When Our Words Return

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The Days of Yore
Alutiiq Mythical Time
Patricia H. Partnow

Historians and cultural anthropologists have gathered increasing evidence that we all remember the past in ways that reflect present understandings of ourselves. This in no way discounts the value of oral history, which encodes specific and valuable historical and cultural details (as Robert Drozda, for example, documented in his interviews on Yup'ik historical and cemetery sites). Rather, it suggests that beyond the facts of oral history lies a symbolic dimension: history as self-definition.

In this exciting essay, Patricia Partnow captures a moment when the Alutiiq residents of Perryville began a process of ethnic self-definition that continues today. The cataclysmic eruption of Novarupta Volcano in 1912 forced the evacuation of Katmai and became a watershed in the lives of the survivors, who ultimately established the current village of Perryville. In the oral tradition of their descendants, the eruption sharply divides traditional from modern times, imbuing the past with Edenlike qualities, giving the eruption the symbolic force of an atomic explosion, and turning history into oral tradition. In the structural aftermath of Novarupta, the earlier Alutiiq distinction between two folklore genres collapsed, and Russian Orthodox symbols and folklore motifs blended with Eskimo ones. The synthesis provides a coherent basis for Perryville people to define themselves today.

As scholars of oral tradition, we are also at a watershed, contemplating the age-old question of how tradition can be at the same time conservative and ever-changing. Clearly, transmission of oral tradition requires a prodigiously accurate memory and a simultaneous contemporary act of re-creation. As we shift our understanding from the memorized to the rememberer, we no longer see tradition as a weight to be carried but as a set of ideas to be renewed and revitalized. When our words return, we make them ours indeed.
Introduction

On June 6, 1912, Novarupta Volcano in southwestern Alaska exploded in one of the largest eruptions in the history of the world. Ash and pumice buried the Alaska Peninsula villages of Katmai and Douglas and the seasonally operated fish-processing camp at Kaflia Bay and fell two feet deep on the city of Kodiak, 115 miles away. The explosion spawned continuous thunder and lightning storms and resulted in total darkness for more than forty-eight hours. Its roar was heard as far away as Juneau, 750 miles distant (Martin 1913: 131). This event was the cause of widespread displacement of the Alutiiq (Pacific Eskimo) population of the Alaska Peninsula. Katmai and Douglas villagers were rescued by Revenue Cutter Service ships and transported to a location far to the southwest, where they established the new village of Perryville.

The eruption became a nationwide media event, which resulted in the formation of Katmai National Monument. Many people, Native and non-Native, locals and visitors, recorded their experiences during those few days in the summer of 1912. Their accounts give a valuable picture of life on the Alaska Peninsula at the time. They also illustrate the process by which a witnessed event becomes part of oral tradition and exemplify the manipulation of symbols and history in ethnic self-definition.

In this essay, I explore the symbols attached to the Katmai story as contemporary Perryvillers tell it and consider the way their narratives cast the disaster in a mythic light. I also discuss three stories recorded in 1992 which describe life in Katmai before the eruption. These narratives illustrate the way that modern Alutiiq definitions of both folklore and history derive from the eruption.

Sources for the Katmai Eruption Story

Eyewitness Accounts

When I first visited Perryville in September 1990, I explained that I was interested in hearing "old stories and history." My hosts responded with brief descriptions of the Katmai disaster and Perryville's founding. They gave me copies of written accounts of the eruption by eyewitnesses Father Harry Kaiakokonok (a Russian Orthodox priest) and George Kosbruk. Kaiakokonok had been a five-
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year-old and Kosbruk a young man of eighteen at the time of the eruption. Both had lived all of their adult lives in Perryville.

In addition to publishing an account of the eruption in a 1956 issue of the Sitka Public Health Service newsletter, Island Breezes (Kaiakokonok 1956),1 Kaiakokonok recorded two interviews in 1975 with National Park Service rangers (1975a, 1975b). These interviews are a mixture of firsthand memory and secondhand report. Kaiakokonok’s memories contribute a child’s perspective of playfulness and fearlessness but are limited by ignorance of who made decisions or the precise chronology of events, details which were filled in later. In describing events that occurred outside his own experience, Kaiakokonok was careful to differentiate what he knew firsthand from what he had been told. An obligatory postbase in his native Alutiiq language, -uma, indicates when the speaker did not personally see the events he describes but believes them to be true. Although Kaiakokonok’s testimonies are in English, he uses the translation of this postbase, “must have been,” to indicate the same careful attitude toward weighing evidence in his second language. A final account, represented as a verbatim rendering by Kaiakokonok to former Perryville resident Tom Jessee, is included in a letter Jessee wrote in 1961, although how the author obtained or recorded the story is not indicated.

George Kosbruk was also interviewed and recorded twice by National Park Service employees (1975a, 1975b). These testimonies reveal the perspective of an eighteen-year-old man who was fully aware of the danger the eruption posed but are incomplete because of Kosbruk’s difficulty with English. A more reliable source is an unpublished translation of a performance recorded at an elders’ conference in Dillingham in the late 1970s by linguist Jeff Leer of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Kosbruk n.d.). Kosbruk’s fourth account (Kosbruk 1976) appeared as a printed interview in the 1976 edition of Kodiak High School’s student publication Elwani. This narrative is the product of several editorial steps. First Kosbruk told the story in Alutiiq to Effie Shangin of Perryville, who translated and transcribed it in English. She then sent the written English version to her son, who was attending school in Kodiak, where it was again edited, this time for printing. A fifth account attributed to George Kosbruk is included (with the description by Father Harry) in Jessee’s 1961 letter.

Aside from differences attributable to individual experience, the accounts by the two men are quite similar. Jessee explains that they had recounted the story many times through the years to younger
Perryvillers: "He [Kosbruk] usually supplied skeletal details which Harry fleshened and brought to life" (Jessee 1961).

Father Harry Kaiakokonok’s first published testimony (1956) was written forty-four years after the eruption, and his and George Kosbruk’s 1975 interviews were recorded more than a half century afterward. During the interval between occurrence and telling, an inevitable metamorphosis occurred. The narrative’s structure came to conform to indigenous literary conventions, characters and plot elements took on symbolic meanings, and the stories were imbued with particular messages for contemporary audiences.²

Contemporary Oral Traditions

Younger Alutiiqs, ³ who had not lived through the eruption themselves, also told me parts of the Katmai story. Most of these accounts focus on the search for a new home after the rescue from the coast. They reinforce the connection of today’s Perryvillers both to their history and the village’s current location and coincidentally validate claims to the land around Perryville.

