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Herausgegeben für



**Ethnologisches Museum**  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

MUSEEN DAHLEM  
KUNST UND KULTUREN DER WELT  
ETHNOLOGISCHES MUSEUM

von

MARIA GAIDA  
PAOLA IVANOV  
LARS-CHRISTIAN KOCH



DIETRICH REIMER VERLAG  
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## **Baessler-Archiv, Band 65, 2018/19**

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Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin  
Museen Dahlem  
Kunst und Kulturen der Welt  
Ethnologisches Museum

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## Past, Present, and Future of the Chugach collection in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin

ILJA LABISCHINSKI, Berlin

**Abstract.** Between 1881 and 1883, Johan Adrian Jacobsen travelled the American Northwest Coast and Alaska on behalf of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin to collect ethnographic material. In November 2015, more than 130 years later, a delegation of the Chugach Alaska Corporation and the Chugachmiut visited the Berlin Museum to get to know the objects that were once collected from their home, the Prince William Sound. A few months later, in February 2016, a member of the delegation and representative of the Chugach Alaska Corporation, John Johnson, asked the museum for support to track down and repatriate human remains and funeral objects of the Jacobsen collection. This was the starting point of collaboration between the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin and the Chugach Alaska Corporation. This paper will give an overview of the history of the collection from Southcentral Alaska, the material heritage of the Chugach in Berlin and give an inside view of collaboration in the making of the Humboldt Forum.

[Alaska, North America, Prince William Sound, Johan Adrian Jacobsen, Repatriation]

“In Prince William Sound, I was happily surprised that I had the welcoming opportunity to get to know remains and relics from ancient times”<sup>1</sup>, it reads in the beginning of a chapter of *Capitain Jacobsen's Reise an der Nordwestküste Amerikas*. The Norwegian sailor Johan Adrian Jacobsen travelled the American Northwest coast and Alaska on behalf of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin between 1881 and 1883. Towards the end of his journey, Jacobsen landed on Chenega Island from where he travelled through the Prince William Sound to collect ethnographic material. Most of the objects he collected in Prince William Sound are now part of the collections in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin.

In November 2015, more than 130 years later, a delegation of the Chugach Alaska Corporation and the Chugachmiut visited the Berlin Museum to get to know the objects that were once collected from their home, the Prince William Sound. The purpose of the journey to different museums in the US and Europe was to find Chugach artifacts and get to know their material cultural heritage that is now in different parts of the world. A few months later, in February 2016, a member of the delegation and representative of the Chugach Alaska Corporation, John Johnson, asked the museum for support to track down and repatriate human remains and funeral objects of the Jacobsen collection. Both the museum and the Chugach Alaska Corporation, agreed to collaborate in researching the history and the whereabouts of the objects and making the objects accessible for the descendants of the former producers of the artefacts.

In this paper, I would like to illustrate the collaboration between a community and a museum that is still in the making. Questions such as what are the chances, challenges and limits of such a joint project will be raised, however not completely answered in this paper. As a foundation of such a project it is necessary to deal with the Chugach collection which is part of the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin today. Although the Jacobsen collection in Berlin is quite well documented, large parts of the collections from Southcentral Alaska are still waiting for research and documentation. The work of Ann Fienup-Riordan and the visit of a delegation of Yup'ik elders at the Berlin museum in 1997 were a starting point for researching Alaskan objects in Berlin (Bolz/Sanner 1999: 219). Nevertheless, the collections from the second part of his Alaskan journey are still not as acknowledged and remain almost unknown (König 2013a:

1 Wherever I cite Jacobsen's travelogue I used the translation of Erna Gunther (1977). There are some cases where the translation is incorrect like in this case where I translated Jacobsen's original German version: „In Prince Williamsund bot sich mir zu meiner freudigen Ueberraschung eine willkommene Gelegenheit dar, Ueberreste und Reliquien aus alter Zeit kennen zu lernen (cited after König 2013: 381)“.

XI). This too is the case with the approximately 200 objects from the Prince William Sound. A lot of objects were registered as *Kriegsverluste*, objects lost during and after World War II. The first approach for the research of this paper was to find out which objects still exist in the Berlin Museum, what types of objects they are and where they are located in preparation to inventory and digitalize the objects. Before that, I would like to give a brief overview of the history of the Prince William Sound and the delegation that visited the museum in 2015.

## The Community

Established in 1971 under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), the Chugach Alaska Corporation exists to serve the interests of the Alaskan Native people of the Chugach region. Two years later, Chugachmiut was founded as a non-profit agency to promote self-determination to the seven Native communities of the Chugach Region. They provide health care and social services, education and training and technical assistance to the Chugach Native people in a way which is acceptable to Native cultural values and tradition.

The Chugach define themselves as Sugpiaq, loosely translated as “the real people or the original people of their homeland” (Johnson 1984: 8). Today, Alaskan Natives in Southcentral Alaska call themselves Sugpiaq as well as Alutiiq or Aleuts (Luehrmann 2008: 3). In the 1700s, the Russians labeled the people of the Aleutian Islands as Aleuts and continued using this term as they encountered the Native peoples of Kodiak Island and Prince William Sound. The name Alutiiq, which simply means Aleut in the language of the area, became the preferred term of self-designation. (Pullar 1992: 182). This changed in the 1970s when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was signed into law (Pullar 2001: 83). ANCSA intended to divide Alaska into 12 geographic regions based on cultural areas. Southcentral Alaska was divided into three areas. The Koniag region of Kodiak Island, the Chugach region of Prince William Sound and lower Kenai Peninsula and the Bristol Bay region that included the Alaska Peninsula Alutiiq villages. In just a few years this ANCSA regional identity had overwhelmed the Alutiiq ethnic identity (Pullar 1992: 185).

