Boas see 1886a, 1886b). By this time, the scientific interest of Franz Boas in the belief systems of the Northwest Coast was sustainably aroused.

Nothing is known about the conditions under which these German academics were able to conduct their investigations: Were fees paid, as was the practice for all other Nuxalk activities done outside of the contractual appearances? For instance, the Nuxalk made new objects in their spare time in Germany, which they used in their shows and then sold.[2]

One can conclude that the Jacobsen brothers were first and foremost businessmen. They by no means pursued only scientific interests in building their extensive collections; collecting was a commercial venture for them from the very beginning. In addition, their various commercial activities served as a goldmine for renowned scholars. However, working with indigenous partners, including paid informants, also opened up new sources of income for them.

"Upgrading" to an Art Collection

Until the beginning of World War II, parts of the Jacobsen Collection were on display in the old Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, where they attracted the

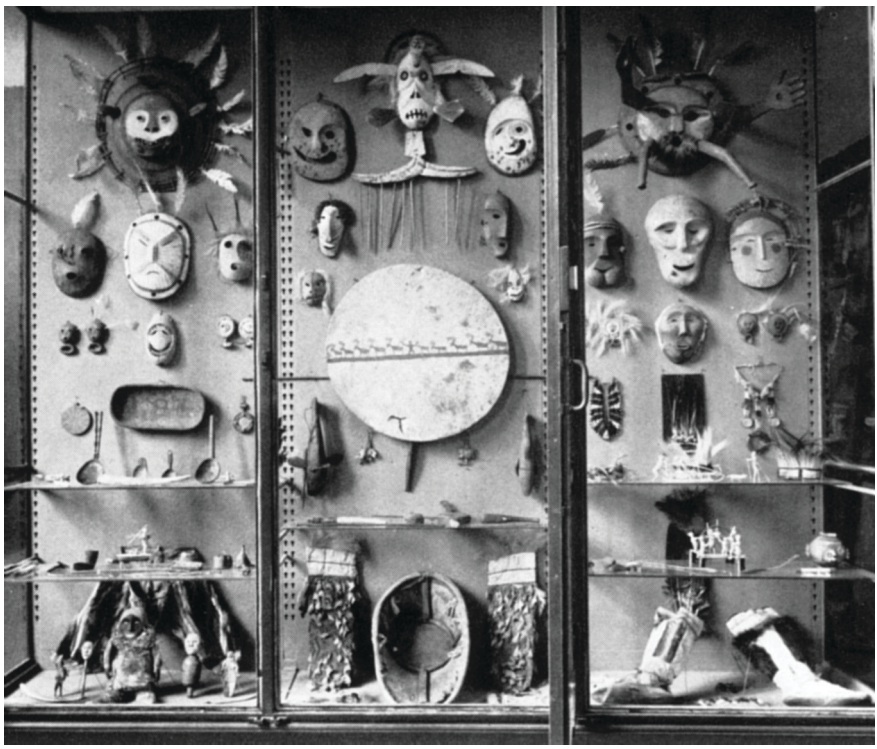

Figure 8.4 Exhibition showcase with parts of the Jacobsen collection in the old Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin around 1926. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum/800240.

interest of Surrealist artists. From the 1930s onwards, they acquired works and stimulated artistic production on the Northwest Coast. Franz Boas had already become interested in identifying individual artists and published first art studies on the Northwest Coast (Boas 1955). From then on, the Jacobsen Collection was of interest not only to ethnographic research, but also to the contemporary art world. However, large parts that were considered war losses were not accessible between 1945 and 1991 (Figure 8.4).

During this time, the extraordinary art exhibition "Donnervogel und Raubwal" ("Thunderbird and Killer Whale") was opened in the Hamburg Museum of Ethnology (today Museum am Rothenbaum Kulturen und Künste der Welt MARKK) on the occasion of its 100th anniversary in May 1979. The curator and vice-director Wolfgang Haberland (1922–2015) published a catalogue which he dedicated to the work of "men of the first hour," including Adrian Jacobsen and Franz Boas.[3] At least 33 objects of the Berlin Jacobsen Collection were exhibited. The event was preceded

