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**AN EMISSARY FROM BERLIN:  
Franz Boas and the Smithsonian  
Institution, 1887–88**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ethnographic objects in museums are physical evidence of the networks through which they circulate and manifestations of the scientific terrain as inscribed by those networks. Combined with archival documentation of their intra-institutional circulations, these objects can also aid in the reconstruction of the historical development of science. This avenue of research offers a new perspective that brings object collections into dialogue with the history of science and highlights the under-realized research value of the millions of objects that lie tucked away in collections storage. This article focuses on the first transaction of ethnographic material between the Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin and the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, D.C. Reconstructing the contexts and networks through which a particular accession came to reside in the NMNH, this research documents the process by which material exchange promoted international communication between practitioners in the emerging science of ethnology. [exchange networks, Franz Boas, Berlin, Washington, D.C.]

**COLLECTIONS RESEARCH: AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE**

Ethnographic objects in museums are the material embodiment of interactions among multiple individuals, contexts, and communities. Their presence serves as physical evidence of the networks through which they have circulated and manifests the social landscapes carved out by those networks over time. When considered alongside correspondence and institutional records, the intra- and inter-institutional circulation of objects can aid in reconstructing the historical development of the disciplines by and for which they were collected, a promising direction for analyses of the historical development of science in general and anthropology in particular. This approach to collections research suggests a new perspective from which to view familiar pieces we encounter in permanent exhibitions and highlights the untapped research

value of the millions of objects tucked away in collections storage.

During the 1880s, European and North American ethnographic collections were growing at such an accelerated rate that a number of institutions found it necessary to dedicate independent buildings to those holdings. It was by way of this development that the two institutions now known as the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, D.C., and the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin (EMB), which today house some of the world's premier collections of ethnographic objects, became distinct museums in their own right. The ethnographic holdings of the United States National Museum (USNM) and Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde (KMV), as they were then respectively known (the former was housed within the Smithsonian Institution Castle until 1881 and the latter within the Königlichen Museen Berlin [KMB] until 1886), grew out of aggressive collecting practices. Separated though they were by geography, language, and scientific tradition, that pursuit drew them into increased correspondence.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas Nichols' article in this volume provides entry to the theoretical framework surrounding the exchange of ethnographic objects in the museum setting, and broadly explores the negotiation of exchanges as a moment of intersection between the production of object value and professional practice, this article presents an analysis of a single exchange as delineated through archival and collections evidence in terms of its significance for the development of science in a transnational context. The focus here is on the first exchange of ethnographic material between the USNM and the KMV, with special attention to the social, professional, and pecuniary circumstances of which it was a physical manifestation.<sup>2</sup> The aim here is to unpack this small accession to demonstrate that even a seemingly minor transaction can offer new insights into scientific networks and methodological developments in the history of science. Carried out as an exchange between 1887 and 1888, NMNH accession 019597 helped establish a relationship between the USNM and the KMV that continued until the United States entered World War I. This NMNH accession, and the objects that were sent to Berlin in exchange, mark a significant moment in the development of international relations and the

production of knowledge within the field of cultural anthropology.

This research makes analysis of the circulation of scientists and objects of scientific interest its double goal. In line with recent work in the history of science on the intercultural migration of scientists as agents of exchange, and the role of the circulation of scientific objects in the development of their networks, this research approaches the NMNH accession 019597 as physical evidence of Boas' earliest years in the United States (see Klemun 2006; Weindling 2002, 2010). I augment this focus on individuals with Anke te Heesen's approach to collections as consciously constructed entities that must be analyzed within the contexts of their "techniques of production," as well as her interpretation of Friedrich Kittler's (1990) *Aufschreibesystem* as a "network of techniques and institutions that enable a given culture to extract, store, or digest relevant data" (Te Heesen 2004, 300). Documentation of most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century museum exchanges is scant at best. Drawing together objects, archival materials, and databases housed at multiple institutions, this research reconstructs the contexts and networks through which the accession came to reside in the NMNH and then examines what more these resources can tell us about the objects themselves and their implications for contemporary museum practice.

#### **TOWARD A TRADE IN DUPLICATES: BERLIN, GERMANY, AND WASHINGTON, D.C., USA**

Museum records relate that accession 019597 entered the collection through the services of NMNH Curator of Ethnology Otis T. Mason and former KMB assistant Franz Boas.<sup>3</sup> Preceded by over a decade of correspondence prior to their own, the transaction marks the beginning of Boas' professional relationship with Mason and one of Boas' earliest forays into American ethnology in the museum. Boas went on to be referred to as the father of American anthropology. As the story goes, he wrestled the title bit by bit from his adversaries in Washington, D.C.—Mason among them. The correspondence presented here, however, retraces that narrative and advances a more nuanced evaluation of Boas' first years in the United States (Jacknis 1985, 75; Lowie 1958; Stocking 1960). The objects in, and archival correspondence surrounding, this accession sketch out a network through which

Boas, Mason, and many others worked together to promote international exchange, contributing to the development of the still-young field of cultural anthropology.

In 1876, Adolf Bastian was named director of the anthropology, ethnology, and prehistory collections at the KMB. Earlier that year, he stopped in Washington, D.C., on his return to Germany from a collecting trip in South America to visit with first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Joseph Henry (Fischer 2007, 201). Among other topics of museum administration, they discussed the desirability of exchanging ethnographic "duplicates."<sup>4</sup> Both were interested in growing their collections, and duplicates possessed the uniquely practical quality of apparent expendability. In an act that was bound up with what Nichols (2018, 13) refers to as "standards of professional or disciplinary practice," duplicates were designated as such because of their perceived inferiority to extant collection type specimens. They could be deaccessioned without posing evident harm to the representative integrity of the core collection and functioned as tender for the acquisition of more desirable specimens from institutional exchange partners.