I was also told a unique story by a woman who called herself a "Russian Aleut." ⁴ She had grown up in the village of Chignik Bay but now lives in Kodiak. She maintained that soon after establishing their new village, the Perryvillers had gone to the top of a hill and tossed the entire supply of flour given them by the Revenue Cutter Service into the air, watching it fall like snow. A common motif in contact-era stories involves Natives treating European food in ignorant and inappropriate ways (see deLaguna 1972: 259; Goodwin 1986: 168; Eliza Jones, personal communication with the author, May 1980; McClellan 1970a: 121–28.). The Katmai version of the motif establishes ethnic distance between the teller, a Russian Aleut, and the subjects of the story, Alutiiq Natives. It also declares, incorrectly, that the founding of Perryville was the first real contact between the people of Katmai and Westerners, emphasizing discontinuity in local attitudes between pre- and post-Katmai life.

Written Documents

Written sources, both official and unofficial, also describe the disaster. These include wireless messages and annual reports of the United States Revenue Cutter Service (USRCS), whose ships were instrumental in the rescue and relocation of the peninsula Natives after the eruption. Other witnesses, further removed, provide varied perspectives. Inhabitants of Kodiak whose homes were buried in ash
residents of Afognak, where the refugees were taken after their rescue from the Alaska Peninsula (Harvey 1991); and geologists (Martin 1913) all left recorded and written accounts.

Life at the Time of the Eruption

In the spring of 1912, Alaska Peninsula Alutiiqs lived in a handful of small villages on the Bering Sea and Pacific coasts. Those most directly affected by the eruption lay along the northeastern Pacific coast—the two former Alaska Commercial Company posts of Douglas and Katmai, along with Cold (Puale) Bay, Wrangel, and Kanatak. A sixth village to the southwest, Mitrofania, was a Creole, or “Russian Aleut,” community. Perryville, where about a hundred Alutiiqs now reside, did not exist before 1912. Its beaches and rivers served Mitrofania residents as summer fish camps.

By 1912, the population center on the Pacific side of the Alaska Peninsula had shifted from the fur-hunting post at Katmai south to the fishing town of Chignik, which was populated primarily by seasonal cannery workers but also by a handful of resident Alutiiqs (U.S. Census Bureau 1910). Other commercial activities along the coast were confined to Cold Bay, which had long had a small store visited by residents of Katmai and the inland village of Savonoski (Kaiakokonok 1975a, 1975b), and Kaflia Bay, the site of a seasonal saltery and store, where Katmai and Douglas villagers camped during the summer.

Most Alutiiqs in these villages lived in semisubterranean sod-covered dwellings, commonly referred to as barabaras. There were three log houses at Kaflia Bay which were inhabited by families who had recently moved there from Katmai and Douglas. Katmai residents hunted both land and sea mammals, some preferring to hunt one, some the other (Kosbruk 1975b). The men were experts at using bows and arrows as well as guns. Drift whales were eaten, and in fact, one had washed up on the Kaflia shore in the early summer of 1912, shortly before the eruption (Kaiakokonok 1975a). Fishing was one of the most important subsistence activities, and as in years past, those at Kaflia in 1912 beach-seined for salmon (Kaiakokonok 1956, 1975b). People collected and enjoyed seagull eggs. Some people still used seal oil in stone lamps, and everyone found it necessary at times to substitute it for kerosene in lanterns (Kaiakokonok 1975a). Alutiiqs
regularly used tobacco, tea, and flour and made pan bread as a staple. Alcohol was used and sometimes abused by local inhabitants (AOM 1904: 14). People routinely traveled by both wooden skiffs or dories and sealskin kayaks. In fact, it was by kayak that three young men made a dangerous journey after the eruption to seek help in Afognak.

In 1912, there were Russian Orthodox chapels at Katmai, Douglas, Kanatak, Wrangel, Chignik, and Mitrofania (AOM 1912: 77; ARC, reel 180). No formal schools were located in peninsula Alutiiq villages before 1922, when the Perryville school was established, but a number of residents were literate in Russian. Vladimir Stafeev, Alaska Commercial Company manager at Douglas, notes that someone could read and write in every Douglas household in 1892 (Diary: July 12, 1892). Of the entire Alutiiq population of the Pacific side of the Alaska Peninsula in 1900, 30 out of 98 Native hunters, or 31 percent, were literate (U.S. Census Bureau 1900). Their literacy was closely tied with the Russian Orthodox Church, which had operated schools for Natives and Creoles in the larger settlements during Russian days. In the smaller villages on the Alaska Peninsula, it must be supposed that reading and writing were taught to children at home by their parents or church readers.

During the Russian days and the period of major fur trading after the Americans came, in fact up to the time when the Alaska Commercial Company closed its posts on the peninsula at the turn of the century, most able-bodied Alutiiq men had been involved in seasonal sea otter hunting for trade and sale. They were accustomed to traveling great distances in this pursuit, and in fact whole families regularly went on long journeys. George Kosbruk describes one kayak voyage down the Pacific coast of the peninsula (1975a), and Harry Kaiakokonok notes that people made frequent portages over Katmai Pass to the village of Savonoski (1975b). Both Katmai and Douglas had long served as regional trading posts visited by Dena'ina, Yup'ik, and Alutiiq hunters, who brought otter, beaver, fox, wolf, and bear skins to trade.

The Story

Prologue

During June of 1912, most of the people of both Katmai and Douglas had congregated, as usual, at the Kaflia Bay saltery to earn money and put up fish for winter use. The few permanent residents of Kaflia,
including the Kaiakokonok family which had recently moved there, inhabited the only substantial dwellings in the settlement. The seasonal visitors from Katmai and Douglas had pitched tents for the summer.

Most oral reports of the eruption begin with a description of the abundant fish and game at Katmai immediately before the event. Kaiakokonok explains,

> And this creek was so clean, crystal clear water—oh, summertime, and thousands and thousands of salmon go into that river. Every kind of a species of salmon; dogs, humpies, silvers, reds, mix up. Then springtime they say ... our rivers used to be plugged with those [candlefish]. ... Springtime, front of that village, the flat used to be all black with geese, many kind of ducks, swans.... There was moose all the time, and caribou. (1975a)

Premonition and Preparation

The stories then tell of a premonition of disaster. The Savonoski people are said to have known that the volcano was going to erupt and hence moved to Naknek ahead of time. Kaiakokonok notes, “Several times, maybe more than several times, we used to notice the jerks. Not exactly a earthquake; big jerk and a big rumble from that volcano. And that’s why this Savonoski people from way up there inland ... they know that eruption was coming” (1975a). Actually, Savonoski’s residents moved to Naknek each summer for the fishing season. The summer of 1912 was probably no different from previous years (Hussey 1971: 329).

But according to the stories, the people of Savonoski were not the only ones to sense coming disaster: Land mammals had been especially scarce that spring and summer. People believed they had evacuated the area because of the impending disaster: “The animals must have known that something was the problem, and they go some other places where they can survive” (Kaiakokonok 1975a).