by a preparation that was innovative and unusual for that time in several respects. Haberland travelled to the Northwest Coast, bought works on site by then unknown young artists. More than that, he systematically contacted the descendants of the groups from whom the Jacobsen brothers had purchased their vast collections since the 1880s. A particularly intensive contact was established with the Hunt family, Jacobsen's and Boas' early "service providers" mentioned above, as well as the descendants of the nine Nuxalk who had toured Germany in the "Völkerschau" 1885 to 1886. Haberland invited a group of Kwakwaka'wakw to Hamburg, including master carver Calvin Hunt (born 1956), who danced at the opening ceremony in the thunderbird costume he had made as a gift for the museum. A group of seven Nuxalk, including descendants of group leader Tom Henry, also came to Hamburg to see the exhibition of their ancestors' works (König 2021, 22–24). The exhibition "Donnervogel und Raubwal" remained present on the Northwest Coast in the memory of those artists who were promoted by Haberland and later became internationally known. The catalogue, although published only in a limited edition in German, was a standard work for Northwest Coast artists in the decades to come. In a way, the Jacobsen Collections became known to Northwest Coast artists through Haberland's richly illustrated book.[4]

Since the Jacobsen brothers' collecting trips, market supply and demand have determined artistic production on the Northwest Coast to this day. But beyond commercial sales, new works are integrated into the ceremonial life of the clans. In Germany, Northwest Coast art has been introduced to a wider audience since the 1970s.

Historical Significance of the Jacobsen Collection

Beginning in the 1980s, the Jacobsen Collection became the focus of North American historians. Douglas Cole's comprehensive study, "Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts," is a standard work to this day (Cole 1985). On Jacobsen, Glenn Penny summarised:

> The indigenous people Jacobsen and others encountered in their 'scramble for artifacts' were anything but victims or dupes: they understood the value of their possessions as well or better than collectors such as Jacobsen. … Jacobsen collected skulls as well as objects, and he went into burial sites when he knew it was not allowed. That is not how he collected the vast majority of the objects he brought back to Berlin. … That emphasis, Cole reminded us over two decades ago, 'creates its own deceptive fictions'.[5]

Shortly after Cole's archival studies in Germany, Hilke Thode-Arora investigated "Hagenbeck's Völkerschauen" and combed through Jacobsen's extensive legacy of manuscripts. She compiled a complete bibliography of his publications—38 articles in scientific and popular science magazines between

1888 and 1893 alone—which prove how much Jacobsen dreamed of a career as a curator (Thode-Arora 1989, 198–200).

Since the 1950s, there were rumours that visitors had seen Jacobsen objects in the Kunstkamera in Leningrad—today's St. Petersburg. In the 1980s, it was finally confirmed that a large collection of Russian war booty from Leningrad had been transferred to the Grassi Museum at Leipzig in the former German Democratic Republic in 1978. Immediately after the reunification of the two German states, in 1990, the final repatriation of a total of 44,561 objects from Leipzig to Berlin was agreed (Höpfner 1993, 168–169). The reinventorying 1991–1993 brought to light many of the sorely missed "highlights" of the Jacobsen Collection (Bolz and Sanner 1999, 47–49).

This historical re-examination of the era of mass collecting in North America, and the sifting of archives in Germany, as well as the return of Russian war booty to Berlin placed the Jacobsen Collection in a global historical context (Penny 2002, 2021).

"Visual Repatriation"—The Yup'ik of Alaska Explore the Jacobsen Collection

Among the lost highlights were, in particular, masks of the Yup'ik, an indigenous group in Alaska. Until their return to Berlin, they were known only from illustrations in publications. In 1994, one year after the last box had been opened, the American anthropologist and Yup'ik specialist Ann Fienup-Riordian visited Berlin in order to prepare an exhibition on Yup'ik Masks (Fienup-Riordan 2005, xviii). She met a museum team fully engaged in unpacking and arranging the boxes, including the Yup'ik masks, some in poor condition.

As a result of her visit, 22 masks returned to Alaska, for the first time in 113 years, for a few weeks in 1996 and were on display at the exhibit "The Living Tradition of Yup'Ik Masks: Agayuliyararput: Our Way of Making Prayer" (Fienup-Riordan 1996).

But this loan was only the beginning of a further exchange:

> Drawing upon her excellent contacts with Yup'ik communities and institutions, Fienup-Riordan simultaneously started planning a return visit to Berlin that would include a team of Native experts. And so it happened that one year later, in September 1997, a research team of six Yup'ik men and women guided by Ann Fienup-Riordan arrived in Dahlem in order to study the Jacobsen Collection for three weeks extraordinary relationship
> (Sanner 2007, 286)

In 1997, 120 years after Adrian Jacobsen first hired young Inuit from the far north for the Hamburg Zoo director Carl Hagenbeck in 1877, Elders of a group he had visited later, the Yup'ik, took such a trip to Berlin on their own initiative. Some were over 80 years old, with excellent language skills and knowledge of their traditional culture (Figure 8.5).