An 1869 statute of the KMB limited deaccessioning to objects deemed duplicates. The exchange of duplicates was thus not only permitted but encouraged because, absent other funds, this provided a cost-neutral approach to growing the collection. Having prompted conditions that led to the designation of duplicates and laid the foundation for their disposal, the statute failed, however, to offer instruction as to what defined a duplicate. That determination was largely left to individual collections managers. According to Beatrix Hoffmann's study on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century exchange practices at the KMB and later at the KMV, the conception of duplicates was first and foremost dictated by typological inference, based on visually palpable external characteristics, and evidenced the general transfer of natural history methods to this emerging discipline. As late as 1936, an object was considered a duplicate based on physical and geographic semblance to another already present in the collection or, as one museum employee put it, "similar forms from the same source" (Hoffmann 2012, 40–41).<sup>5</sup>

Mutual interest in an exchange was present early as 1876, but the matter was set aside for some years while Bastian and Henry awaited the completion of new buildings to house their ever-growing collections.<sup>6</sup> The cornerstone for the KMV, which would serve as a separate building to house the KMB ethnographic collection, was laid in 1880. In January of that year, USNM curator Charles Rau reopened the subject of an exchange in a letter to Fédor Jagor, an explorer and sometime collector for the *Königlichen Museum*. As a member of their commission of experts (*Sachverständigen-Kommission*), Jagor was charged with keeping abreast of acquisition opportunities (Hoffmann 2012, 55). Rau suggested that Bastian contact Henry's successor Spencer Fullerton Baird, who was eager to expand the Smithsonian's already extensive exchange network. Rau assured Jagor that "I would naturally be involved. Professor Baird always . . . gives me leave to make the decision."<sup>7</sup> Jagor, in turn, reminded Bastian of the USNM mission to "institute investigations in various branches of science and explorations for the collection of specimens in . . . ethnology to be distributed to museums," the congressionally funded program dedicated to the distribution of duplicate specimens, and the "convenient conditions" these provided for an advantageous exchange (Smithsonian Institution 1878, 8, 47).<sup>8</sup>

Bastian wrote Baird again in early 1881 proposing not one exchange but the establishment of an ongoing program.<sup>9</sup> Bastian was particularly interested in the USNM collection of artifacts from the "aboriginal tribes of the territories of the United States," which he believed lacked representation in his own collection.<sup>10</sup> The interchange that followed, wherein Bastian suggested casts of Berlin's classical sculptures (that is, casts of Berlin's casts), detailed in an accompanying catalogue of exchange, evidences that he was inclined to test the parameters from the first. He was prepared, as he eloquently formulated it, to "exchang[e] for the costly relics of the Red Man's past the relics of classical Greece."<sup>11</sup> Judging from archival correspondence, this temerity appears a hallmark of Bastian's approach and contradicts the situation cited by Nichols wherein an extent of mutual and seemingly unspoken agreement regarding the parameters of exchange is framed as supporting the perpetuation of institutional relationships (Nichols 2018, 16). Baird's reply was reserved: The value of casts (double

duplicates, as it were) could not compare with that of objects from the USNM Native American collections. A decision would have to wait, at any rate, until his collection was unpacked in the new building.<sup>12</sup> Bastian and Baird marked their mutual intent with an exchange of another variety: back issues of their museums' publications.<sup>13</sup>

The KMV was scheduled to open its doors in December 1886. The USNM exchange project had by then languished for some years, but the occasion prompted Bastian to rekindle his correspondence with Baird, and this time matters proceeded more quickly.<sup>14</sup> A KMB assistant on an expiring one-year contract intended to spend some time in the USNM Native American collections during the summer of 1886 before continuing on to British Columbia, and offered to act as Bastian's emissary, facilitating the exchange (Hoffmann 2012, 25).<sup>15</sup> The assistant was Franz Boas, and during that time he was also hoping to secure a position at a U.S. museum. To this end Carl Schurz, a former German revolutionary turned statesman in the United States, had helped him gain entry to, among other institutions, the Smithsonian.<sup>16</sup>

Boas met with Baird at the USNM in August of 1886 and received from him a Smithsonian letter of recommendation before setting off for the Northwest Coast, where he spent that fall and winter.<sup>17</sup> Upon his return to the East Coast, Boas sent Bastian a detailed catalogue of the collection he had assembled, offering him the whole of it if he could match the US\$600 offer proposed by a buyer from the United States (Hatoum 2015, 33–34; Rohner 1969).<sup>18</sup> He added, "On principle, I'm not giving the Washington museum a single thing." With a charge that anticipated the argument he would soon elaborate in *Science*, Boas protested that his brief time with the USNM collections had revealed an irrational principle of organization: They "tear asunder everything that has been grouped together according to origins and rearrange it according to object types" (Bunzl 1996, 17; Chapman 1985, 15; Jacknis 1985, 75).<sup>19</sup> Bastian's reply to the offer was favorable, but funding was an issue, especially as the region had been the subject of an extensive collection made by Johan Adrian Jacobsen just four years earlier (Bolz and Sanner 1999; Haberland 1989).

A look at Boas' collection catalogue affirmed that it included numerous typological duplicates of pieces

in the Jacobsen Northwest Coast collection. Bastian suggested Boas use a selection of those duplicates toward the long-anticipated USNM exchange and ship the rest to Berlin, where he would purchase the remaining objects up to a value of 2,000 German Marks, or US\$600.<sup>20</sup> The majority of Boas' 1886 collection is today housed in Berlin and is the subject of a recent study by ethnologist Rainer Hatoum (2015, 27–66). Days later, without hint of the reluctance so recently expressed to Bastian, Boas offered the USNM a portion of his British Columbia collection toward the KMV exchange and was put into correspondence with USNM ethnology curator Otis T. Mason.<sup>21</sup>

### BOAS AND MASON: EXCHANGES BEHIND THE PUBLIC DEBATE

The ensuing correspondence between Mason and Boas documents their earliest professional interaction. The letters record their growing familiarity, fleshing out a hitherto unexplored perspective on their relationship in general and scholarly exchange in *Science* in particular. It is important to remember that this was 1887, the year of Boas' entrance onto the ethnographic museum arena by way of his article "The Occurrence of Similar Inventions in Areas Widely Apart" (1887, 485–86). This contribution is now recognized as marking a decisive moment in his engagement with American museum anthropology, and is generally framed as a vanguard challenge thrown down in methodological and theoretical opposition to Mason, and Washington-based anthropology more broadly (Buettner-Janusch 1957; Bunzl 1996, 58; Jacknis 1985, 77–83; Stocking and Boas 1974, 2–29).<sup>22</sup>

Because Boas brokered the exchange, choosing which objects would serve as the KMV contribution and which to accept in return, this accession presents a unique opportunity to analyze his early interpretation of an ethnographic duplicate. Hoffmann observes that the differentiation between like and unlike objects that occurs during classification is dependent upon the beholder's idiosyncratic conception and subjective perception (Hoffmann 2012, 18). As Nichols notes, object assessment is closely connected to museums' changing conceptions of their mission and their collection scope (Nichols 2018, 15). Moreover, the curatorial act of designating ethnographic objects as duplicates illustrates both the

curator's perception of an object and his or her approach to classification, as well as the great extent to which the designation is prone to manipulation by personal and scientific interests (Hoffmann 2012, 43). These are particularly salient considerations for interpreting this transaction and Boas' role in it.