The Eruption

The people at Kaflia Bay first knew of the eruption when they heard a tremendous noise and saw a cloud coming out of the mountain. Everyone shouted, “Puyulek! Puyulek! [Volcano!]” One old man, called Apacaq, realized that the boats must be turned upside down and water gathered before all the streams were choked with ash.
The shape of the volcanic cloud has undergone an interesting change in the retelling through the years. Geologist George C. Martin, who journeyed to the scene with a National Geographic Society party several months after the eruption, was told that the cloud was “a beautiful illuminated funnel-shaped cloud, which rose straight into the air.... It afterward assumed different colors and dissolved into cloudbanks, being illuminated all the time. A similar cloud was observed from Iliamna ... the description different ... only in the statement that in losing its funnel-shape form it assumed the 'shape of a ship’” (1913: 161). In his written version (1956), Father Harry Kaiakokonok describes the cloud thus: “The mountain just come up something compare to a fountain; it's quite difficult to make a definite description concerning this erupting mountain. She must rose up something like a bread dough and flow over on all sides with what they might call pumice stone....” (1956). By the 1975 interview, the image has changed. Kaiakokonok then says, “It comes up like a mushroom. Like that, that—you see that atomic bomb when it exploded? It looks something like that. It comes up and flowing, flowing, flowing; red, black, just like rolling all around! And the man who was staying right by it, he made a picture of it, drawing with a pencil. And then he made it just like a atomic bomb explosion” (1975a). George Kosbruk, in his Elwani article, says, “Roaring thunder followed, then a mushroom-like cloud shot up real high. No difference from a bomb picture we see in magazines today” (1976: 17).

The image of the mushroom-shaped cloud, which would not have been meaningful before 1945, compares not just its shape to one generated by an atomic bomb but also the magnitude of the explosion to the disasters of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The cloud’s shape symbolizes the complete destruction of Katmai, Douglas, and the old way of life.

Judgment Day

Kosbruk's and Kaiakokonok’s testimonies then discuss the long, dark, hot, noisy, smelly ordeal when pumice and ash poured down on the community for forty-eight hours (Kaiakokonok) or five days (Kosbruk). All the people gathered in the log cabins that had recently been built (Kaiakokonok 1975a). Kaiakokonok notes that he, as a child, was not afraid, but that the adults were. George Kosbruk states, “People believed in the Bible, and how it would be when the world came to an end. So we all thought this was it. We had no hope of surviving; we gathered this from older people. Prayer was our only hope. We
gathered together and made a special prayer to the Virgin Mary” (1976: 18).

Messengers

The prayers were answered by a slight glimmer of light through immense clouds of ash. The people then decided to supplement prayer with human action. They sent three young men in kayaks to the village of Afognak across Shelikof Strait. Johnson reports that two of the messengers were Wasco Sanook and Vanka Orloff, a visitor from Afognak (1977: 171). The third man remains unidentified, and in fact none of the three is named in accounts by Perryvillers. The kayakers’ anonymity may be due in part to the fact that they were all young men, not yet suitable role models for other Alutiiqs. Their anonymity also serves a dramatic purpose in the Katmai story, for it lends a mythic element in emphasizing the role of messenger rather than individual identities. Further, this anonymity gives the impression that the story is very old, as if the events had occurred so long ago that names are no longer remembered.

Rescue and Exile

The kayakers’ mission was successful. The Revenue Cutter Service was alerted, and a ship steamed to Kaflia Bay to rescue the people. One hundred fourteen Alutiiqs were taken to the Creole village of Afognak north of Kodiak on June 12, where they were housed in the schoolhouse, in vacant houses, and with residents. There they stayed until the beginning of July.

The reactions of the Afognak residents to the refugees from the mainland, as reported in the story of one Swedish/Creole family, are instructive:

The strangers that were living in the schoolhouse and in the yard around Orloff’s place were unlike other people they had known. Papa said they were from way across Shelikof Strait, from a place called Katmai.... Eunice and Enola, though curious, were afraid of them....

These men and women were dark-skinned with dark slit-eyes and black hair, straight and close-cropped. The women wore calico dresses and kerchiefs, which lessened somewhat their scary appearance to the girls. The men, however, wore dark hats, and coarse dark-colored suits with heavy knee-high turbusii, the skin boots typically worn by mainland natives. Both girls had seen some
children as they ran past the schoolyard, but they were not going to stop and ask them to play.

When rescue came, [Ivan] Orloff and his wife, Tania, let some of the people stay in their barn and banya. Others were sheltered at the schoolhouse. The revenue cutter left an officer in Afognak to oversee the distribution of rations of food and gear to the refugees.

Herman told his family that he had made arrangements for the Katmai men to carve a number of the crochet hooks [of ivory] and some miniature skin bidarkas, with carved men, to sell in the store. He thought the work would be a good occupation for the men, and, of course, he hoped to sell all the items they could produce. (Harvey 1991: 110-11)

This selection indicates the social and cultural gulf between Afognak Creoles and Alaska Peninsula Alutiiqs despite their common ancestry, religion, and language and their participation in the same economic system. The passage is also instructive in contrast to the very brief mention Alutiiq storytellers make of their time in Afognak. That month or so is passed over as an inconsequential interruption of the pilgrimage to Perryville, a time when the refugees temporarily placed their lives on hold.

Relocation

It was apparent to both cutter personnel and the inhabitants of the Katmai coast that their old homes were no longer habitable. The cutters made two trips to Douglas and Katmai so the residents could retrieve as many belongings as possible. Government officials began seeking a new village site for the refugees.

According to Revenue Cutter Service documents, Captain Reynolds, commander of the Bering Sea Fleet and the Tahoma, made the decision to move the people down the coast beyond Chignik. In a dispatch sent from the Tahoma on June 24, 1912, he wrote,

Recommend the 98 mainland natives now destitute and depending on Government aid be located immediately peninsula westward of Chignik, probably Stepovak [a bay southwest of Ivanof Bay]. Good summer fishing. Winter trapping and hunting. Should be moved by July 10th to insure winter supply fish ... soon self supporting ... Probable cost [of building material] one thousand dollars ... Agent acquainted with natives, possibly Bureau
Education, should be sent to compel fishing, building, etc., and handle rations. (USRCS 1867–1914)

The 1913 annual report of the USRCS talks of "the Tahoma [with Orthodox priest and interpreter Father Aleksandr Petelin and five Katmai/Douglas Natives] having left several days previously to select the site" (USRCS 1913: 93). Local villagers were apparently to choose the specific location for the new village within the area southwest of Chignik. Oral tradition agrees with this view, although not all residents were aware of the mechanisms through which the choice was to be made. George Kosbruk states, "We spent about two weeks there [Afognak] till the Coast Guard boarded us to proceed on our journey west. Where? Japan? We never knew where they were bringing us" (Kosbruk 1976: 18). Father Harry Kaiakokonok, on the other hand, recalls,