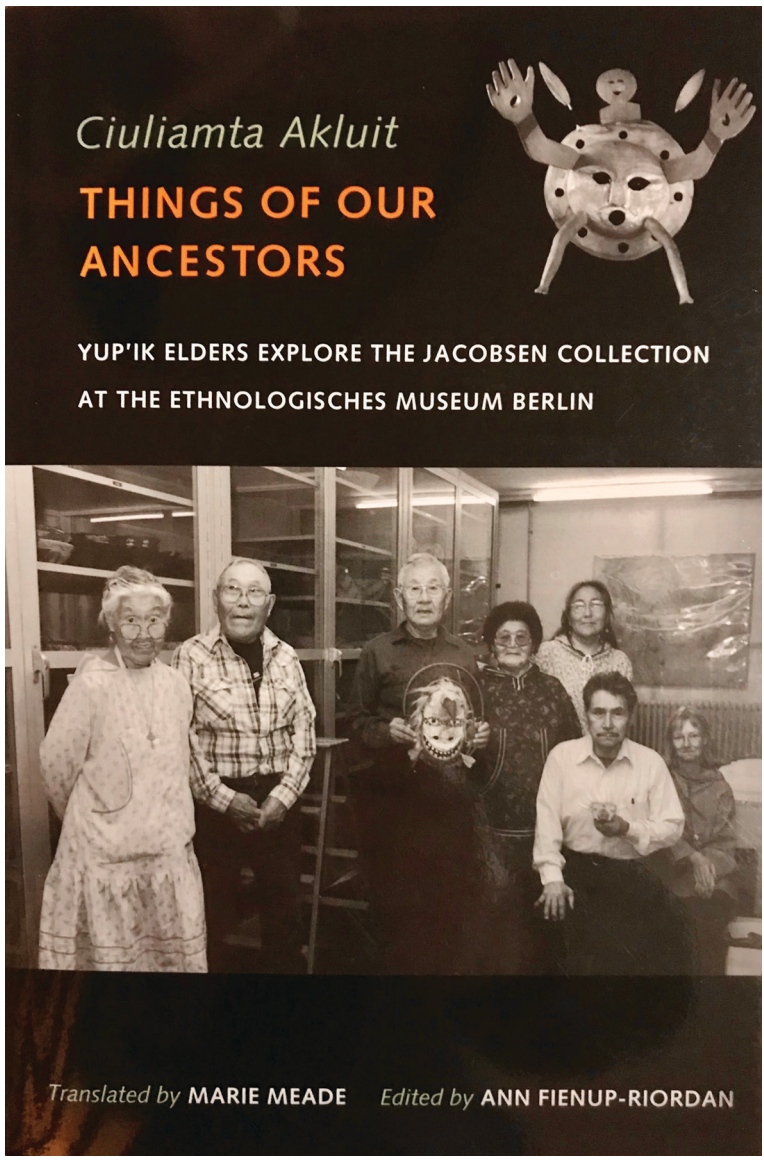

Figure 8.5 The Yup'ik delegation at Berlin 1997. Book cover: © Ciuliamta Akluit (2005). Things of Our Ancestors: Yup'ik Elders Explore the Jacobsen Collection at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin.

They wanted to see the 2000 objects of the Jacobsen's Yup'ik collection on site and make a selection to incorporate them into their own exhibition. Fienup-Riordan's detailed publications on the project includes the most comprehensive biography of Johan Adrian Jacobsen so far, because in her words:

> Without a clear understanding of who Jacobsen was and why and how he came to Alaska, the full significance of the collection he amassed and the unintended consequences of his collecting remain obscure. Working to collect the remnants of peoples thought to be on the edge of extinction, Jacobsen likely never imagined what a gift the objects he collected would be to the descendants of their makers. (…). And yet, their primary concern was not to reclaim museum objects, but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied
>
> (Fienup-Riordan and Marie Meade, 2005, xiii, xxiii)

The visit was a tremendous mutual enrichment not only for the Yup'ik, but also for the museum curators. Jacobsen's notes and card information were complemented and corrected while the handling of the objects inspired the Elders to tell old stories and even perform music and dances (Sanner 2007, 289). Unfortunately, not all "Elders" survived to see their travelling exhibition. Ten years after their visit in Berlin, "Yuungnaqpiallerput / The Way We Genuinely Live: Masterworks of Yup'ik Science and Survival" was finally ready to tour through Alaska, starting in 2007 in the Yup'ik community of Bethel, ending in Washington, DC in 2010 (Fienup-Riordan, Freda and Readen 2007, Figure 8.6).