On May 15, 1887, while, working on behalf of Bastian, Boas offered Mason not casts of European antiquities but 20 pieces he knew would be of much greater interest—a selection of pieces from his 1886 expedition that could be considered duplicates of object types in the Jacobsen Northwest Coast collection at the KMV. Should the value of the USNM portion of the exchange exceed that of the KMV, Boas reported that he was, moreover, authorized to make up the difference with duplicates from the Jacobsen collection itself.<sup>23</sup> The Jacobsen Northwest Coast collection represented some of the most recent and valuable of Berlin's accessions. Having written Jacobsen in 1884 expressing interest in the expedition and requesting a copy of his published account, Mason had long been interested in the collection.<sup>24</sup> Boas had organized Jacobsen's collection during his time at the KMB, and he was intimately familiar with its contents. In correspondence with Bastian, Boas had questioned the scientific value of the Jacobsen collection, arguing the need for a more systematic analysis that studied the "tribes of the British Northwest . . . in relation to one another."<sup>25</sup> While Boas' 1886 expedition and collection had been an independent undertaking, the designation of some of the objects in that collection as duplicates of the Jacobsen objects, and their association with the Berlin museum by virtue of Boas' own affiliation therewith, were arguably salient factors in rendering the exchange tenable.<sup>26</sup> Boas promised to include his own field notes on Northwest Coast cultural traditions. In return he requested pieces from the Nas-kapi Innu and the area surrounding Coppermine River in Canada.<sup>27</sup>

Five days later, "The Occurrence of Similar Inventions" appeared in *Science*. In it, Boas challenged Mason's typological evolutionary arrangement of the USNM ethnological collections in favor of a tribal geographical approach. His primary objections against Mason's system were that "unlike causes produce like effects" and that each ethnological specimen must be "studied individually in its history and in its

medium.” In terms of the latter, he emphasized the utility of Bastian’s concept of “geographical provinces.” Read literally, this passage might suggest that Boas resisted the tendency to generalize objects through categorization as duplicates; however, he ended the article by stating that, while arrangements of visually similar objects offered no insight into particular cultures: “For a study of native art and its development . . . duplicates . . . are absolutely necessary,” especially vis-à-vis neighboring peoples; they were in fact the “only means of determining what is characteristic of a tribe and what is merely incidental” (Boas 1887, 485–86).

Reanalyzed in the context of Boas’ initial reluctance to offer his collection to the USNM, and consequent negotiations with Mason regarding the exchange of duplicates, this passage reveals some ambiguity regarding the suitability, if not the motivation and practicality, of categorizing objects as duplicates. Mason’s reply in the next issue of *Science* failed to elaborate on the subject of duplicates. He easily dismissed Boas’ remarks regarding superficial similarities from unlike causes and affirmed his own organizing principles, “the sooner we recognize the fact that . . . we must always apply the methods and instrumentalities of the biologist, the sooner will our beloved science stand upon an immovable foundation” (Mason 1887, 534; Penny 2003, 91–93).

The public face of this discussion, which expanded to include John Wesley Powell and William H. Dall (Dall and Franz, 1887; Powell and Franz, 1887), portrayed Boas and Mason as uncompromising methodological opponents, an impression that persists to this day. Personal correspondence between the men, however, supports a subtler narrative. In a letter written three days after his *Science* article appeared, Boas thanked Mason and accepted his invitation to publish his material on British Columbia through the USNM.<sup>28</sup> Mason’s blithe reply to Boas’ critique was tucked in among letters discussing the exchange, “I am very grateful for the candid spirit . . . and with the permission of the distinguished editor [Boas] I will send my reply.” An appended note requested a list of Boas’ publications. Four days later Mason officially accepted Boas’ exchange.<sup>29</sup> While there is no question that the two differed methodologically, these letters contextualize that debate within their larger dialogue and suggest that at this point in their relationship that

divergence was less materially manifest than has been previously suggested.

The content and tone of their letters, moreover, suggest that Mason and Boas shared an understanding of the public aspect of this dialogue as a vehicle to advance the field through methodological discourse. Their correspondence during this period attests to an ongoing dialogue through which the men tested and refined one another’s positions. Mason repeatedly expressed his pleasure with the spirit of the *Science* debate and, at one point shortly after Powell’s rebuttal, asked Boas whether it would be useful for him to write another reply, maintaining that “I do not wish to be tedious, but am willing to do all the good I can.”<sup>30</sup> It is clear that Mason, 20 years Boas’ senior, applauded his junior colleague’s engagement and at times even assumed the role of a mentor, praising and commenting on Boas’ text drafts and drawings, and “rejoiced” in his efforts to promote ethnology at Clark University. Mason also urged Boas to focus his efforts, commenting that he was “doing very excellent work in language and mythology,” and Mason hoped he would not divert his interests to craniometry.<sup>31</sup>

The exchange was postponed again in June 1887 because Baird was ill.<sup>32</sup> He died that August before any material progress with the transaction had been made. Samuel Pierpont Langley was named Smithsonian secretary in November of that year. Negotiations eventually resumed; Mason accepted approximately half of Boas’ proposed objects, and these were entered into the USNM ledger on October 24, 1887.<sup>33</sup> This small group of objects includes, from the upper left to right: three painted wooden masks and two painted and articulated wooden figures, all attributed in the ledger to the Bella Coola; and one red cedar bark head ring, one painted wooden mask, and two red cedar bark neck rings, all attributed in the ledger to the Kwakiutl (Figure 1).<sup>34</sup>