I don’t know where they—where we were going, but the people had the Coast Guards give the people quite a long notice for them to make decisions which way they wanted to go. Southwestward or eastward from Kodiak. The people don’t know which way to go, which way would be better for them for living; and a lot of people wanted to go further southeast; and some people wanted to go [to] the west. And one lady was so anxious, and she been telling people even when she’s got no business, "We go to the west, west,—westward!" Oh! And then her husband, tempting the chief of Katmai, make people go westward and the lady, his wife, advise him to beg him to go westward. Okay, they decide. (1975a)

First Landing
The first place the people landed was at the head of Ivanof Bay. In its protected harbor, they set up tents and began to seine for fish, using a net given them by one of the canneries (USRCS 1913: 99). They started immediately to dry fish for the winter. However, local tradition has it that there were already two Norwegian trappers living at the bay. They told the people that it was not a good place for a village, for snowslides occurred, ice formed in the bay in the winter, and land animals were scarce. Kaiakokonok says,

Oh, the people get excited. "We not going to select this kind of place where we can’t go in and out...." The people didn’t know any better that they were further down south than where they used
to be up here in Katmai and Douglas. Right away the people have a
meeting, and then they go out and look for location for village. And
they selected Perryville, here where we are today. And these two
Norwegians, they ... fooled the marshal escorting the people....
They all believe it. (1975a)

George Kosbruk is more direct about the Perryvillers' attitude to­
ward the Norwegian trappers: “That guy, the guy called bullshit. The
winter time you got snow right down to the water.” [Interviewer's
question: “This is what the guy told you?”] “Yeah. And never. Never
snow right down there” (1975a).

Home at Last
And so the village was moved two bays east to the present site
of Perryville—though, as a postscript, a number of villagers soon
built winter trapping barabaras at Ivanof Bay because land mammals
were in fact much more abundant there than at Perryville. In 1965,
six families moved permanently from Perryville to Ivanof Bay (Davis
1986: 8).

Alutiiq Narrative Genres

The Alutiiq versions of the Katmai story and the tales of events
which are said to have taken place there before the eruption express a
unique understanding of both the past and the present, a perspective
which places the Novarupta eruption simultaneously at the center
and beginning of modern history. In fact, the story of the eruption is
so powerful that it has collapsed traditional narrative genres into a
single story type.

The dangers of equating narrative genres across cultures are well
known (see McClellan 1970a), but the English designations myth and
legend are similar enough to traditional Alutiiq genres to warrant
a closer look. Most definitions of myth contain the following ele­
ments: They are “prose narratives which, in the society in which they
are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened
in the remote past” (Bascom 1984: 9). The stories generally “con­
tain information about decisive, creative events in the beginning of
time” which function as models and “can be characterized as onto­
logical: they are incorporated and integrated into a coherent view of
the world, and they describe very important aspects of life and the
The context of myth is, in normal cases, ritual" [emphasis in the original] (Honko 1984: 50–51). Legends, on the other hand, are described as "prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today. Legends are more often secular than sacred, and their principal characters are human" (Bascom 1984: 9).

Because Alutiiq lore is largely undocumented, a brief discussion of narrative genres in the folklore of the neighboring Yupiit provides a framework for its examination. The Yup'ik stories which most closely resemble myth as defined here are qulirat (plural; singular form, quliraq). Qulirat include tales which are not ultimately attributable to any known storyteller, and which include stock characters, rather than named persons who are known to have existed.... Etiological stories, detailing origins of celestial and geographic features, human customs and ceremonies, and animal characteristics; accounts of the legendary exploits of culture heroes; and ancient tales of animals in their human forms and of human/animal transformations.... (Morrow 1994)

Morrow further notes that "quliraq narratives often begin with generalized locations ('there was a village by a river')" (1994). The Alutiiq word glossed as "myth" is unigkuaq (plural, unigkuat), a cognate of Siberian Yup’ik and Inupiaq terms.

A second Yup’ik genre consists of qanemcit. These stories describe events which took place after the current world order was established. They "include anecdotes and historical accounts—for example, personal encounters with ghosts or other beings, accounts of famines or illness, and feats of great shamans or hunters whose names are generally known" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1984: 26). A word translated as "story" or "account," quli'anguaq (plural, quli'anguat) seems to be the analogous Alutiiq genre.10

The analogy between Yup’ik qanemcit and European legend is incomplete. For instance, two nonlegendary forms of qanemcit are the personal memorate and the radio/television broadcast. Further, supernatural elements are prominent in both qulirat and qanemcit. This fact mirrors the Yup’ik worldview, which does not separate phenomena into the discrete categories of the sacred and profane, the supernatural and the natural (Fienup-Riordan 1990: 78). In fact,
Morrow cautions that *qulirat* and *qanemcit* are not firmly bounded nor mutually exclusive categories. She describes the "basic, although not rigid distinction" as relative, for "stories are sometimes classified ambiguously" (Morrow 1994).

The Alutiiq pre-eruption stories I recorded were called by the tellers either *unigkuat*, *quli'anguat*, both, or neither. I found no firm agreement on their definitions or the distinctions between the two. In fact, they were described by some as synonymous. Alutiiq elders explained:

"*Unigkuat are the same as quli'anguat."

"*Unigkuat are bedtime stories; quli'anguat are stories told by someone who has come from somewhere else."

"They're the same thing."

"*Unigkuat are fairy tales."

"*Quli'anguat are stories; unigkuat are fiction stories."

Jeff Leer (personal communication with the author, October 1992) reported like findings in other Alutiiq villages, where the distinction between *unigkuat* and *quli'anguat* is becoming blurred.

Alutiiq genres, like their Yup'ik counterparts, probably have never been strictly delineated. The disagreement over the respective meanings of the two terms results from several factors. On one level, it may represent an example of "the philosophical expression of multiple simultaneous reference [which] pervades Yup'ik society and encompasses phenomena ... [and] a negative reinforcement of analysis and specification" (Morrow 1990: 152). Second, the apparent confusion indicates the uneasy fit between Alutiiq and English folklore genres. There is no single English word that adequately renders either Alutiiq term.

Third, informants' characterization of *unigkuat* as "fairy tales" or "fiction stories" is partly a reaction to derogatory comments by American teachers about the "superstitions" described in the stories. One man confessed to me, "A lot of people are ashamed of our stories." When I asked why, he explained that his generation had been punished whenever they spoke Alutiiq in school. This made them wary of mentioning anything related to their language, including the old stories, in front of white people.