The borrowing US institutions covered the costs including the restorative care for the fragile objects. The courier trips to Alaska allowed the establishment of new contacts with other indigenous groups represented in the Jacobsen Collection.

To summarise: Ann Fienup Riordan's initiative to bring a delegation of Yup'ik Elders to Berlin had pilot character. This special "field work turned on its head" opened up new perspectives for joint collaboration with the museum. It resulted, among other things, in a 5-year loan of Berlin objects for exhibitions in Alaska and its publication. This first sharing of knowledge project inspired further cooperation with other groups visited by Jacobsen.

Exhibiting the Jacobsen Collection

The presentation of the Jacobsen Collection follows different premises in its home countries than in Germany. There, it is a matter of preserving cultural heritage and knowledge; here, it is a matter of conveying and translating it for an external audience.

The results of the Yup'ik visit were incorporated into the new permanent exhibition "North America" in the Ethnological Museum at Dahlem in 1999,

Figure 8.6 The Jacobsen Collection on Tour in Alaska. Setting up the exhibition at the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, April 2009. © Viola König.

which followed the former concept of "cultural areas." Ten years later, as part of a special exhibition on the Museum Island Berlin in 2009, the Yup'ik project was presented as an example of the strategies for future cooperation with the so-called "source communities" that were to be integrated into the new exhibition concept of the Humboldt Forum.[6]

The planning for the Humboldt Forum enabled the museum to generate funds for further collaborative projects. Between 2009 and 2017, three very different projects were conducted with partners from the Northwest Coast and Alaska.

The Project "One History—Two Perspectives" (2009–2012)

In 2009, the Ethnological Museum and the John F. Kennedy Institute of Freie Universität Berlin were granted a 3-year project from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) titled "One History—Two Perspectives: Culturally specific modes of representation of the ›exotic‹ other at the Pacific Northwest Coast." The funding allowed the team to visit museums in Europe, Canada, and the USA and establish new networks.[7] Most importantly, however, was the invitation of representatives from indigenous groups of the Northwest Coast to Berlin.

The project's task was to rethink contemporary exhibition practices, and to develop alternatives for new modes of presentation with the active

involvement of indigenous partners. In addition, however, the scientific processing and digitisation of the collection was aimed at. The published results reflect the commentaries by the artists who had studied the objects in the Ethnological Museum. Dempsey Bob and Nathan Jackson, who had worked with Wolfgang Haberland (head of the Department of the Americas Hamburg) in the 1970s, had now come with their nephews and sons, all also artists (König 2011; Etges et al. 2014, 7). However, it turned out that they were not so much interested in the presentation in Berlin, but rather in the accessibility of the collections. The loan of objects was seen as the best way to collaborate effectively with the museum. Furthermore, the artists were particularly interested in the presentation and sale of their own works in German museums. Artist Dempsey Bob summarised:

> I believe it is a great idea to integrate artists in the process of choosing and exposing the objects in Humboldt-Forum, given that they have a different perspective
>
> (König 2014, 18–24)

Alternatives: The Use of Performance and Media in Exhibitions

Is it possible to bring the collection closer to the public with media other than showcases and exhibition texts? The "Humboldt Lab Dahlem" (2012–2015), serving as an "experimental rehearsal stage" in preparation for the exhibitions in the future Humboldt Forum, allowed the testing of this question.[8] At that time, the exhibition planning called for two areas to explain Jacobsen's journey. The first part aimed to retell the Jacobsen's stay on the Northwest Coast from the perspective of the European adventurer and collector himself and illustrate it by means of the objects at various stops. The other part was to focus on the second part of the journey into the harsh, cold north of Alaska, but here from the present-day perspective of the Yup'ik and Iñupiat of the 21st century. Could new media translate 19th-century narrative material into other genres as an independent, artistic achievement? A puppet show, an interactive computer game and a virtual discovery tour were developed in 2014 to test new approaches. The puppet show "Travelogue," produced live and as a video by the Puppet Theatre "Das Helmi," caricatured the figure of Jacobsen using foam puppets as a problematic, tragicomic personality. The project was received controversially because indigenous protagonists were portrayed through Jacobsen's eyes exactly as in his diary. The artist group "gold extra" employed two different narrative forms with which they addressed the origin of the collection and Jacobsen's role in it. In their computer adventure game, visitors slipped into the role of Jacobsen during his stay with the Haida in Canada. Probably the most useful format turned out to be the use of tablets, with the help of which the objects themselves became storytellers (König and Zessnik 2014; König, Rostasy and Zessnik 2014, Figure 8.7).