Boas’ promised notes on the specific traditions associated with each object survive only as marginalia in the Smithsonian accessions ledger and as penciled German notations on a few surviving hang tag remnants that remain with the objects.<sup>35</sup> Thin as this material is, when supplemented by Boas’ correspondence, marginalia on an object catalogue transcription found in Berlin, and collections databases, it allows us to perform two tasks: first, to trace a selection of the NMNH duplicates through the



Figure 1. Objects collected by Franz Boas in 1886, NMNH Accession 019597. From top left to bottom right: Catalogue no. E129509, E129510, E129511, E129512, E129515, E129516, E129513 a, E129513 b; Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution. (Image courtesy of NMNH.) [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

correspondence surrounding that exchange back to their point of collection and, second, to identify some of the Jacobsen originals of which the NMNH pieces were considered duplicates. In so doing, we can generate new knowledge for source communities and museum professionals about these objects and reconnect some of the objects with their Indigenous and institutional histories.

### RECONCILING ACCOUNTS: RETRACING THE ORIGINS OF A MODERN COLLECTION

I turn first to the object catalogues housed in the EMB archive. As the original record in his own hand and detailing the 95 objects Boas presented to Bastian for purchase from his 1886 expedition to British Columbia, the first of these is as significant a tool for tracing the Indigenous provenance of the NMNH

accessions as are the databases for reconstructing their designation as duplicates. A second version of Boas' Berlin catalogue, transcribed for EMB records and including notations on deaccessioned objects, makes it possible to confirm the "deaccession" of many of the pieces that had in fact remained behind in Washington as duplicates.<sup>36</sup> When considered alongside a letter to Bastian and two later letters to Mason detailing the pieces Boas proposed for exchange and some of the penciled numbers on the NMNH hang tag remnants, it is possible to correlate just over half of the NMNH objects with Boas' catalogue entries and in so doing to establish their provenance more securely.

As mentioned, very little is known about the NMNH accession. In a number of instances, Mason's USNM ledger entries regarding the localities from

which the objects were collected fail to match those listed in Boas' letters and later publications. This being the case, correlating the names given the objects in Boas' letters to Mason and in his later publications with those listed in his Berlin catalogue allows for a corrected and more detailed understanding of their origins and uses. While it is not possible to irrefutably determine listings for the first three masks in the accession (E129509, E129510, and E129511), the remaining four objects can be identified.<sup>37</sup>

Beginning with the regalia, the NMNH ledger lists the origins of E129513 a and b (the cedar bark neck rings), and E129515 (the cedar bark head ring) as Kwakiutl and pertaining to the *hā'mats'a* ceremony. Boas' letters to Bastian and Mason all confirm this attribution. The second letter to Mason further elaborates that all three objects were "used in the dance *Tsētsā'ega*. Tribe: *Tlatlasiqoala*."<sup>38</sup> This attribution corresponds to a set of objects listed in Boas' Berlin catalogue as numbers 1–5 and described as

neck ring, head ring, arm and ankle bracelets of the *Hā'mats'a* (=the eater). The *Hā'mats'a* dances constantly in a squatting position and shakes moving arms from one side to another while holding them widely outstretched. This movement means that he is holding a corpse, which actually occurs at the initiation of the new *Hā'mats'a*. The *Hā'mats'a* dances naked, the face is painted black.<sup>39</sup>

As mentioned previously, two other neck rings that would have been part of this group are now housed in Berlin. The description furthermore establishes that the three objects at the NMNH were originally part of a designated set that included arm and ankle bracelets that were not included in the exchange. Hatoum presents evidence that one arm ring (now missing) and an additional head ring that were likewise included in that set were part of the 1887 KMV accession (Hatoum 2015, 62). One final piece—a leg ring—appears in neither the USNM nor the EMB collections.

Turning to E129512, the two wooden figures are listed in the NMNH ledger as originating from the *Bilhula* (*Bella Coola*). The ledger attribution matches the attribution inscribed in black ink on the back of one of the figures. Boas' Berlin catalogue and letters document these pieces as originating from among the

*Tlatlasiqoala*, evidencing that there was some confusion in cataloguing, and moreover highlights the value of collections research in disentangling discrete moments in ongoing knowledge production and standardization processes. Listed as numbers 44–45, the catalogue details the pieces as pertaining to the January *Nōutlem* dance and describes them as follows: "The *Nutlemky*. Two carved human figures. According to legend, of a man who had wounded the *Tsōnō'qoa* (see below), and following him, found him in the sky." The catalogue also lists the following piece, number 46, as "belonging" to the two figures. This piece Boas describes as "Qagyux *Nuthlemky* (=head of the *Nuthlemky*) belongs to the previous. The wearer wraps himself [*sic*] in a blanket and wears the carved head before his stomach." This third piece is now housed in the EMB collection as IV A 6892 and represents the second apparent instance within this accession of Boas separating what he designates in his catalogue as a set of objects between the USNM and the EMB.

NMNH E129516 represents a final correlation. The carved wooden humanoid face is referred to in the USNM ledger and Boas' letters as *Tsōnō'qoa*, and also attributed to the Kwakiutl (*Kwakwaka'wakw*). Matching this piece with Boas' catalogue, in which it appears under the subheading "Nemgiš and Kwakiutl masks etc.," and is listed as "belonging to the *Walasnamū'guis* family," suggests that combining collections and archival research can help researchers reconnect objects in museums with data regarding their use and collection histories, and potentially aid in more accurately establishing their origins. The very fact that this information has been dissociated from this object for so long also points to the central importance of exchange histories—which are not always documented or apparent—for collections research.

### **MATCHING DOUBLES IN WASHINGTON, D.C., AND BERLIN**

With all of this in mind, I turn to an identification of the EMB "originals," or the Berlin pieces that could reasonably be considered type specimens for the pieces Boas designated as duplicates based on visually palpable, external characteristics, and, in some instances, corresponding object names as assigned by Boas. It must be noted from the outset that numerous Berlin objects were lost or looted during World War

II—including parts of the Jacobsen collection—and not all of these have returned. Thanks to the EMB internal collections database and another conceived by Aaron Glass and the U'mista Cultural Centre that catalogues Kwakwaka'wakw objects collected during Jacobsen's expedition, we have a fairly complete idea of the collection as it stands today (Glass 2015, 19–44). Drawing upon the EMB collection via these databases, and in consideration of the nineteenth-century KMV conception of duplicates as displaying similar forms from the same source, we can suggest positive EMB matches for all but two of the objects from the NMNH accession.