I have concluded, though, that the confusion springs from something else, something more basic than these three factors: a collapsing of the two genres which represents a shift in Alutiiq conceptions
of their lore and history. It appears that for contemporary Alutiiq storytellers, particularly those from Perryville, there is no longer a difference between the two types of stories. It is certainly true that the youth who do not speak Alutiiq know nothing of the genre distinction. Even elders who know the terms and heard examples of each when they were young tell "old" stories that are different in an important way from those they heard. On the one hand, their narratives are largely mythic in the primary role the supernatural plays and in their remote, unchanged, and paradisiacal setting. On the other hand, some contain nonmythical, qanemciq-like characters and plot elements and often describe conflict or action involving particular, named people who are asserted to have a direct link with the present.

At the same time, the types of stories considered qulirat among Yupiit are rarely told by peninsula Alutiiqs today. That genre, as formerly understood, seems to have all but dropped out of the local folk repertoire. I was told no Raven trickster or origin stories, nor did I meet anyone who remembered hearing any. I recorded only three transformation tales, two involving wronged wives who were transformed into (or from) bears and the third involving a race of killer whales who beat the people of Katmai in a gambling game. People remembered hearing other animal stories as children but could not recall them.\textsuperscript{11} A'ula'aq stories about wild hairy beings who sometimes abduct people are also commonly told, but most of them are recent memorates.

The near disappearance of an entire genre of stories—which is said by local Alutiiqs to have occurred only in the last thirty years—is due in part to the deaths of all the Katmai survivors and in part to the discontinuities between life in Katmai and Perryville. The new community required new stories with new messages. Once people with links to the old way of life had died, their stories died with them. Today’s elders grew up in what has always been considered a progressive and forward-looking community. The canneries began to employ Natives not long after the relocation, and people were soon completely entwined in a wage-earning economy. An American school opened in the early 1920s. Traditional locales for storytelling changed from the "community house" or qasgiq to the trapping cabin, from communal locations to individual homes.

Furthermore, for contemporary storytellers, life in Katmai exists only in stories. I spoke with no living Alutiiq who has visited the ancestral village site. Propelled by the descriptions of the elders who survived the eruption, Katmai has become a symbolic, mythical place.
The Katmai Story as Myth

Structure

The story of the eruption at Katmai is not precisely myth as conventionally understood by folklorists, although it is an origin story that mimics widespread mythic structure. Like myth, it serves as a major identifying symbol to contemporary Perryville Alutiiqs. An image of a volcano is painted on Perryville School's gymnasium wall, alongside a portrait of Father Harry Kaiakokonok and the school mascot, the eagle.

As an origin story, the tale contains a literary structure and symbolism common to both biblical and Yup’ik origin stories (see, for instance, stories of the flood and the theft and retrieval of light in Nelson [1899: 452, 461, 483]). Briefly stated, the story's structure is as follows:

I. Original paradise
   A. Premonition of impending danger is felt
   B. Preparations are made

II. Disaster which induces a liminal experience inside tomblike houses
   A. Divine help is received through prayer
   B. Three messengers embark across the water on a pilgrimage for human help

III. Flight of the people from the destroyed original paradise (Katmai, Douglas, and Kaflia Bay)
   A. Pilgrimage of the whole community begins
   B. People spend a month in exile in Afognak (an element rarely discussed in Alaska Peninsula narratives)
   C. Pilgrimage continues to a new location (Ivanof Bay), whence people are expelled again

IV. Complete reintegration after settlement in Perryville; members of three communities merge to form a single new one.

The number of structural elements is unimportant; they can be rearranged to form three, four, five, or more main topics. The important point is the origin/mythlike movement from paradise through liminality to the modern era, suggestive of the birth and maturing of a people and their community. This movement mimics Van Gennep's (1960) tripartite structure for rites de passage, comprising separation, margin or limen, and reaggregation. Further, it mirrors Turner's
extension of that structure to social activities aimed at strengthening solidarity or *communitas* (1974: 231–32). Turner explains that liminal-ity, the ambiguous state between two normal states, is a particularly potent time for generating *communitas*. The experience is “frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon” (1969: 95). This is an apt description of the time between the eruption and final settlement in Perryville, a time characterized by temporary passivity, literal nakedness within the sweltering houses, and an illusion of timelessness. Furthermore, through its physical and emotional hardships, the experience fostered a newfound sense of unity among the former residents of Katmai, Douglas, and Kaflia Bay and produced in them a sense of having seen something of the divine. It confirmed their role as a chosen people and their story as part of the divine one (see Turner 1969: 96; 1974: 238).

**Symbols**

Several locally important symbols are embedded in the Katmai story, including the characterization of the place as a paradise, the anonymity of the kayakers sent to Afognak (resulting in their representing the group as a whole rather than individual heroics), and the mushroom-shaped cloud rising out of the volcano as a symbol of the destruction of the old way of life. All signal that the story has metamorphosed into a symbol-rich, communal oral tradition. They further lend a mythlike character to it.

Another telling symbol is the emergence of the people from their buried houses after the eruption. This is reminiscent of Christ’s rebirth from his tomb and the emergence of a shaman from his journey to another world, itself a sort of rebirth (see the Pugla’allria story to come; see also Fienup-Riordan 1990: 53). Similarly, their pilgrimage in search of a new home is comparable to the expulsion from Eden, of landfall after the great flood, of the Exodus out of Egypt. It reinforces the Perryvillers’ sense of being a chosen people.

Parallels with Christian images are probably no accident: Father Harry Kaiakokonok, a lay reader until 1971 when he became an ordained priest, was intimately familiar with the Bible, as indeed are all Perryville elders. I often heard layfolk relate biblical teachings to everyday life, so the practice is a common one. Intentional references to shamanic rituals are also possible. Despite a century and a half of Christianity, talk persists today that at least one resident, dead less than thirty years, was a practicing shaman.
The Mythic Pre-eruption Era

Euro-American histories of Alaska customarily divide time into three periods: the precontact, which covers the archaeological era; the Russian period from 1741 to 1867; and the American period after 1867. Contemporary Perryville history also divides time into three eras, but the categories cover different years. Alutiiqs speak of the pre-eruption period (the years up to 1912), the Perryville years up to World War II, and the present. The division between the pre- and post-eruption eras is thought to have much greater magnitude than the one separating pre- and postwar Perryville.

People describe life in Katmai very differently from existence after the eruption. Humans had ready access to the supernatural, through which they learned proper behavior, which serves as a model today. People spoke Alutiiq, ate healthy Native foods almost exclusively, traveled in sealskin kayaks, and lived in warm, draftless barabaras. There was no drinking of alcohol, and people helped each other. They were hardy and healthy, able to work with an intensity unimagined by today’s youth. There were community houses where people learned their Native dances and the proper rules for hunting and disposing of animals.