Figure 8.7 "Totem's Sound—Tablet Tour" created for the Humboldt Lab Dahlem as part of the "Travelogue" project at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin in 2015. © goldextra.com.

"Thin Ice": Facing the Environment and Climate Change in Ethnological Museums

The Humboldt Lab Dahlem also addressed the importance of the topic of climate change in exhibitions. Paul Ongtooguk, Iñupiat, professor for Research of Alaska Native Education, was invited to give a lecture in a workshop entitled "Sharing Knowledge. The Arctic Habitat" (October, 2015) and used this opportunity to study the 4000 objects collected by Adrian Jacobsen from his ancestors. Like the Yup'ik Elders before, Paul was able to demonstrate the function of all items live in the storage room, exactly as we had already seen him do in the exhibitions of the Anchorage Museum (Figure 8.8).

Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi: The Dena'ina Way of Living

At the same time, the Anchorage Museum was preparing a large exhibition in close collaboration with another Alaskan group, the Dena'ina.[9] Once again, the Ethnological Museum was asked for a loan. Twenty-eight objects from the Jacobsen Collection temporarily returned to Anchorage in 2013 to be exhibited. Among the numerous international lenders, only the Kunstkamera Museum of St. Petersburg and the Berlin Jacobsen Collection in the Ethnological Museum were given their own chapter in the exhibition catalogue. In this catalogue all 55 Dena'ina objects were published, because

Figure 8.8 Iñupiac Professor Paul Ongtooguk studies the collection of his ancestors on the occasion of the Workshop "Thin Ice" in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, October 2015. © Viola König.

"this museum holds the largest and most diverse collection of nineteenth-century Dena'ina objects not associated with Russian America. Within the Jacobsen Collection of Dena'ina artifacts are several one-of-a-kind objects, including a beluga spear and two heddles used for weaving quills or bead." (Jones et al. 2013, 285; König 2013b, 261–271).

Present Relevance, Reowning Knowledge, Forms of Exchange

Provenance Research and the Significance of Jacobsen's Written Legacy

From the rather incidental contribution of the Nuxalk to German scientists during their stay in Berlin in 1886, Wolfgang Haberland's trip to their community Bella Coola, B.C. in 1978, and the Yup'ik initiative "Fieldwork turned on its head" in Berlin in 1997, ongoing collaborative research has continuously developed. However, given the size of the Jacobsen Collection, it is not surprising that there are unresolved questions about the provenance of individual objects. Yet, there is a danger that researchers who focus exclusively on provenance may miss important clues to other aspects that are significant. For example, the case of the "Tsimshian Pole": Why did indigenous carvers make inauthentic totem poles for sale to Europeans like Filip Jacobsen? Understanding the "complex histories" hidden in the Jacobsen Collections requires knowledge preserved in the societies of origin combined with an examination of the objects and written documents archived in

German institutions. Furthermore, provenance research must also reconstruct and map the "webs of interactions," identify the contact persons involved, such as indigenous middlemen and German compatriots, who made extensive collecting possible in the first place (Labischinski 2021; König 2022, 262–274).

Items collected by Adrian Jacobsen in the Eyak area of Alaska's Prince William Sound can be stylistically assigned by ethnologists to the Tlingit of the Southeast, while linguists can use Jacobsen's records to trace the language shift from Eyak to Tlinkit in the late 19th century and back to Eyak in the 20th. Therefore, North American scholars not only recognise the value of the Jacobsen Collections but also Adrian's records, even if they are hard to read and flawed:

> His journals however, written in a sort of German heavily influenced by and mixed with Dano-Norwegian and English, are of significant interest for language also. For instance, of Eyak village he writes, inimitably: 'in Iggiak Villag, zwischen das Kopfer River und Prinz William Sound am ein Lake beliend – sprechen ein eigne Sprache sollen von ein Inlands treib sein – sind jetzt mit Eskimo und auch Thlinket intermarried und die meisten verstehen die beide Sprachen'.
>
> (Krauss 2006, 191)

For all the caution exercised in dealing with Jacobsen's texts, and "although somewhat amateurish, these reports represent a transition in genre between travel accounts and professional ethnography, and are valuable for informing our understanding of early Northwest Coast anthropology" (Glass 2010, 1). In fact, Jacobsen's descriptions are often the earliest accounts for many customs, for instance: the Hamatsa dance of the Kwakwaka'wakw (Jacknis 2002, 21; Glass 2021, 98, Figure 8.9).