Today, the people who define themselves as Chugach live around Prince William Sound and Lower Cook Inlet. Alaskan Natives of the Chugach Region live in seven coastal communities: Chenega, Eyak, Nanwalek, Port Graham, Seward, Tatilek and Valdez. The Chugach people like other Native Alaskans in the Southcentral are often seen contemptuously as a mix of Russians and Scandinavians with a bit of Native ancestry (Pullar 2001: 84). This is due to the special history of this area. This region was the center of the Russian fur trade. The impact of early Russian explorers, traders and clergy was high and also explaining the present-day prominence of the Russian Orthodox Church. Later, the abundant natural resources and the productive fishery also became the reason why contact between Natives and Non-Native people was more frequent than in other regions of Alaska.

The people in Southcentral Alaska suffered extremely under Russian colonization. Russian traders took women and children as hostages and forced men into work groups, hunting sea otters and fighting other Natives to feed the Russian appetite for new lands and resources (Pullar 2001: 84). Diseases spread over the region and the people that survived lived under slave-like conditions. Haakanson Jr. even calls the Russian conquest genocidal practice (Haakanson Jr. n.d.). However, the story of the Chugach people does not begin with the Russian colonization. Oral tradition reveals that the Chugach migrated and settled in Prince William thousands of years before. Archeological evidence shows that the Chugach people have survived and prospered for thousands of

years (Johnson 1994: 209). Oldest legends tell of the last ice age when Prince William Sound was largely covered by glaciers (Johnson 1984: 8), myths that are supported by archaeological evidence (Steffian 2001: 103).

In 1867, the Russians sold Alaska to the USA, but the situation of the Alaskan Natives remained unchanged. Natives were not allowed to own land or to educate their children in their own culture and language. The Native people of the region have had several devastating experiences. In the early 1900s, a small pox epidemic decimated the community of Nuchek. 30 years later, a pneumonia epidemic struck the region. As a consequence, everyone known to have pneumonia was sent away and usually did not return. This event tore families apart and had a long-lasting impact on the population. In 1964 after an Earthquake on Good Friday, a Tsunami destroyed most of the buildings and killed many people in Chenega, Valdez and Seward. Surly the most profound impact on life in recent years was the Exxon Valdez incident in 1989. An estimate of 11 million gallons of oil spread across the Prince William Sound through lower Cook Inlet to Kodiak Island and beyond (Pullar 2010: 151).

The situation of Alaskan Native people changed in 1971, when the American government enacted the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which established 12 regional Native corporations and more than 200 village corporations – one of them was the Chugach Corporation. More than 40 million acres of public lands in Alaska and USD 962.5 million were granted to the Native corporations. ANCSA was designed to give Alaskan Natives a means of ensuring financial independence by giving them corporate ownership to large tracts of land and the opportunity to develop that land. In contrast to other corporations, the Alaskan Native Corporations invest a majority of their income in social and cultural programs. According to data collected by ANCSA Regional Association, between 2009 and 2012, the 12 regional corporations paid out a total of USD 678.4 million in shareholder dividends. Their goal is to find a thoughtful and responsible balance of development and preservation. (Chugach Alaska Corporation n.d..)

Since the 1980s, a cultural revitalization movement began to sweep over South-central Alaska. This movement focuses more on strengthening the spiritual connection with one's heritage and sense of identity rather than reclaiming certain rights. This does not mean that basic rights of self-government are not important any longer but that asserting these rights is much easier when they are demanded by a community with a strong sense of who they are. (Pullar 1992: 182)

John Johnson, Vice President of Cultural Resources of the Chugach Alaska Corporation explains: "A cultural renaissance is now sweeping across Alaska like a winter storm. Native cultural centers and spirit camps for the Native youth are being built across this great land and in record numbers" (Johnson 2001:93). An important part of the cultural revitalization of the Chugach is the Nuuciq Spirit Camp. In the old village of Nuuciq, on the shores of Nuchek Island, within the Prince William Sound, children and elders of the Chugach spend time together to relive their heritage. The camp is designed to raise awareness of the origin and history of the people in the Prince William Sound and to broaden awareness of their history and culture. Activities include gathering and preparing subsistence foods, language lessons, woodcarving, beading, traditional singing and dancing. Storytelling with Elders provide important lessons in culture, history and learning the values of the Chugach community.

## The Journey

2 The Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde was the predecessor of the Ethnologisches Museum.

The journey of Johan Adrian Jacobsen on behalf of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde<sup>2</sup> and the collection he brought back to Berlin is what connects the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin to the Chugach people. Adolf Bastian, the founding direc-



tor of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde stated: "I often feel the wish returning, to send there a special collector for our Museum" (Bastian 1881 cited in Cole 1985: 58) when he returned from a stop-over at the Northwest Pacific Coast during a return voyage from Polynesia. Bastian was so impressed by the excellence in carving, the unique art style and the complex social structure of the people that he did his best to raise enough money to finance a collecting trip.

His first choice for the journey was Johan Adrian Jacobsen. The Norwegian sailor worked in Hamburg for Carl Hagenbeck, the famous zoo owner, who had hired Jacobsen to organize *Völkerschauen* (ethnic exhibitions). Jacobsen travelled to Greenland and Labrador to hire Native people and bring a collection of ethnographic material to Germany. Jacobsen later sold the collections to the Berlin Museum and through that got in contact with Bastian.