First, to the regalia. NMNH E129513 a and b are both listed in the USNM ledger as Hámats'a neck rings. The former is of pounded and twisted cedar bark rope of uniform tone, or color, with four groupings of tassels (Figure 1).<sup>40</sup> The latter is identical to the previous, save for the addition of coiled cedar bark rope, and likewise displays four groupings of tassels (Figure 1). With respect to these pieces, it is necessary to point out that head and neck rings were used by numerous different hereditary dance societies, and subtle variations in construction and appearance, such as those described here, are highly locally significant (Glass 2017). Both NMNH pieces are visually similar to neck rings in the EMB collection. Of these, EMB pieces IV A 6876 and IV A 6863 (see Figure 2), which

were accessioned from the 1886 Boas collection, share a close resemblance to E129513 a. EMB IV A 6863 displays the same form and construction quality, but it has just three tassels, and IVA 6876, which likewise displays four tassels, could well be considered a duplicate of E129513 a. As noted in the previous section, the Glass/U'mista database relates that Boas designated both Berlin pieces as neck rings belonging to the same ceremony. This raises the question of whether Boas intentionally separated a set to supply both the USNM and the EMB each with a similar item. NMNH E129515, listed in the USNM ledger as a Hámats'a head ring, is made of pounded and twisted cedar bark of uniform tone and topped by four center bound tassels (Figure 1). It is reminiscent of EMB IV A 934, a head ring collected by Jacobsen that displays a similar construction but with no ornamentation other than the use of two-toned cedar bark.

NMNH E129509, listed in the USNM ledger as a "Satlpsta" mask, is a large wooden mask with looped nares, or nostrils, and a movable jaw (Figure 1). It is painted in graphite with red accentuations and adorned with long strips of pounded cedar bark at the top of the head and on the lower jaw.<sup>41</sup> Although of less sophisticated execution, this piece presents a variation on an apparent recognizable type presented by EMB IV A 893 (Figure 3), which is listed by Jacobsen as having been collected from among



Figure 2. Neck rings collected by Franz Boas in 1886, left: IV A 6876, right: IV A 6863. (Both photos courtesy of the Ethnologisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz and U'mista Cultural Center. Photographer: Sharon Grainger.) [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]





Figure 3. Mask collected by Adrian Jacobsen, ca. 1882, EMB IV A 893. (Photo courtesy of the Ethnologisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz and U'mista Cultural Center. Photographer: Dietrich Graf.) [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

the Kwakiutl, and likewise is painted in black with red accentuations, adorned with cedar bark and displaying a movable jaw. Boas' notes on the piece in the Glass/Umista database refer to it as representing Baxbakualanux'iwae.<sup>42</sup> Boas lists the NMNH piece as being from the Bilhula of Taleomch, likely referring to modern-day Tallio in Bella Coola.

This potential match exposes an incongruity between his theory and practice. In consideration of Boas and Mason's classification dispute in *Science*, and presuming that IV A 893 was indeed considered the original of E129509, their variance in tribal origin would plainly suggest that Boas would not, strictly speaking, consider the pieces duplicates. Entries in the NMNH ledger, Boas' letters to Mason, and his publication "The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians" (1897) note this piece as representing S'a'lpsta. The 1897 publication, moreover, puts forth an explanation of why Boas may have considered it a duplicate of the EMB piece: He states that the S'a'lpsta mask of the "Bi'lxula" (Bella Coola) "corresponds exactly to the BaxbakuālanuXsī'waē of the Kwakiutl" (Boas, 1897, 650, Figure 200). With this reasoning, it is possible that Boas included this piece in the USNM exchange because he regarded it not as a duplicate but instead as another version of the form and myth associated with IV A 893.

NMNH E129516, identified in the USNM ledger as a "Tsonóqoa" mask, displays a carved wooden humanoid face overlaid in graphite, with red accents on the ears and open mouth, and prominent brows accented with leather (Figure 1). This piece might have been considered a duplicate of four EMB masks referred to in the Glass/U'mista database as Dzunukwa.<sup>43</sup> IV A 555, IV A 883, and IV A 1286 were all collected by Jacobsen (see Figure 4). Each shares the basic form, prominent eyebrows, hollowed cheeks, and coloring of the NMNH piece, but they exhibit variations, such as fully hollowed eyes, additional red accentuations, and hair (or remnants thereof) framing the head and/or upon the eyebrows, chin, and upper lip area. The final piece, IV A 6896, accessioned from the 1886 Boas collection, likewise displays form, coloration, carving quality, and prominent brows similar to the NMNH piece, but it differs in its rounded chin, hair remnants, one hollowed eye, and lack of red accents (Figure 4).

The final series of duplicates brings us to NMNH E129512, two wooden figures identified in the USNM ledger as "wooden images 'Nutlemky'" (Figure 1, detail: Figure 5, left). E129512 comprises two weathered, 22-inch-long carved wooden figures. Both display remnants of what appears to be human hair; prominent black brows; horizontally oriented, half oval eyes running with black mica streaks to just below nose height; slightly open mouths surrounded in a vermilion trapezoid spanning from the philtrum, or the vertical groove between nose and mouth, to the chin; articulated elbow joints; and slightly bowed legs. Boas' notes list these as representing a pair of Nutlemky. These figures present a marked visual semblance to EMB IV A 1031 (Figure 5, right). Somewhat larger than the NMNH examples at 34.5 inches, IV A 1031 is referred to in the Glass/U'mista database as a Nulam and differs from the NMNH examples in its whitewash, closed eyes, parameters of the vermilion mouth accent, and removable head.<sup>44</sup> In his 1897 publication, Boas refers to both the USNM and Berlin figures as representing the Nō'nlemgila (Boas 1897, 507–8). This attribution, in addition to the pronounced similarity of these objects in a combination of form, construction, and materials, renders them a particularly explicit illustration of the relationship between original and duplicate.