Specialist Fienup Riordan even observes a kind of method of collecting in the Far North:

> We are fortunate that Jacobsen concentrated his efforts 'from the first to last snowflake', when people had gathered into winter villages, rather than scattered over the landscape in hundreds of small seasonal camps. Jacobsen was also lucky in the northern group's attitude towards the objects he desired. Jacobsen was able to buy extraordinary masks and ceremonial paraphernalia, not because they no longer had meaning but because of the requirement that these spiritually charged pieces be discarded after use and newly made every year.
>
> (Fienup Riordan 2005, 33)

Jacobsen's diaries also led to the location of sites and eventual restitution. In 2002, US archaeologist Janet Klein studied 200 objects from the Kenai peninsula, Alaska at the Ethnological Museum.[10] She had read that Jacobsen

Figure 8.9 Left: "Crooked Beak Mask". Kwakwaka'wakw, Nouette, Hope Island, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, before 188I, not for sale, IV A 893 a, b. Right: "Boatsmask Pogtettnoak—the one who travels with big boat" with helping spirit (tuunraq). Yup´ik, Kuskokwim, Alaska. Collection of Johan Adrian Jacobsen, before 1883; the objects were traditionally destroyed after being used, IV A 5145. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum/Photo: Dietrich Graf, IV A 893, IV A 5145.

"dug at a Native village called Soonroodna," a still-unidentified site in Prince William Sound, homeland of the Sugpiaq or Alutiq.[11] In her book, Klein published a selection of the objects, including five items that were restituted to the Chugach Corporation 10 years later.[12]

In 2012, Medeia Csoba DeHass of the Department of Anthropology and Alaska Native Studies at the University of Alaska in Anchorage travelled to Berlin in order to register the Jacobsen Collection for her "Sugpiaq Ethnohistory collaborative, community-based project with the Nanwalek Indian Reorganization Act Council and the community of Nanwalek, Alaska."[13] The website:

> provides a platform for virtual repatriation where community members can engage with museum collections located at different parts of the world … people can actively reconnect with items that were once removed from their communities and their cultural realities. Community members can learn about the past histories of these items and reintegrate these pieces

into their collective knowledge on what is important to know about Sugpiaq past in the region.[14]

Here, all Jacobsen Sugpiaq objects can be consulted online.

The Restitution to the Chugach Alaska Corporation

Around the same time, the project "Being Aware of Our Beginnings," was launched with the aim of exploring Chugach artefacts in museums all over the world to "create a complete digital archive of Chugach material culture worldwide."[15] In May 2013, the Chugach Alaska Corporation contacted the Ethnological Museum and announced the visit of a delegation to view the pieces from the Kenai Peninsula and start a cooperation "for a virtual exhibit on our website and eventually a loan for an exhibition of the objects."[16] The five-member delegation that visited the museum in November 2015 included Helen Morris and John Johnson, who had been responsible for the repatriation of human remains throughout the USA beginning in the 1990s under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act(NAGPRA). So Johnson was interested in finding human remains in the Jacobsen Collection. Although the museum documentation does mention four mummies from Chenega, these have not been inventoried and could not be traced (Labischinski 2018, 13). Unlike Janet Klein and Medeia Csoba DeHass, Johnson had no idea about the objects Jacobsen had marked as coming from graves. However, after I had shown him the relevant passages in Jacobsen's diary and the associated burial objects in the storage, he asked for restitution.[17] His request was recognised not only by the museum but also by the legal owner, the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation). The bureaucratic process took only 24 months until its final approval in November 2017, followed by the physical restitution ceremony in the Ethnological Museum Berlin in May 2018 (Figure 8.10).[18]

Exactly two years after the first Chugach delegation, another one visited German institutions in November 2019 to identify Chugach artefacts (Labischinski 2020). Meanwhile, sharing collections and the knowledge inherent in them has become a common practice.

However, the restitution did not go unchallenged. It was criticised that its formal justification by the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz contained factual errors based primarily on Eurocentric legal norms that did not apply at the time of Jacobsen's stay in Alaska. Another objection is not at all comprehensible to the Chugach Corporation, namely that Jacobsen did not steal the burial objects from the current residents at all, because it was allegedly common practice among whale hunters of the neighbouring island of Kodiak to steal and move mummies from secret caves (Schlothauer 2018, 19–22). But the Chugach Corporation sees an all-encompassing responsibility for its territory:

Figure 8.10 John Johnson of the Chugach Corporation studying the collection of his ancestors and their neighbours on the occasion of the restitution of nine objects in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, May 2018. © Viola König.