To finance a journey like this to the Northwest Coast, Bastian wrote to August Le Coq, a wealthy Prussian businessman:

If the museum were funded as required by the (...) urgent needs of ethnology, then I would not hesitate one moment to rent a ship immediately for 2–3 years and then tell him the route he will have to follow. The costs (...) will amount to 15,000–20,000 Mark per year (...) the collections which could be gained ... could represent ten times this value or far more in the scientific sense. (Bastian 1884 cited after Fienup-Riordan 2005: 5).

Le Coq visited Jacobsen to verify the qualities of the Norwegian sailor in person and afterwards recommended him to other possible financiers of the journey (König 2013a: XIV). Together with a group of Berlin notables, Le Coq founded the *Hilfscomité für die Vermehrung der Ethnologischen Sammlungen der Königlichen Museen* in July 1881 to finance Jacobsen's journey aiming to document the 'savage peoples threatened with extinction' (Fienup-Riordan 2005: 5).

On July 31 1881, Jacobsen left Hamburg to travel to Victoria via San Francisco. From there Jacobsen visited the Queen Charlotte Islands (today Haida Gwaii) and Prince Rupert before he returned to Victoria again. After ten days, he left again, this time to travel the coasts of Vancouver Island. In January 1882, the first shipment arrived in Berlin and Bastian and the *Hilfscomité* were more than satisfied with the outcome. Bastian and Jacobsen agreed to another trip, this time to Alaska. "The Eldorado for a collector" (Fienup-Riordan 2005: 8) was Jacobsen's first choice because he heard stories that ethnographic material was abundant there and cheaper than anywhere else. Jacobsen's plans were delayed by a request from Hagenbeck, to help him organize a *Völkerschau* with people from the Northwest Coast. In June 1882 Jacobsen could finally leave San Francisco where he spent the winter and boarded a schooner that brought him to Unalaska at the very Southwest of Alaska. In the following months, Jacobsen made four major trips from St. Michael (Northern Alaska), one in each cardinal direction.

In May 1883, Jacobsen arrived in Fort Alexander, the headquarters of the Alaska Commercial Company, where he wanted to rest for a while before returning to Germany. The journey home was more complicated than Jacobsen imagined and it took him until September to finally arrive back in San Francisco. On June 5th, he reached Cook Inlet and while waiting for a schooner to Kodiak Island, Jacobsen heard about ruins of an old and deserted settlement called Sanradna, a village supposedly abandoned after an attack of the Russians in 1794 (Klein 1995: 33). Jacobsen hired a young local man to show him the place. "After several hours of fast sailing we arrived at last at the ruins of the village of Sanradna. It is situated at the foot of the third glacier on the south side of Kachemak Bay" Jacobsen wrote in his travelogue. He and his crew spent three days in this area and excavated a small collection of artifacts, 51 of those are now part of the collections in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin. The location of Sanradna is unknown today.



When Jacobsen finally arrived on Kodiak Island, there was no ship that left directly to San Francisco like he had hoped for. He therefore decided to continue his journey to Prince Williams Sound. In Chenega Jacobsen bought all the ethnographical objects he could get. Some local people told Jacobsen about a burial place nearby and he decided to visit it right away. While the grave was already plundered he was still able to find two broken masks. The next day Jacobsen left together with Captain Andersen on his schooner to another burial place he had heard of. He there discovered the mummy of an adult person and one of a child of which he could 'secure' only one. Nearby Jacobsen and Andersen discovered another burial place where they found several mummies but could take only one on board. Besides that, Jacobsen took several skulls, a children's cradle and some pieces of wood from broken masks. The next day the schooner reached Knights Island where again Jacobsen found four mummies and six skulls of which he could take only one female skull and a cradle on board. Jacobsen continued his trip around Montague Island to Nuchek where he found 15 old and broken stone axes. On July 27 1883, Jacobsen and his crew left Nuchek to Hawkins Island and continued to the Copper River Delta. On August 8, they returned to Nuchek where Jacobsen bought everything he could get and was happy that he found ethnographic material from all along the Alaskan coast. On August 11 Jacobsen decided to return to Kodiak Island to finally get a ship that would bring him back home. Jacobsen returned to San Francisco on September 22. Finally it took him two more months to return to Berlin.

After his return from his journey in 1883, he stayed in Berlin to catalogue his collection (Bolz/Sanner 1999: 219). His handwritten descriptions of the objects can still be found on the file cards. Already in 1884, the travelogue of Jacobsen's journey was published as a monograph most probably ghostwritten by August Woldt, a member of the Berlin Anthropological Society (Fienup Riordan 2005: 21–23). Both, the travelogue and the index cards are an important source for further research, although they deserve critical inspection.

## The Collection

From his journey, Johan Adrian Jacobsen brought back nearly 7,000 objects, around 3,000 from the Northwest Coast and 4,000 from Alaska. Out of these 4,000 objects, the majority comes from his trips into the Yup'ik and Iñupiat territory. Only a very small part, about 200 objects, derives from the Prince William Sound.

In comparison to the Jacobsen collection from British Columbia, the research of the collection from Alaska began quite late (König 2013a: X; Bolz/Sanner 1999: 219). It remained largely unpublished also because it was thought to have mostly been destroyed during the bombing of Berlin. In fact, many objects were taken to Russia by the Soviet Army. In 1978 these collections were sent to the German Democratic Republic and the Leipzig Museum of Ethnology and were returned to the Berlin museum in 1992 (Höpfner 1995). In the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, most collections that come from Alaska have never been systematically studied (Bolz/Sanner 1999: 205), the Yup'ik collection being the only exception. Organized by the American ethnologist Ann Fienup-Riordan, a delegation of Yup'ik elders visited the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin in September 1997. The results of this collaboration were published a few years later (Fienup-Riordan 2005). The Yup'ik and Iñupiat objects are quite well documented in the inventories of the Ethnological Museum mainly because they were planned to be presented in the new exhibitions in the Humboldt Forum from 2019 onwards. The objects from the Chugach region were only poorly documented and almost completely lacked digitalization. Several objects were inventoried as *Kriegsverluste* (objects lost since WWII). While the collection was partially photographed and some information



**Fig. 1** Bowl, IV A 6206, Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Photo: Martin Franken.

was accessible through the digital catalogue and museum publication, the collection of the Chugach region had remained largely inaccessible to Chugach people.