Figure 4. From upper left to lower right: Mask collected by Adrian Jacobsen, ca. 1882, EMB IV A 555, IV A 883, IV A 1286, and mask collected by Franz Boas, 1886, EMB IV A 6896. (Photos courtesy of the Ethnologisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz and U'mista Cultural Center. Photographer: Lars Malareck/Sharon Grainger.) [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



Figure 5. Left: Figures collected by Franz Boas, 1886. Detail of NMNH accession 019597, Catalogue Number E129512; Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution. Right: Figure collected by Adrian Jacobsen, ca. 1882, EMB IV A 1031. (Photo courtesy of the Ethnologisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz and U'mista Cultural Center. Photographer: Lars Malareck/Sharon Grainger.) [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

We know that Boas was concerned with recouping the monetary value of his 1886 collection in order to repay debts he incurred during that expedition (Hatoum 2015, 33). Based on a combination of the tribal origins and physical/ceremonial descriptions provided in Boas' Berlin catalogue, Bastian considered an unspecified grouping of those objects undesirable duplicates of pieces already adequately represented in the Berlin collection. Bastian offered Boas the option of designating a selection as duplicates based on his experience with the Berlin collection and his recognition of their relation to "those specimens which are contained in the old collections of the Berlin museum" and using them toward the long-anticipated exchange with the USNM.<sup>45</sup> The perceived redundancy of the duplicates in that collection rendered them nonviable for sale to the KMV but valuable as tools in network building (see also Nichols 2018, 16–18). This accession shows that, although Boas' mature rationale would most likely have disputed the characterization of some of these as duplicates, this same logic was not, as a rule, equally applied to all of the objects in this exchange, perhaps as a result of their alternate value as a means of building his professional network. Accession 019597 thus offers a concrete vantage point from which to consider Boas' early designation of duplicates, the influence of personal or professional considerations thereupon, his coincident discourse with Mason and company in *Science*, and the relation of all of these to the development of his own conception of cultural relativism.

#### A FAIR TRADE, A BLUFF, AND A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

What, then, did Boas negotiate in return for the KMV? What did he consider a fair trade? It seems that there was some question regarding this exchange. Letters written after the USNM accession show that three months passed before the matter was settled. Boas declined Mason's first selection of objects, and they came to an impasse before Mason and Goode joined in offering to send Boas' objects back to Berlin (where, in fact, they had never been) and to conduct all future transactions through Bastian. Their maneuver was evidently successful; a letter from early March 1888 sends notice that the accepted exchanges had been shipped.<sup>46</sup>

Bastian had desired as complete a selection as possible of implements from a single tribe. This preference was assimilated and articulated by Boas in "The Occurrence of Similar Inventions." As Nichols shows in her article, this is an approach to collection acquisition that carried on into his practice at the American Museum of Natural History (Nichols 2018, 16–17). For this first exchange with the USNM, Boas focused his request on pieces from the Naskapi and the area surrounding Coppermine River in Canada and did indeed receive objects from that general area. The objects that had gone to the USNM belonged by and large to ceremonial contexts, while those requested in exchange were of a more quotidian variety.<sup>47</sup> Of the objects offered, Boas settled on an ice pick, a harpoon, a bow, four arrows, one pair of snowshoes, a stone oil lamp, a carving knife, and a scraping tool, all from Ungava Bay; a quiver from Hudson's Bay; a wooden box from Anderson River; and two final pieces from Point Barrow referred to in the Berlin ledger as a *Wurfbrett* and a *Speckhacke* (literally translated, a "throwing board" and "bacon axe," perhaps meat cleaver). All but two had been collected by Lucien M. Turner. These pieces were accessioned to the Berlin collection in 1888. Most were lost during World War II and are no longer among the collection.<sup>48</sup>

The exchange, which had taken 12 years to realize, proved successful in establishing a foundation for increased correspondence between the institutions. While the USNM presence at the 1888 International Congress of Americanists in Berlin was poor as a result of late invitations, Bastian declared himself committed to following up on the connection, not least because he wanted to continue expanding his collection of Native American artifacts and believed the USNM to have the finest collection.<sup>49</sup> In 1889, Mason traveled to Paris as USNM representative to the International Congress of Anthropology, and the KMV was second on his list of most significant European museums to visit.<sup>50</sup> He reported to Langley: "The activity of the Germans is prodigious. . . . The Berlin collections from our own territory rival those from the same area . . . and leaves us far, far in the shade in material from South America, Africa, Asia and Polynesia." With Goode, he is somewhat more candid: "What interests me most in this collection . . . is its immensity. You will know, perhaps, that Bastian is not a scientific man. Nobody ever reads a word he

writes . . . [but] with unlimited influence to get all the money he wants and, above all things, afflicted with the mania of collecting.” Critical as Mason may have been of Bastian as a scholar, or of Boas’ budding role in ushering in new methods, some of which were undoubtedly influenced by his time at the KMV, the USNM went on to carry out four more transactions with Boas between 1889 and 1896.<sup>51</sup>

### CONCLUSION: THE UTILITY OF COLLECTIONS RESEARCH FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Analysis of the social and material characteristics of the exchange that brought accession 019597 into the NMNH demonstrates that collections research can indeed prove useful in the reconstruction and analysis of historical events and relationships. This combination of archival and collections research, which suggests a model for tracing objects back to their point of collection and contextualizes contemporary discourses surrounding the exchange of duplicates, can be a source for new knowledge that proves useful to source communities, museum professionals, and historians of science alike. This potential for objects to be mined for evidence of past encounters lends substance to the idea that objects can—and indeed should—be regarded as physical evidence of the networks through which they circulated and manifestations of the methodological and conceptual landscapes as shaped by those networks. Indeed, this small accession presents a vision of the concurrent anthropological terrain in microcosm—rich in players, disciplines, and motives.

Proceeding to take a closer look at why specific objects were chosen to be exchanged and received, and the data pertaining to those objects that survived and were omitted over the course of the negotiations, furthermore confirms that exchanges were anything but straightforward transactions between disinterested parties. The perception of duplicates as pieces of similar form from the same source manifested a process hinged on a subjective conception and analysis of form with geographic specificity. The accession explored here is an artifact of a stage in Boas’ career during which he was actively negotiating—in the sense of helping along his professional goals as well as of refining his methodology—the parameters that defined his definition of a duplicate. Analysis of the curatorial act of designating ethnographic objects as

such allows for a deeper understanding of variant positions on object classification and demonstrates that even seemingly contrary positions could simultaneously be maintained by a single scientist if the apparent benefit outweighed the potential harm. In this case, we can infer that in realizing an exchange with a prominent museum in another country, Boas hoped to obtain a position, or at least leverage, there.