> How were traditional values and worldview expressed through objects produced within the culture? … What connections can the people of the region make between the traditional knowledge exhibited and their worldview? These questions are particularly relevant in the context of the Alutiiq culture that has already undergone massive changes since the objects were produced and a region where people are striving to regain a culture they fear has been lost.[19]

The return of objects from ethnological collections is no longer a matter of proving a "context of injustice" that must be legally comprehensible from a European perspective. Nor is there a direct "colonial context" in the case of North American collections in German museums, and who should define "ethical commitments"? Rather, restitution reflects the current significance to the descendants and their expressed desire to take care of their significant objects themselves, whether as memorabilia, for ceremonial practice or just as cultural heritage.

Meanwhile in the USA, indigenous owners of the restituted objects agreed to the production of faithful 3D replicas for practical use in change for the physical retention of the objects in the museum, where they can be professionally cared for in terms of conservation, even if they no longer legally belong to the museum.

Interchange and Gifts

In 1997, the Yup'ik Elders had already pointed out the aspect of seeing the Jacobsen Collection as a gift. Recent collaborations have opened up even more opportunities for reconciliation than simply physical restitutions. In June 2015, I was invited to present the Ethnological Museum's collection from Kodiak on the international symposium "The turning circle" held in Boulogne-sur-Mer and Paris. Kodiak artists and representatives from various Native Alaskan organisations were present, as well as specialists from North America and Europe.[20] The Musée Boulogne-sur-Mer organised it on the occasion of an extraordinary project. In 2008, 36 of 60 masks that the collector Alphonse Pinart had collected in the Kodiak Archipelago between 1871 and 1871 were lent to Kodiak for 9 months. In return, the museum received contemporary works of art from Kodiak artists as gifts. This was apparently a good deal for the museum, who could present the "returned" old and the new works together now. The artists, on the other hand, saw this action as an excellent opportunity to promote their art permanently in Europe.

The longue-durée of dealing with the Jacobsen Collection has shown that the societies of origin were involved in different ways from the very beginning. The methodological approaches were project-dependent. A particular challenge lies in the generational change. How can we jointly succeed in keeping the regained knowledge of five generations of those involved accessible in the long term, and expand it in a targeted manner?

Consequences and Challenges for the Future Treatment of the Collection

Current developments underscore the importance of the Jacobsen Collection in its home countries. But what is the function of the collection in a German museum today? Both aspects are addressed in the concluding remarks.

The Jacobsen Collection from Alaska and Climate Change

Since time immemorial, the inhabitants of North and Northwest Alaska have experienced long and extreme cold winters. But for many years, Alaska has been one of the regions experiencing the most dramatic effects of climate change. Among the discussions on the Musée Boulogne-sur-Mer conference, I remember Othniel Art Oomittuk Jr.'s commentary on the importance of the Jacobsen Collection as a testament to indigenous culture before the dramatic climate change in the far north. He is an Inupiac artist from Point Hope in the Chukchi Sea. Since he described the situation in drastic terms in 2015, the situation has even worsened:

> Climate change is already here for us. The ice has changed. It comes late, it leaves early. It has become unreliable, hard to read, making it dangerous to cross during hunting. Our ice cellars are melting, eroding, making it difficult to store our subsistence food. It rained this past winter; it never rains in the winter. The ice in the fall used to protect our coastline from heavy waves. Now the waves wash away our shores.
>
> (Othniel Art Oomittuk Jr. 2015)

When Jacobsen came to Alaska, he encountered cultures that had not previously been of interest to explorers and collectors due to the extreme climatic conditions of -40° and the hazardous travel conditions. Jacobsen's treatment of indigenous people reflects the racist attitudes of his time. Astonished by the resistance to sell their property or to give accommodation and provision to this authoritarian, sometimes even violent Norwegian sailor, he used their huts without being asked, plundered graves and did not appear squeamish in other ways either. Nevertheless, his collections, his descriptions and illustrations of the objects as well as his recordings of the indigenous languages are contemporary witnesses to climate change today. In Jacobsen's time, seasonal fishing techniques, preparation and preservation methods for animal and vegetable food followed the rules of the arctic and subarctic. But how much longer will there be Yup'ik and Iñupiat who know how to use the items?

Charles Edensu's Totem Pole from the Northwest Coast and What It Says About Us

On May 5, 2021, the Haida Totem Pole purchased by Adrian Jacobsen on Haida Gwa'ii in 1881 was erected in the Humboldt Forum Berlin. A joint ceremony with Jim Hurt, a descendant of carver Charles Edensu, was planned back in 2016. However, Haida representatives were only able to virtually attend due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Northwest coast specialist Aaron Glass believes this "intercultural icon" is perfect for use inside the Humboldt Forum to address misconceptions about totem poles which

are rather complicated products of Native encounter with and reaction to European presence. Poles are visual means of advertising clan identity and celebrating individual ancestors, but the museum knows much more about the Haida-Edensu pole in the collection than is the case for most late 19th century poles and can add a more detailed explication of its specific local significance. Ongoing contact with master carver Jim Hart, current holder of the title Chief Edensu, means that these important museum artefacts are also a living heritage in the present.