What is presented in this chapter is a description of the objects from the Chugach and the first completed outcome of the research for the collection. The first step of the research was to catalogue which objects are in the storage of the museum and which objects are still missing today. During the research, it was possible to track down most of the objects in the storage and they are now again accessible for Alaskan Natives as well as for the museum and scholars. The second step was to inventory the objects, to digitalize the records and connect them with the existing information about the Jacobsen journey. Separated by great distance, little was known about the objects in the collection in the Berlin Museum.

Most objects from the Chugach region and Prince Williams Sound are objects of daily life. In Chenega, Jacobsen bought at least 16 eating bowls that are today part of the collections of the Berlin Museum (IV A 6195-6217), six eating bowls come from Nuchek (IV A 6290-6294 and 9484). On the index cards Jacobsen states that some bowls were only used by men while others were reserved for women. Most of the bowls are painted red on the inside and are decorated with concentric rings with inlaid beads on the rim. One especially conspicuous bowl is IV A 6206 (Fig. 1), a bird shaped bowl with embedded glass beads that is saturated with fish or sea mammal oil. This bird-shaped bowl probably represents a merganser duck like it is described for a very similar object from the Smithsonian Collection (E168623-0). Already 100 years before Jacobsen travelled to Alaska, the German doctor Carl Heinrich Merck described the decorated plates: “Of dishes they have wooden platters and plates, carved from flat pieces

of wood and decorated with bones, crystals, beads, and the teeth of various animals” (Merck 1980).

The white beads were used by Sugpiaq artists to decorate their carvings. In Sugpiaq and Yup’ik art, circles represent passageways between levels of the multi-layered cosmos, and between upper and lower levels of the sky and sea (Crowell 2010: 165). The form of three beads is typical for the Chugach people. It makes their objects distinguishable from other Alaskan Native groups. The Chugach eating bowls are largely similar to the bowls of the Tlingit but are normally shallower and more naturalistic in the representation of the animal (ibid).

The nine spoons in the Berlin collection (IV A 6214-6221) are not as decorated as other ones in museum collections from Southcentral Alaska. IV A 6213, 6214 and 6215 are three large ladles from Chenega, probably for serving soup (Birket-Smith 1953: 61). Of IV A 6214, the handle and the rearmost half is painted red, whereas on the other half there are only short, radial stripes along the edge in the same color. The smaller spoons are made of mountain-goat horn and have carved handles with representations of animals. Spoons made of goat horn can also be found in Kodiak Island where mountain goats are absent, but horns of the animals were acquired in trade from villages in Prince William Sound and along the Kenai Peninsula (Crowell 2010: 165).

Four of the five baskets Jacobsen collected in Chenega are still in the Berlin Museum (IV A 6175-6178), IV A 6179 was lost during WWII. Most of the baskets have three horizontal reinforcements at the sides near the bottom. The colors of the baskets vary, but yellow and brown are dominant on most. Two more baskets (IV A 6269 and 6286) originate from Prince William Sound and were bought by Jacobsen at Nuchek. Both are dominantly yellow and red and are shaped like a bottle with a lid. Birket-Smith describes them as imitating ordinary European bottles (1953: 59).

Two beautiful stones are rock crystals (IV A 6327 and 6328) that Jacobsen describes on the index cards as collected by the Natives just because of their beauty. He speculates about their use by shamans as magical objects but is not sure if they were ever used in that context. Of 22 stone axes in the collection (IV A 6304-6325), 15 mostly broken stone axes were excavated in Nuchek while the other seven axes are not described any further. Seven stone lamps from Chenega (IV A 6390-6396) were normally used to illuminate the house. They were filled with oil from sea animals and a wick made out of moss or cedar bark. On the index card, Jacobsen describes the production of the oil lamps as the same as for stone axes. Stone lamps for burning sea mammal oil have been used for at least 7,500 years in the region (Steffian 2001: 108). While the lamps in the Berlin collection are rather simple in their design, old stone lamps were often carved with human figures, whales, and other designs.

Three coats from Chenega, all of them made of eagle skins (IV A 6258-6260), are examples of a superb craftsmanship of fitting eagle skins together. Before the manufacturing of the coats, the skins were sewn together into horizontal bands (Birket-Smith 1953: 65). The large feathers were sheared, so only the underneath down is left. Stitching can be seen only on the back side of the coat. Jacobsen notes the native name for the jackets as ‘kotchskallitt’.