On the other hand, Perryville was a modern village from the beginning. Seventy-year-old women today insist that they never saw carved ivory or bone dolls but instead played with porcelain dolls and china tea sets. They recall their beribboned straw hats ordered from catalogues. They wore sno-packs rather than mukluks and played on swings rigged between the pilings of cannery docks. Men remember the Perryville baseball team, the Bears, which used to play Navy or Coast Guard teams on summer patrol along the Alaska Peninsula coast. In effect, the residents of Katmai, Douglas, and Kafia Bay invented themselves anew when they became Perryvillers.12

The pre-eruption time is mythlike also in its portrayal as a single, seamless era in which life changed little from day to day, year to year. No distinction is made between precontact and postcontact time. This is illustrated by the fact that two major Russian and American influences figure prominently in the stories, Russian Orthodoxy and the fur trade which exploited the Alutiiqs. Storytellers do not see these elements as non-Alutiiq, nor as evidence of an essential shift in lifestyle or worldview from what they consider “traditional ways.” They admit that Christianity and the fur trade came with the arrival of the Russians, but since they know nothing of the culture in existence
before that time, these are part of the earliest stage in their known history.

The Russian Orthodoxy that permeates the pre-eruption stories is a syncretic mixture of Alutiiq shamanism and animism with Christianity. The fact that religion is important in the stories derives from both traditional unigkuaq structure and local interest. Most contemporary peninsula Alutiiqs are deeply religious.

The second imported element in pre-eruption stories, Alutiiq economic exploitation, is associated with the Russian fur trade, although in fact it continued for a generation during the American period as well. The economic system and its inequities are personified in the story about Macintine. He is portrayed as a greedy, stingy, bossy, dangerous, self-serving Russian. He is an example of what has become a stock character in Alutiiq folklore, though this person is no longer necessarily a Russian (any white man will do), is often stupid as well as stingy, and in modern memorates is frequently bettered by the Alutiiqs among whom he travels.

Not only is there no expressed distinction between pre- and post-contact in the stories, but the Russian and American periods before 1912 are also collapsed and confused. The tale of the death of Macintine is again a case in point. Macintine was described to me before I began recording the story as the "king of Russian America." His tyranny and that of the fur trade in general are remembered as Russian phenomena, while in fact the events described in the story occurred in 1886, almost twenty years into the American period.

The merging of Russian and American times in Alutiiq conceptions of history is understandable, for life on the peninsula changed little as a result of the 1867 sale. The fur trade continued much as it had during Russian days, though now with American traders. Villages still interacted with company officials through a tuyuq or village chief, apparently chosen from among respected men, with a great deal of input from the itinerant priest (see AOM 1902: 432). The company continued to encourage worker dependence on its store, issuing credit to hunters which could only be repaid through future hunts (ACC correspondence: 8/7/1877; AOM 1899: 91). In several instances, Alaska Commercial Company officials were Russians who had chosen to stay in Alaska after the sale. Russian Orthodox priests maintained their yearly trips to the villages, speaking Russian and church Slavonic (and, in the case of Creole priests, Alutiiq as well). The absence of schools until the 1920s meant that
the English language was neither promoted nor required in daily life.\textsuperscript{14}

Pre-eruption Stories

Three recorded stories told by the current acknowledged storyteller in Perryville, septuagenarian Ignatius Kosbruk (son of George Kosbruk), illustrate the collapsing of genres and historical periods: “Piculi,” about a hunter who tempted fate; “Pugla’allria,” a “good” shaman who accepted Christianity at the end of his life; and “Macintine,” the “Russian king” who was killed in retribution for his meanness to Kodiak Alutiiqs.

Ignatius Kosbruk learned most of the stories he knows at trapping camps or at night over tea from “the old man,” Wasco Sanook. Wasco’s widow, Martha, described the setting in which Kosbruk most likely learned the stories: Each night many of the boys in the village gathered at the Sanooks’ house. Wasco Sanook would begin telling stories as the boys lounged on the floor and furniture. The storytelling continued well into the night, with Martha going to bed long before her husband relinquished his audience. Finally, he would announce that he had no more stories to tell, and the boys would go home. The Sanook house served as a sort of modern-day \textit{qasgiq}, its main innovation being the fact that he was the only adult male instructor. Hence it was his own idiosyncratic view of Alutiiq folklore and history, rather than a consensus, which was passed on.

Ignatius Kosbruk told me the stories while I was a houseguest in his and his wife Frieda’s home. I was an out-of-town visitor, a non-Native English speaker with very limited knowledge of the Alutiiq language. I generally sat across the kitchen table from Ignatius as he recorded his stories. I sipped tea while Frieda Kosbruk worked, listened, and occasionally commented from the cooking area.

\textbf{Piculi}\textsuperscript{15}

Kosbruk identified the first story, “Piculi” (not the name of the man, but a descriptor meaning “great hunter”), as an \textit{unigkuaq} (myth). The story is reproduced here in English translation, written with the assistance of Ignatius Kosbruk and Ralph Phillips. The comment to Jeff Leer at the beginning refers to Kosbruk’s understanding that Leer, with whom he has worked in the past, will listen to the tape. Kosbruk switched to English when he felt it was especially important that I
understand what was going on. Portions originally told in English appear in italics.

"Piculi" as told by Ignatius Kosbruk
March 30, 1992
Perryville, Alaska
English translation

There's another story, Jeff Leer. There used to live at Katmai an expert hunter. I don't know his name. He was a great hunter. But I don't know his name. Anyway, this guy was a real good hunter and—great hunter. He used to hunt year round. Fill all his garages up for the winter, with whatever they had, I guess. I don't know how they were made, made out of grass or wood. He let his servants make him three big warehouses for winter. Dry up meat. All the meat he put away. So I think it must have been in the fall. Finally, he came back from his hunting. When he came back, they were putting up fish; he saw them down at the river. The Alutiiqs were putting up fish. There used to be lots of fish in the past.

Then he said to his wife, "My new shoes. I've never used them." He put them on and went for a walk. He put on clean clothes and went to visit. He went to the village by way of the river.

While—the sun was shining; it was fine weather, and that man had on clean clothes; he went to the ones who were fishing at this river. While he was going along the road, he stepped on some fish—you know—they were exposed to the sun. Then he splashed his shoes with the rotting fish. Boy, then he cursed. He cursed about the fish, even though it hadn't done anything to him. He cursed God. For no reason. "Why did you send fish here?" Because it just dirty his shoes when he stepped [on] that fish, rotten fish. And he splash it on his new shoes. Boy, then he cursed God. He cursed God for no reason. And then He answer him from the air without nobody. Nobody around. And [He] answered. The word came out from the air. All the people that were along the creek listened to it. Everyone of 'em. And listened to Him and stopped, and were—

And then He said, God tells him Himself, "I sent this food, fish, down so the kids wouldn't go hungry. I sent it down due to the people that will go hungry, so they wouldn't go hungry."

And this guy, he answered Him right back and told Him, even if he doesn't eat any fish, he will make it through the winter.