"The totem pole" has come to be iconic for Native Americans in general within the global imaginary, and with a very specific German pedigree through popular writers such as Karl May and others. In the 1880s, the notion of "totemism" was of keen concern to theorists interested in the origins of religion as a model for their evolutionist models. So-called totem poles began to be sought after at this time by European museums and it was precisely in these intellectual and cultural/colonial milieus that Jacobsen acquired the Haida pole, which is probably the first full-sized pole to enter a European museum collection, making it highly significant in the history of museums. Therefore, the fascinating story of its post-Indigenous provenance can serve to introduce visitors to the museum itself and its own history.[21]

Implications and Final Remarks

Glass's characterisation as "intricate products of Native people's encounter with and response to the European presence in the region" applies to many of the Jacobsen objects. But the questions posed to the collection are subject to a "Zeitgeist." The founding director of the "Völkerkundemuseum" in Berlin Adolf Bastian collected in the spirit of a "salvage anthropology," in order to save and preserve evidence that testified to the original cultural heritage of indigenous groups. He assumed their inevitable extinction as a necessary consequence of the ever-expanding Western influence. However, the indigenous populations of the Northwest Coast and Alaska are not extinct, and despite intermittent bans on practice, traditions have been revived. Instead, 100 years later, "the Elders who travelled to Berlin were the recognised 'professors' from their region and were chosen for their ability and willingness to share what they knew." They specifically wanted their stories about the objects to be recorded not only for their own community but also for the museum and "for anyone else who is interested not only in what the Elders have to say, but how they say it." (Fienup-Riordan and Meade 2005, xxiii–xxiv).

Neither Bastian and Jacobsen in the late 1880s, nor the Yup'ik Elders in the late 1990s, however, could have foreseen that their natural habitat in the far north with extremely low temperatures, to which they had adapted their culture so perfectly, is being destroyed with as yet unforeseeable consequences for their future life. Nowadays, the Jacobsen Collection testifies to far more than vanished cultures, it is an exemplary witness to the existence of ecological habitats that are unlikely to exist in this form in the foreseeable

future. All this suggests that the potential of the Jacobsen Collection is far from exhausted.

Notes

1 Photographs and recordings preserved in the EM.
2 Second and third convolutes of the Jacobsen's collections, housed today in Hamburg, Köln, Lübeck, Freiburg (Gerhard 1991; Hess 2020).
3 Haberland (1979) includes 33 illustrations of the Berlin Jacobsen Collection. It is possible that more exhibits were borrowed from Berlin.
4 Haberland continued his research on the Jacobsen Collection over the next 10 years, now publishing in English (Haberland 1987, 1988, 1989).
5 Penny 2018, last accessed 27 September 2023, https://boasblogs.org/dcntr/exasperation/
6 "A Different Approach to the World: The Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace. A first look at the lab" (2009–2010).
7 Andreas Etges, Viola König (project directors) Peter Bolz, Rainer Hatoum, Tina Brüderlin.
8 The Laboratory was financed by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.
9 Former name Tanaina, Athabaskan group who live in the Cook Inlet area of south-central Alaska.
10 For a description of the collection, see Labischinski (2018/19).
11 Klein (2008), 164 referring to "Jacobsen 1977: 198–199."
12 Klein (2008): three masks (IV A 6674-76), an infant cradle (IV A 6678), a figurine (IV A 6679).
13 The community of Nanwalek belongs along with six others to the Chugach Corporation.
14 Nanwalek History Project Description. Online: https://nanwalekhistory.com. Last accessed 10/08/2022.
15 For more of "Being Aware of Our Beginnings," see www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1153566. Last accessed 10/08/2022.
16 Email Helen Morris to Viola König 16 July 2015.
17 Catalogued as Nos. IVA 6674–6682.
18 In August 2017, Johnson and König met at the corporation's Anchorage office to agree on the final technical details of restitution.
19 See www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1153566. Last accessed 10/08/2022.
20 See more at https://doczz.fr/doc/65189/the-turning-circle. Last accessed 10/08/2022.
21 Excerpt from a commentary by Aaron Glass for the author, 19 October 2016.

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