Several objects from the Chugach area in the Jacobsen collection are associated with hunting. In Chenega, Jacobsen bought eight harpoon points made of slate, whalebones, and leather (IV A 6240-6246 and 6363) along with a quiver (IV A 6247). Another harpoon point comes from Nuchek (IV A 6298) together with six whole harpoons (IV A 6287-6289 and 6295-6297). According to Jacobsen’s descriptions, they were used for hunting sea lions. On the index cards Jacobsen explains that sea lions in this region were very common and get as close to the boats of the hunters that they can be easily killed with these harpoons. Another 14 harpoon points come from Nuchek made of copper for hunting sea otters (IV A 6271-6285). IV A 6273 was sold as a so called *Dublette* to the



**Fig. 2** Throwing Board, IV A 6257, Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Photo: Martin Franken.

Völkerkundemuseum Dresden in 1922. Four harpoon points (IV A 6236-6239) are described as used for whale hunting. Other objects related to hunting are two bows (IV A 6252 and 6266) with three arrows (IV A 6253, 6254, 6265), the point of a spear (IV A 6249), a copper knife (IV A 6250), a knife made of iron and wood and a fishing pole (IV A 6251). The throwing board IV A 6257 (Fig. 2) is a beautiful carved object. A throwing board extended a hunter's arm, adding extra leverage. Sea otter and seal hunters used throwing boards to send their harpoons further and with more force. Jacobsen describes that this throwing board is similar to the ones used in Kodiak and Norton Sound, the ones used in Southcentral Alaska usually do not have a hole for the finger. Typical for the region, in Jacobsen's opinion, is the hard wood that was used to carve this throwing board. Five polished mussels (IV A 6232-6235) were used to scrape out the inner pulp of a special kind of tree and were then used for nutrition.

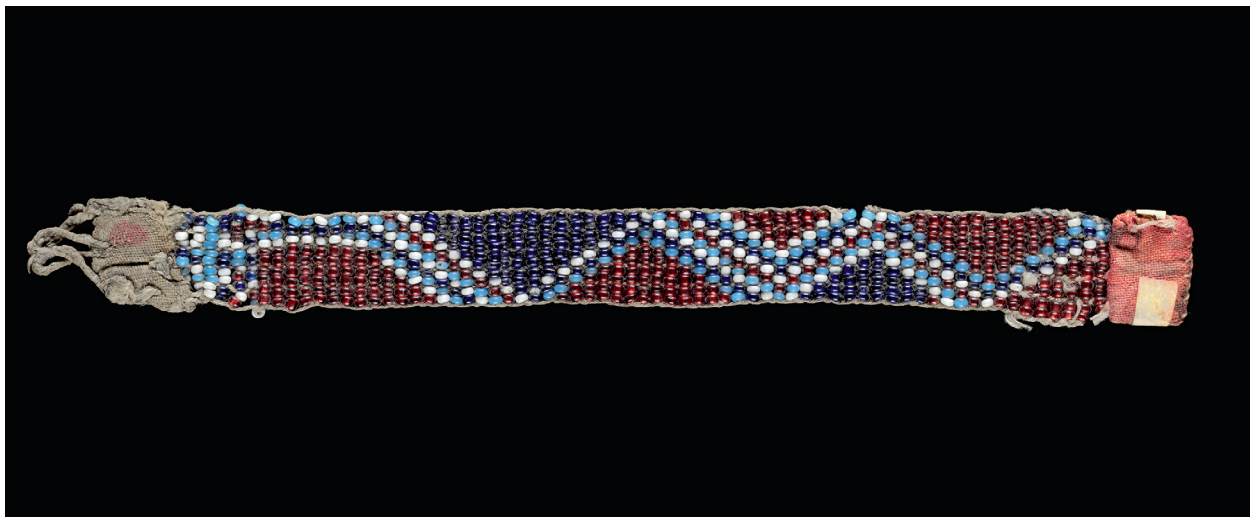
Before WWII a Kayak from Nuchek divided into a front and a back part (IV A 6267 and 6268) was part of the collection. It seems that it was a full-sized kayak but documentation is very vague. The kayak model IV A 6330 (Fig. 3) is one example of a three hatch-kayaks that were invented after the contact with the Russians. In earlier times, the hunters usually travelled in one-man or two-man kayaks, while the single-hatch boats were used to hunt small and fast animals while the front seat in double-hatch kayaks was used to shoot harpoons, darts or guns (Crowell 2010: 154). Typical for the kayaks from Prince Williams Sound is the bifurcated bow that worked like a shock absorber, an innovation the Sugpiaq came up with centuries ago (personal communication with the members of the Chugach delegation). The first bow split open the wave and the second bow retained the flotation. This bow together with the construction of the kayak added a lot to the endurance of its conductor. To cover the wooden construction, the Chugach used stellar sea lion, walrus or seal skin. It took just one sea lion to cover one kayak. More common was seal skin of which six to seven were needed.

Of the eight collected necklaces in Chenega, three were lost after WWII (IV A 6180, 6184, 6186) while five are still in the collections of the Berlin Museum (IV A 6181, 6182, 6183, 6185, 6187). Jacobsen describes the necklaces on the index cards as worn by both sexes but preferred by women. They are made of beads and cord and were closed with a button around the neck. Jacobsen mentions that these necklaces were called 'Ojameltkat' in Chenega. Six out of originally seven bracelets are in the Berlin collections (IV A 6189-6194), while only IV A 6188 was lost after WWII. Jacobsen





**Fig. 3** Kayak Model, IV A 6330, Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Photo: Martin Franken.



**Fig. 4** Bracelet, Inv. IV A 6193, Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Photo: Martin Franken

describes that the bracelets and the necklaces were worn by both sexes. He continues to describe that not only the people in Chenega but also the people living at Copper River wore a lot of jewelry made of beads, a tradition that in his opinion came from the Tanana, Indians living in the Alaskan midland. Bracelets were always worn on both wrists so that the objects in the Berlin collection are always in pairs, for example: the missing bracelet IV A 6188 was worn together with IV A 6190. Pairs of bracelets were always in the same design. IV A 6193 (Fig. 4) of which design in Jacobsen's opinion depicts a snake has no matching pair.