And then God gave him the best of luck. All the game he wanted—came. And he dried all the meat he can, and put away three big warehouses,
The story melds a common Eskimo theme with a Christian message, illustrating how completely Alutiiq and Christian values have been combined. The motif of mockery or disrespect of a valuable food resource (Thompson 1975: motif nos. C94.3, C 934, Q288) is common among Alaska Native lore (see McClellan 1970b; Johnson 1975). It involves a person who is inconvenienced or upset by the resource and curses or mocks it. In this case, drying salmon, exposed too long to the sun, has rotted and splashed the man's new shoes. Later, retribution is exacted for this thoughtless and disrespectful act. In “Piculi,” the man is punished by God Himself in a manner reminiscent of the European Midas punishment (Thompson 1975: motif no. D476.2), a motif not reported in other examples of North American folklore (see Thompson 1966: 362).
The story's messages are several: Treat the resource with respect, or it may be denied you (a common Eskimo theme); avoid the sins of pride and love of material objects (a Christian theme); be a sharing member of society (an Eskimo theme); and do not blaspheme God (a Christian commandment). Taken together, these messages represent solid contemporary Alutiiq values.

Pugla'allria

The second story is about Pugla'allria, a shaman who was said to have lived during the last days of Katmai. Ignatius Kosbruk also termed this story an unigkuaq. He explained that Pugla'allria had actually lived; he had been the hunting partner of Simeon Takak, the last chief of Katmai and first chief of Perryville.

The following English translation of the Pugla'allria story was written with the assistance of Ignatius Kosbruk, Ralph Phillips, and Jeff Leer. The parts originally told in English are in italics.

“Pugla’allria,” as told by Ignatius Kosbruk
March 24, 1992
Perryville, Alaska
English translation

I used to hear this story in the past from that old man; his name was Wasco Sanook. He used to tell me stories. He used to tell me stories there in the trapping grounds, when we used to be there, trapping. Then, I didn’t understand what he told me. He was really talking about a shaman. Then, when I thoroughly understood it, he made me tell that story back to him.

From Naknek to Katmai, a maternal uncle went down there to two old people. They had only one son—one. Then that uncle made that son into a shaman—but the uncle didn’t tell the nephew’s two parents anything.

When he was about to go home, he took that boy out, the one he had made into a shaman, and he put him into a garbage pit. It was about in the fall, in September, I guess, or October, whatever. So he made him stay there the whole winter, through the entire winter, in the back of the pit. We call it a garbage hole. He was there the whole winter.

Then, when spring came, that uncle went down from Naknek to Katmai. Then he asked the two parents, “Where on earth is your son?” Then his mother got all excited, not having known where he
was since the fall; she had lost him, her boy. Then that uncle told her to look for him out there in the garbage hole. In the pit—the garbage pit. His mother did as she was told; she went down to that pit. Then she saw him there in the pit, in the process of leisurely cleaning his teeth, taking fish eggs out from his teeth. She took him down to his father, to his dad.

Now that boy knew every last thing in the world. He knew what was on everyone’s minds. He knew how people would live in the future. He was a person who knew things. Now that uncle was just beginning to make him a shaman.

From then on, being a shaman, he didn’t hurt his fellow humans; he just helped his fellow humans.

He became a shaman. People in those villages didn’t know what kind of person he was. That Pugla’allria, he knows everything what was going on. He only killed his uncle. He killed him because of the fact that he had made his parents cry. The only person he killed; that was the only one. When he was just leaving, when that uncle got ready to go home again, Pugla’allria tied a hair around his neck. That uncle didn’t know it; he didn’t know he tied a hair around his neck. He didn’t know. So he went back, back to Naknek, and that same year, one year after that, he went back. He went back to Naknek, and looked at him. He was almost cut by the hair what he put around his neck. As a shaman, the only person he killed was his uncle. On the way, he helped people out.

Then again one time when people were hunting for sea otters in the sea, when they were way out in qayaqs, in three-man baidarkas, there were lots of them hunting sea otters. The wind came up, it blew really hard, and they had absolutely nowhere to go. Then that Pugla’allria, he called those who were hunting sea otters, the ones that went out for sea otters. And all a sudden, suddenly all the qayaqs went towards each other; they gathered without anyone doing anything. Nobody touched them.

They were out in the storm. They didn’t know. And they all touch them, and they didn’t know what happened. They all go through that one path—right up to Qa’irwik gathered in one place and made a path for them to go up to—back to Katmai.

There was no human agent—nobody touch them, and they didn’t know what happened. They all go through that one path—right up to Qa’irwik [Katmai], right where they live. And when they landed, Father, Apawak [the Russian priest told him not to do that anymore].
Then he, that shaman, lived among the people. He was kind and nice to the people. He only helped those people. He used that magic.

Now, once, unexpectedly, this couple’s child got a fish bone stuck in his throat—in the village—a bone got stuck in his throat. His parents asked shamans to come help. That Pugla’allria watched all those shamans from somewhere or other in their home. They couldn’t do nothing to him. And Pugla’allria was watching them from his home—and wondering what kind of kallagalek are they.

At last, finally they think of him. They call Pugla’allria down. And he went out. And when he entered the house, he told them, “What are you shamans good for anyway? You just torture people in their minds; you’re just killing people instead of helping. Is this child suffering here? You can’t seem to help him.” So he just take the child and put him on his lap. I don’t know what he did. And he take the bone out and show it to them kallagaleks, every one of them. “Was this hard?” He take the bone out and show it to them—every one of ’em. Then he told them to look, that “a person who pays attention to himself can be a shaman. He helps people, doesn’t do anything bad to them.” And they said some of ’em were real criminal in that group. He seen them, their mind.

And then after that, then the shaman lived there helping people.

This chief there, the one I told you about, the chief, he never hire nobody, only Pugla’allria for partner. He say he never carry no gun. And fall of the year, when they watch for bears at night, he let the bear come right close to them, up to them right there. He had no gun. That’s something amazing. He never let the bear see him.

Then he used his shamanism as a means of helping people out. He helped people out with his shamanism.

Then he lived and just helped people.

Then once he started to ponder, “Am I doing the right thing?” Then, then when he started to think about it, he started to think he wanted to quit it, what he was doing, being a shaman. Then he started to become sick. He was sick then. Then one time, once, all of a sudden his shaman helpers came back to him. They broke his joints. Arms and legs were broken up without nobody touching ’em. And he hollered, “Whoa! I wouldn’t come with you guys!” And his arms and legs started to break up without nobody touching them.

And he hollered, “I wouldn’t come with you guys, because I think that we are doing something that is wrong.” He screamed that it wasn’t
right. "It's not right. It's all devil's work." And it got worse and worse and worse. His legs start to break without nobody touching them. Then it got worse and worse. His arms and legs start to break without nobody touching them. Then he screamed, saying he will not go with his spirit helpers; they're not doing right. He said he would follow only the true God.

Then the poor thing died. He just vomited blood until Good Friday. I heard this, that the poor creature died on Good Friday, vomiting blood.