As the first documented exchange of explicitly anthropological material between the KMV as such and a North American museum on one hand, and one of the first between the USNM and a German museum on the other, NMNH accession 019597 is a physical marker of a pivotal moment in the establishment of relations between North American and German museum anthropology. The events to which this accession testify—and the very physical presence of the objects at the NMNH today—represent the combined efforts of Boas and Mason but also of Jacobsen, Bastian, Henry, Rau, Jagor, Baird, Schurz, and Goode, each of whom in some way helped lay the foundation for this exchange. Small as it is, this transaction reveals, in Kittler’s terms, an intricate *Aufschreibsystem* through which early anthropological networks—both inside and outside the museum—were galvanized by a plurality of individuals, disciplines, and contexts: source communities, ethnologists, and museum professionals, as well as geographers, archeologists, explorers, and politicians.

In light of the position Boas defended in *Science* during the spring and summer of 1887, it seems incongruous that a poorly documented exchange of duplicates should be credited with bringing him to the USNM and serving as his introduction to Mason—or perhaps not. Hoffmann (2012, 82–83) has justly cited Boas as a fitting example of the merging of personal connections and institutional relationships that was often one of the desired results of an exchange. Boas was known to be openly critical of Jacobsen’s methods and the scientific value of his Northwest Coast collection. He was aware, however, that it was of interest to Mason, so he used the possibility of receiving objects from the Jacobsen collection, in addition to his own, as leverage in negotiations, literally trading on the popularity of Jacobsen’s collection.

This double analysis of the people and objects involved in accession 019597 disentangles and reconnects the dissociated archival and collections data

pertaining to the transaction and complicates an oft chronicled moment in the emergence of modern American anthropology. It offers a glimpse into the mechanisms by which museums acquired and exchanged objects, shows how these processes shaped collections, and confirms that even a modest grouping of objects can add to the narratives of how and why specific scientific disciplines have reached their present states. A more nuanced understanding of the complex of networks and negotiation processes through which these objects entered museums forces us to readjust their ostensibly dichotomous trajectories in light of the rich histories they evidence. This multiplicity of collaborators must be taken into consideration as we attempt to understand the international development of museum anthropology.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is an outgrowth of a case study begun during the course of SIMA 2013. My sincere gratitude goes to Candace Greene for the opportunity to join the SIMA network and for her ongoing support of my work. The aforementioned case study likewise served as a trial run for my dissertation, titled “Instituting Anthropology: The Circulation of Scientists and Ethnographic Materials Between North America, Germany and Austria, 1883–1933,” made possible by generous funding from the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) DOC Fellowship Program (2014–18). My additional thanks go to librarian Kate Adler; Charles Greifenstein and Bayard Miller of the American Philosophical Society (APS); Anja Zenner, Bettina Weiss, and Monika Zessnik of the Ethnological Museum, Berlin (EMB); David Rosenthal at the NMNH; members of the *Arbeitsgruppe für Wissenschaftsgeschichte* at the University of Vienna; and Catherine A. Nichols and Christopher Branson Lowman for their invitation to publish in this volume. I also am much obliged to Mitchell Ash, professor emeritus at the University of Vienna, and Aaron Glass of the Bard Graduate Center; both of whom have been integral to the shape and direction of my work.

### NOTES

1. The variant use of institutional acronyms throughout this text is in accordance with historical variations of the same.
2. A small exchange of arrowheads and organic samples was carried out between the KMV and the USNM in 1878; however, this exchange pre-dated the exclusive focus of these museums on ethnographic collection (Hoffmann 2012, 74).

3. I say KMB because Boas was a museum assistant from 1885–86 and left before the collection was transferred to the KMV.
4. Bastian to Baird, unknown month and day, 1881, Amerika vol. 6, 1879–81 (Am. vol. 6), EMB.
5. Author’s translation from the German “*formgleiche Stücke vom gleichen Stamm*,” quoted in Hoffmann (2012).
6. Bastian to Baird, unknown, 1881, Am. vol. 6, EMB.
7. Rau to Jagor, Jan. 25, 1880, *ibid*.
8. Jagor to Bastian, June 22, 1880, *ibid*.
9. Bastian to Baird, Jan. 8, 1881; Bastian to Baird, unknown 1881; Baird to Bastian, Apr. 4, 1881; and Baird to Bastian, May 14, 1881, all: *ibid*. The USNM exchange was in fact part of an ongoing larger scale effort on behalf of Bastian to mobilize a multinational exchange network.
10. Bastian to Baird, unknown, 1881, Am. vol. 6, EMB.
11. *Ibid*. This proposition was not wholly untenable: The USNM had yet to relocate the ethnographic collection to a dedicated building, and thus their holdings encompassed art as well as ethnographica, but the tone and character is wholly in character with Bastian’s demonstrated history of opportunistic collection practices.
12. Baird to Bastian, Apr. 4, 1881; Bastian to Baird, unknown, 1881, both Am. vol. 6, EMB. The new building, now known as the Arts and Industries building, opened in October 1881.
13. Baird to Bastian, Apr. 4, 1881; Bastian to Baird, unknown, 1881; and Rau to Jagor, Jan. 25, 1880, Am. vol. 6, EMB.
14. Bastian to Baird, Mar. 4, 1886, RU 189, Box 8, Folder Barton, M.T.-Bastick, W.W. (RU B.8), Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA).
15. Also see: Bastian to Baird, Apr. 25, 1887, Boas Acta/ Pars I B. 1 (A/P I B.1), EMB; Bastian to Unknown, June 30, 1886, RU B.8, SIA; and Boas to Bastian, Jan. 5, 1886, FB Prof. Corr., Reel 1 (FB PC R.1), American Philosophical Society (APS).
16. Boas to Schurz, Oct. 27, 1886, FB PC R.1, APS; and Museum File, May 11, 1886, RU 189, Box 7, Folder 3 (RU B.7 F.3), SIA. Schurz was also trying to help secure a position for Boas at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City.
17. Baird to Boas, Aug. 9, 1886, Boas Collection B61, original letters, APS; Boas to Bastian, Feb. 8, 1887, B A/P I B.1, EMB.
18. It seems that Boas hoped the collection would be purchased by the AMNH in New York. See: Boas to Schurz Oct. 27, 1886; and Boas to Bickmore, Feb. 15, 1887, both R. 1, APS.