The five ivory amulets in the collections (IV A 6223-6227) are most probably good luck charms and represent sea otters. According to Sugpiaq belief, sea otters were formerly human beings (Crowell 2010: 156). A story from Prince William Sound tells of a man who was trapped on the beach by a rushing tide. To save himself, he cried: "I wish I might turn into a sea otter!" His wish was granted, which is why, it is said, the internal organs of a man and a sea otter look the same. The designs depict the animal's ribs and



Fig. 5 Hunting Hat, IV A 6174, Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Photo: Martin Franken.

spine (ibid). The Chugach of Prince William Sound returned the bones of killed otters to the sea so that the animals would be reborn. Ivory hunting charms were fastened inside the cockpit of a kayak to bring good luck to the hunter. A very similar good luck charm can be found in the Smithsonian collection (E168626A) by William J. Fisher in the same year Jacobsen was travelling through the area.<sup>3</sup> An archaeological example was found at Seldovia in Cook Inlet (de Laguna 1975: 257) which leads to the suggestion that the good luck charms are much older than the Russian invasion. IV A 6174 (Fig. 5) is an outstanding basketry hat, painted with a design that is similar to groups from the Northwest Coast. It is decorated with colored beads and sea-lion whiskers. There are red and black paint decorations on the hat, which are very fragile. There is also a red cotton-like cord that ties under the chin. Birket-Smith describes the hat as a shelter against the rain (1953: 66), while a similar hat from the Fisher collection in the Smithsonian is labeled as a hunting hat (E074720). Hunters wore spruce root hats to attract sea otters and believed strongly in their power. William Fisher describes hunting hats as: “highly prized and natives do not like to part with them. These hats are supposed to have the power of attracting sea otters and by parting with the hat they also part with all luck in getting the animals” (Crowell 2010: 153).

Jacobsen describes in his travel log and in letters he sent to Bastian several occasions when he plundered graves. Today, no human remains of the Jacobsen journey are part of the collection of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin. It is still unclear whether those remains ever arrived in Germany or became part of the collection of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin or any other institution.<sup>4</sup> This would be an important but much more extensive research to track down the human remains Jacobsen collected. Besides the human remains the funerary objects that were probably taken from burial sites were of special interest for the Chugach delegation members. In his travelogue, Jacobsen describes how he heard about an ancient burial place near Chenega. He went there but realized that someone was there before him and took all the human remains. The only

3 In his travelogue, Jacobsen also mentions Mr. Fisher several times: “I have made an agreement with Captain Anderson that half of all finds would go to Mr. Fisher in Saint Paul. Without such an agreement, I probably would not have had the opportunity of being there at all”. Jacobsen hired Captain Anderson and his schooner that brought him to Prince William Sound in St. Paul, Kodiak Island. In 1879 William J. Fisher took residence in St. Paul and worked there as a tidal recorder for the U.S. fish commission. Fisher offered the Smithsonian to collect natural specimen. Today, nearly 400 objects are part of the collections of the National Museum of Natural History. Fisher knew about Jacobsen’s activities in Prince William Sound and bemoaned the piracy of the German collector (Crowell 1992: 21). It would be an interesting but larger research to find out more about the connections between the two collections.

4 The museum documentation leads to the suggestion that at least four mummies from Chenega arrived in Berlin but were not inventoried in the collections of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde.

things that were left were two broken masks. These masks seem to be in the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin today (IV A 6674, IV A 6675).

Masks were made to memorialize someone or to pray for good hunts. A song and a dance were composed so that the mask could be danced with. Everyone who attended the ceremony put their prayers and messages into the mask. Immediately after the dance, the mask was burned. In doing so, the flames and the smoke brought the messages to the loved ones (Crowell 2010: 170). As a result of this tradition, not too many masks from the Chugach survived. If the masks were not burned, they were often placed in caves and graves.

The suggestion that the use of funerary masks among the Chugach is part of a burial complex that survived from an earlier prehistoric culture (Palugvik) that is closely related to the Kachemak tradition of Cook Inlet and Kodiak Island, first put forward by Birket-Smith in 1953, is consistent with the results of subsequent archeological investigations. (Anonymous 1999)

While the catalogue description identifies the masks IV A 6674 and 6675 as Sanradna as the origin location, Jacobsen's descriptions in the travelogue label the masks as collected from the vicinity of Chenega in burial places.

After we landed at Chenega, a local inhabitant told me that a few English miles away there was an old burial site. So, I rented a small skin boat, took my interpreter and a native with me, and went to this place. It was once obvious that someone had collected the pieces before me. I found only two broken masks, which I took (cited after Gunther 1977: 204).

IV A 6674 is a rather big mask measuring 57×27cm. It seems that the figure on this mask is wearing a large, tall hat that might represent a 'toion', the village headman (Abyo 2011).

Another funerary object Jacobsen brought to Berlin is a children's cradle (IV A 6678). It seems that this object is mislabeled with its origin in Sanradna. In his travelogue Jacobsen writes:

In our boat we cruised along the steep overhanging cliffs with many caves and found a second burial site where there were more mummies, also in such advanced stages of decay that we could find just one small example. This was also wrapped in skins and was lying on a wooden hoop that reminded me of a Labrador snowshoe and was possibly a child's cradle (cited after Gunther 1977: 204-205).

While Jacobsen bought a new child's cradle in Nuchek (IV A 6270) this specimen is in bad condition and highly decayed.

In Sanradna Jacobsen also took several funerary objects out of a cave. Amongst them is another mask. IV A 6676 is also broken but in a much better condition than the other two from Chenega. Also, the object described by Jacobsen as a square piece of wood with a hole in the center seems to be a mask. There is a very similar mask in the Fisher collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (72506), which is described as a plank mask. The rectangular opening in the middle served as a frame for a face, and there is residual red paint on the front of the mask. The fact that Jacobsen collected this item from a grave also supports identification as a mask (Crowell 1992: 25) All masks have red paint marks that are still visible. Following John Johnson, one of the members of the Chugach delegation, red masks were associated with graves.

From the same grave Jacobsen took several other objects: "We then visited a mall cave that was used as a burial site after cremation was no longer practiced. There I found a staff similar to those used in ceremonial dancing [IV A 6677] and also a figure of a woman [IV A 6679]". The painted figure seems to be a shaman's doll, like the ones in the



Alutiiq Museum (UA85.193:4063) or the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (E74719-0). In Fisher's accession record it is described as used by shamans:

It was believed that shamans could put a spirit into a doll, then send it away to save people from danger or to cause their deaths. Some dolls could speak, but only the shaman could hear their words. Spirit helpers also took the forms of owls and loons, whose calls meant the arrival of sickness.<sup>5</sup>

## The Collaboration

The material cultural heritage of the Chugach described in the previous chapter was collected on the premise that the Native People of North America were soon to be extinct and that their material culture should be preserved for future generations in Europe (Cole 1985). Over a hundred years later, the visit of the Chugach delegation shows that Alaskan Native people are still alive and interested in their cultural heritage that resides in European museums.

The relationship between these so-called source communities<sup>6</sup> and ethnographic museums has changed in recent years. Museums and source communities in Australia, New Zealand and North America have set standards for a new relationship and processes of collaboration in research and exhibition planning while such collaborations in Europe are still an exception (Peers and Brown 2003: 3). A first but important step for the changing relationship between museums and source communities was James Clifford's article "Museums as contact zones" (1997) where he refers to museums as spaces in which geographically and historically separated people come into contact and establish ongoing relations.

While repatriation of objects often plays a minor role in the relations between source communities and museums, it is fundamental for the cultural revitalization movement in Southcentral Alaska to repatriate funerary objects and human remains. It is therefore not surprising that the most important issue for the Chugach Corporation is to locate and the repatriation of the human remains Jacobsen collected during his journey to the Chugach region. For the Chugach Corporation, it is important to rebury the human remains back to their place of origin and to repatriate funerary objects to Alaska where they can be displayed at regional and village facilities for educational purposes. This would be extremely important to the Elders and to the spiritual well-being of the culture. It is in the interest of both the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin and the Chugach Corporation to locate the human remains and their whereabouts. It will be part of joint research of both institutions. The funerary objects were repatriated to the Chugach Alaska Corporation in May 2018.

Today, no human remains of the Jacobsen journey are part of the collection of the Ethnological Museum Berlin. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the Berlin Museum to support the Chugach Alaska Corporation to track down the human remains that once were taken by Johan Adrian Jacobsen who was ordered to do so by the museum. To locate and repatriate the human remains to the Chugach Alaska Corporation would be an important first step for future collaborations, especially because repatriation is not, Johnson stresses, "the end to the thirst for knowledge, but is a new starting point in building trust and cooperation. Cooperation and partnership with science is important if we want to understand the full picture of human history" (Johnson 2001: 92).

"Much of what is needed in a cultural revitalization movement is information" (Pulgar 2008: 111). The delegation of Chugach came to Berlin not only to have a look at the Jacobsen collection and therefore at their material cultural heritage, but to establish a relationship between the museum and the Chugach community for developing the basis

5 <https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=173> retrieved 23.07.2018

6 Although the term source community is a highly problematic term, it is still the most common one in English language to refer to these groups that are the descendants of the people from whom the objects in museum collections were once collected. Following Peers and Brown, I understand source communities as a group of people that have "legitimate moral and cultural stakes or forms of ownership in museum collections and that they have special claims, needs, or rights of access to material heritage held by museums" (2003: 2).

for future collaborations. It is important for the Chugach delegation to get access to the information about their culture that is preserved in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin not just for cultural healing but to strengthen the cultural revitalization movement in the area that is described in the previous chapter.

For the time being, the aim of the collaboration between the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin and the Chugach community is to exchange knowledge about the collection Jacobsen brought to Berlin more than 100 years ago. As a first step, the museum wants to provide photographs of all Chugach objects of the collection. These photographs will be used for a virtual exhibition. Providing them for the communities is much more important than just virtual exhibitions. Visual representations of objects enable local people to carve masks, make clothing and other traditional objects using cultural techniques that have been nearly forgotten. By seeing the objects or at least pictures of them, people can develop a sense of who they are, what their history is and how they fit into the world. This is what Ann Fienup-Riordan calls visual repatriation (2005: 280). The objects remain in the museum storage - what is repatriated is the representation and with it the knowledge embedded in the objects but also in field notes, photos and other documents. The knowledge associated with the objects return to its original home. This often is of greater importance for the people who originally owned them. (Pullar 2008: 112).