19. Translated from German by the author. Boas to Bastian, Feb. 8, 1887, B A/P I B.1, EMB.
20. Bastian to Boas, Mar. 1, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS.
21. Boas to Mason, Apr. 3, 1887; and Mason to Boas, May 23, 1887, both *ibid.*
22. For a discussion of the work of Bastian in relation to the theory and method that Boas drew upon, see chapter 3 in Penaloza Patzak (forthcoming).
23. Boas to Mason, Apr. 3, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS.
24. Mason to Jacobsen, Nov. 25, 1884, A. Jacobsen vol. II IB W, EMB.
25. See also Boas to Bastian, Jan. 5, 1886, FB PC R.1, APS.
26. Boas to Mason, Apr. 3, 1887, *ibid.*
27. Boas to Mason, May 15, 1887, *ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. The date evidences that Boas sent Mason an advance copy of the article. See: Mason to Boas, May 19, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS. He also presses Boas for a more complete bibliography of works in German, Mason to Boas, May 23, 1887, *ibid.*
30. Mason to Boas, June 29, 1887, *ibid.*
31. Mason to Boas, Dec. 3, 1887, *ibid.*; and Mason to Boas, Nov. 17, 1888, FB Prof. Corr., Reel 2. Film 1308, 2/1/1889-4/30/1894 (FB PC R.2), APS.
32. Mason to Boas, June 24, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS.
33. Goode to Boas, Dec. 30, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS, includes a list of proposed objects in Boas' hand. On the denied objects, see: Goode to Boas, Aug. 8, 1887, *ibid.*, in which Mason declares all but two of the objects duplicates of extant USNM pieces and returns them; and Mason to Boas, Aug. 20, 1887, *ibid.*; the USNM already has exemplars of all but the "two flat images," referring to E129512.
34. This research is based on historic texts from the latter part of the nineteenth century and uses the terminology of the era. Hatoum (2015, 28) speaks to the challenge of shifting terminology in his introduction.
35. Many of the pieces also appear in later publications by Boas, but these treat the objects more as type specimens than individual products of specific origin.
36. Both documents in B A/P I B. 1, EMB.
37. To note: I have accumulated a great deal of evidence that suggests E129511 is what Boas refers to in his original catalogue as a "sun" mask from "Bilhula Talemok" [*sic*]. That piece would likely have been considered a duplicate of IV A 885b and, according to Boas' notes, was originally intended to accompany what he refers to as a "Mas-malanix" mask, now at the EMB, IV A 6901.
38. Boas to Bastian, Mar. 30, 1887, SMB, Anthropology Archive, Boas Acta / Pars I B. 1; Boas to Mason, Apr. 3, 1887; and Boas to Mason, May 15, 1887, both FB PC R. 1, APS.
39. This and each of the following catalogue excerpts have been translated from the German original by the author.
40. A second piece, listed as identical and numbered E129514, is now missing.
41. This object is also referred to as such in Boas to Mason, Apr. 4, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS, where it is furthermore mentioned as originating from Taleomch, but it continues to present some confusion in terms of the Boas Berlin catalogue, where it is not mentioned by name under the sub-heading of objects collected from that area.
42. Glass noted that in his early work Boas regularly identified masks such as NMNH E129509 as "masks of Baxbakualanuxsiwe," but later, under the direct influence of George Hunt, he corrected this attribution to "Crooked Beak of Heaven" masks. Aaron Glass in correspondence with the author, May 14, 2016.
43. NMNH and EMB pieces published in Boas 1897, Figure 13, p. 372; and Figures 141–144, pp. 494–496. A drawing of the NMNH piece also appears in the AMNH collection as Z/44 V. The EMB pieces mentioned are referred to in the Glass/U'mista database as portraying Dzunukwa. For more on this mask in Boas' early work, see Glass 2017.
44. Both specimens are pictured in Boas 1897, 507–8, Figures 156–157. Therein they are all described as figures representing Nō'nlemg-ila. Berman (2001, 199–200) related that these figures and the associated ceremony formed a point of contention between Boas and George Hunt.
45. Boas to Mason, Apr. 3, 1887, FB PC R.1, APS.
46. Mason to Goode, Jan. 13, 1888, MSC SIA, microfiche relating to accession 19597; Mason to Geare, Feb. 28, 1888, RU B.7 F.3, SIA; Goode to Boas, Mar. 1, 1888; and Goode to Boas, Mar. 7, 1888, both FB PC R.1, APS.
47. Boas to Mason, Apr. 3, 1887, *ibid.*
48. On the collector and accession see: Goode to Boas, Dec. 30, 1887; and Mason to Boas, Feb. 28, 1888, both *ibid.*; and Mason to Geare, Feb. 28 1888, RU B.7 F.3, SIA. On the lost objects see: EMB accession records, Amerika Naturvölker IV A 2 = IV A 4078-8019, IV A 6942-6958 (from 1888).
49. Bastian to Boas, Nov. 11, 1888, FB PC R.1, APS.
50. Langley to Mason, June 8, 1889 (draft), RU 201, letters received from departments and bureaus of the government and letters received from officials of the museum, 1875–1902, Box 12, Folder 11 (RU 201 B.12 F.11), SIA.

51. Mason to Langley, Dec., 16, 1889, RU 201, letters received from departments and bureaus of the government and letters received from officials of the museum, 1875–1902, Box 12, Folder 10, SIA. Mason to Goode, Sept. 7, 1889, RU 201, Mason 1889 trip, SIA. For additional Boas transactions, see: accession 019597: 9 objects, 1887–8; accession 21890: 8 objects, 1889; accession 29057: 15 objects, 1895; accession 95A00030: 10 paintings, 1895; and accession 030192: 40 objects, 1896.

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