Gathering knowledge and translating existing information into English is therefore another important aspect of the cooperation. Even if a large part of the Jacobsen collection is internationally researched this is not the case for the objects of the Chugach region. Another point is that there is still a lot of information only available in German or translated in an unsatisfying way. It will be an important step to make this information available and understandable for the Chugach community. This is a way of sharing knowledge between the preserving society and the source community. Sharing knowledge goes beyond the public discourse of repatriation (Luehrmann 2004: 217). As Gordon Pullar puts it for the case of Kodiak Island:

This sharing greatly enhances the pursuit of the misplaced cultural knowledge, which is needed to re-invigorate their cultures. Partnerships and collaborations between indigenous peoples' organizations and the museums that store the representations of their cultures are often a key to recapturing important components of cultural heritage and healing from past traumatic events that resulted in cultural loss. (Pullar 2008: 114)

For the communities, the main interest is access to information that is preserved in the museum, whether it is preserved in files, photographs or the objects themselves. Making this information accessible to the communities is an effective way to give the knowledge back. People interested in reviving cultural traditions or traditional technical skills can use this information to teach and revive cultural heritage in their communities (Luehrmann 2004: 221). By sharing information, a new kind of knowledge is created in form of recordings of the analyzing process of objects or conversations between museum curators and members of the communities. These new artifacts can become a new kind of cultural property that is easily shareable between faraway places. Digitalization of objects and knowledge in this process is indispensable. Digital collections and databases not only overcome the great spatial distance between indigenous communities in North America and museums in Europe but can be the basis of continuous collaborations between source communities and preserving societies (Hoffmann 2015: 210).

For the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, a cooperation like this is as important as for the Chugach community. It creates new information and knowledge about the objects and the history of the collection that was previously unknown, missing or lost. In the case of the Chugach cooperation, objects that were considered as *Kriegsverluste* could be found in the storage. They are now being digitalized and are available for future research.

The collaboration with the Yup'ik was an important experience for the Berlin Museum and showed the large potential that lies in working together with source communities. For Viola König, the collaborative project with the Yup'ik closed a circle that began ingloriously with the *Völkerschauen* organized by Jacobsen that now opened totally new perspectives for mutual visits (König 2013a: XII). König calls the Yup'ik project organized by the anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan exemplary but envisioned that future projects will be initiated by the communities themselves (König 2013a: XX). A vision that came true with the visit of the Chugach delegation.

Both the Berlin Museum and the Chugach Corporation and the Chugachmiut Tribal Organization hope to have a cooperative agreement soon to share educational information with each other.

## Future Prospects

Since its founding in 1873, the Königliches Museum für Völkerunde, nowadays called Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, has collected and exhibited objects from the cultural heritage of people from all over the world. Representatives of these groups call on to participate in the process of exhibition and collection research. It is planned that in 2020 the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin will open new exhibitions in the Humboldt Forum right in the center of Berlin. The museum has defined multiperspectivity and the decentering of interpretive power as highly justified demands and central elements of the new exhibitions and the future research. Establishing partnerships for joint projects is therefore a central task for the Humboldt Forum.

The cooperation between the Chugach Alaska Corporation, the Chugachmiut and the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin will be directly located on an institutional level, in contrast to most previous and existing cooperations. Joint projects between ethnological museums and source communities are usually based on the work and trust between individual people and therefore often end when one person leaves the organization or the museum. To create sustainable cooperations independent from individual persons is a big and important task for the future of ethnological museums and especially for the Humboldt Forum.

For European museums, The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) could provide a framework within which museums and Native peoples can begin to develop new kinds of partnerships and collaborative relations. NAGPRA describes the rights of Native Americans with respect to the treatment, repatriation, and disposition of Native American human remains, funerary and sacred objects with which they can show a relationship of lineal descent or cultural affiliation. The Act requires federal agencies and institutions that receive federal funding to return these objects to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated groups. As a national law, NAGPRA only applies to museums in the United States. Nevertheless, source communities from North America also expect European museums to respect the guidelines of NAGPRA as a basis for future collaborations. While the repatriation of objects for purposes of reburial runs contrary to the most fundamental principles of preservation and conservation it can be the starting point of creating new knowledge by combining museum information with local knowledge about the objects and history of the collection that is often preserved in the communities. Where human remains and grave goods were stolen, virtually all Alaskan Native peoples agree that they should be returned (Pullar 2008: 108). For Native communities in North America the reburial of human remains is an important political issue not least but to assure that they have not vanished, and that their beliefs and feelings are entitled to the same respect as other Americans (Bray 1995). While there exists a paper with the position of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation

(which the Ethnologisches Museum is a part of) about how to deal with human remains in museum collections a general attitude towards dealing with questions of repatriation of sacred and funeral objects is still missing. It would therefore be helpful to establish the guidelines of NAGPRA as a framework and basis for future collaborations between North American source communities and European museums.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 the nine funerary objects from Sanradna and Chenega were repatriated by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation to the Chugach Alaskan Corporation. The President of the Prussian Foundation Hermann Parzinger stated:

At the time, these objects were taken without the consent of the Alaska Natives and were therefore removed unlawfully from the graves of their deceased, so they do not belong in our museums. I am particularly pleased that this repatriation does not stand at the end of a collaboration, but that quite on the contrary we will intensify the exchange with the Chugach Alaska Corporation in a co-operation.<sup>7</sup>

John Johnson added:

Many museums have feared that repatriation of cultural items was a loss of knowledge. However, it became clear that these actions resulted in greater understanding of the objects and a better working relationship with cultures that they are trying to preserve. The Chugach people are very excited and honored to work with the Staatliche Museum in Berlin on various cultural exchanges in the future. I am proud and very grateful for all the efforts that were made to help make this dream a reality.<sup>8</sup>

For the future, Viola König, former director of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, stated that she would be more than willing to lend objects of a hitherto unknown and unstudied collection to Alaska museums (König 2013b: 271). Returning the Chugach objects for exhibitions to Alaska and therefore making them accessible for people in situ would be an important step in the future. For a long time, Native Alaskans have been denied the ability to interpret their own history and there has been a refusal to admit to different ways of knowing and interpreting the past (Bray 1995). Joint projects have the ability, like “sharing knowledge” has shown to reveal the instability of knowledge systems and the necessity of sharing ethnographic collections.

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