That's the end, it's all done.

Pugla'allria experienced a conventional initiation into shamanhood—his maternal uncle put him into a pit used to ferment fish heads and left him there for a year. At the end of that time, Pugla'allria emerged a clairvoyant, healer, and controller of weather. The story recounts a number of his exploits but makes a point of noting that each was for the good of the people, and that Pugla'allria, unlike other shamans of his day, did not use his powers for his own benefit or to harm people (with one exception, justified on the grounds that the murdered man had "made his parents cry"). Despite Pugla'allria’s stellar career and good motives, when he was on his deathbed, he realized that shamanism was essentially evil and that his spirit helpers were agents of the devil. He threw them off, dying in excruciating pain. As with Yup’ik shamans, the locus of his spiritual power was in his joints, which burst open when he expelled his helpers. He died on Good Friday, but not before he was able to accept the true God and Christ.

The story of Pugla’allria, like that of the piculi, is a statement of contemporary Alutiiq values, particularly as they apply to religion and worldview. This story demonstrates that shamanism was not entirely bad; when it conformed to the Christian exhortation to help others, it was beneficial to the people.18

At the same time, shamanism is shown to have been powerful, regardless of the motives of its practitioners. There is no question that Pugla’allria has powerful abilities. Interestingly, the less beneficent shamans are portrayed as less successful in doing good deeds, but they have no trouble performing feats for their own benefit. The story thus shows that Christianity did not dissolve the beliefs that existed in precontact days. Instead, through a syncretic mixture, it incorporated and overpowered them. Although people claim to know little
about shamanism nowadays, the bone-breaking episode at the end of the story indicates that portions of the previous belief system are remembered. It is likely that the Alaska Peninsula Alutiiqs, like the Yupiit about whom we have more information, broke the bones of a shaman when he died to ensure that he would not come back to life (Elsie Mather, personal communication with the author, June 1992; Fienup-Riordan 1990: 54).

This story indicates that both Alutiiq and Russian supernatural systems were powerful, but Christianity, through its emphasis on good works, was preferable. Even today the powers and methods of the two religious systems are seen to be analogous. I was told of innumerable incidents when holy water, a cross, a prayer, church bells, or consecrated ground saved people or structures from natural disaster in precisely the same way that Pugla’allria was able to calm the waters for the sea-otter hunters.

A central theme in Kosbruk’s telling of the Pugla’allria story thus concerns the victory of Christianity over shamanism. For Kosbruk, the story symbolizes not just one shaman’s conversion but the conversion of all Katmai Alutiiqs. The shaman’s death on Good Friday is particularly significant. It invites comparisons between Pugla’allria’s life and that of Christ, reinforcing each as a model for future generations. Good Friday itself is shown to be spiritually powerful, an active force in Pugla’allria’s conversion.

Taken together, “Pugla’allria” and “Piculi” reveal much variation in what Ignatius Kosbruk termed unigkuat. “Piculi” might have been a typical unigkuaq except for its Christian elements, but “Pugla’allria,” as an account of a named and fairly recent person’s deeds, would probably have been called a quli’anguaq, following traditional genre distinctions.

Macintine

The story about the death of Macintine illustrates Alutiiq attitudes about the fur trade, provides a striking symbol of ethnic distinctiveness, exemplifies the merging of historical periods in pre-eruption stories, and illustrates the way that ancient motifs have been reworked with modern situations and characters. The story is an account of the November 1, 1886, murder of the Alaska Commercial Company’s Kodiak trader, Benjamin G. McIntyre.

Ignatius Kosbruk told me that the story “belonged” to the Kodiak Alutiiqs, for Katmai hunters and trappers did not deal with McIntyre
but with the trader at Katmai who sent the furs to Kodiak. Kosbruk did not identify the tale by genre.

The English translation of this Alutiiq story was written with the assistance of Ignatius Kosbruk and Ralph Phillips. Again, portions originally told in English are italicized.

"Macintine," as told by Ignatius Kosbruk
March 24, 1992
Perryville, Alaska
English translation

I used to hear this one, too; it belongs to Kodiak Alutiiqs especially. Macintine was the king here in Alaska. He tortured Alutiiqs, the ones that went sea-otter hunting. He gave them for their sea-otter catch only one pound of tea. He made them go out hunting, the Kodiak Alutiiqs, out to sea. He made fun of them. A little flour, a little sugar was all he gave them.

Now one time they made a plan from the Lower 48, from Seattle, before we bought Alaska. That boss owned the whole Alaska.

Well, they made a plan from down there: Someone would kill him. Their minds were made up, all the Alaskan Alutiiqs.

Then the assassin from Seattle came from down there; the government from the Lower 48 sent him to Kodiak.

Kodiak was really full of gunpowder. So [he went] to the place under the bluffs, where he [practiced] shooting.

Then that assassin got to Kodiak. He walked among the people, and they didn’t see him. He was invisible. He was some kind of man, I guess. People touched him, not knowing it.

Then that first day when he got into Kodiak, Macintine himself, he went to him and ask him, "Macintine, would you let me buy a cow today for lunch?" Macintine saying, "No, you got to pay a lot of money for a cow." Says, "You know it."21

Then that one said to Macintine, "Today is your last day you will have supper in your table." Or tomorrow, whenever is a better time for him to be dead.

Lots of those other people in the village were scared of him; they thought Macintine would kill all of them. They didn’t think he’d be able to kill Macintine.

The next day the assassin [was there], just as they were sitting at a big table just about to eat. That Macintine was right on the end of the table; he was sitting with his, with his treasurer or whatever he was, second to him, he was sitting down eating. Getting ready to eat.
And then he sneak up to the window and aimed at him. He was clear. With the shot. And his partner was nearby him, and he aim at him and shot him right there—stone dead. And his partner, he must have talked a little bit Native language. He hollered, “Kina maani caligta [What’s happening here]!?!" He was crawling around all over on the floor. “What’s happening here?!”

And then after that, soon as he killed him, he went over and blow that ship up, so nobody would know. He blew it up. And then he wandered around. And about three days after that, they heard it from Seattle. And they were gonna come up and bomb the Kodiak Island, but Kodiak didn’t put its flag up. That’s the only—if the flag would have come up, they would have blowed Kodiak up, but the people knew that they were gonna do a dirty trick like that. They didn’t put their flag up for three days. The third day they went out.

That was the end of it.

Like the Katmai story, “Macintine” has been remembered and recorded differently by various parties. The first of four printed versions was published in an 1887 travelogue by Heywood W. Seton-Karr, who had been a member of the New York Times expedition to Alaska during the summer of 1886. Seton-Karr was dining with McIntyre when the manager was shot in the back of the head. The second is an unpublished account written by Ivan Petroff, who had been deputy customs agent at Kodiak in 1886 (Pierce 1968: 7), and was also a witness to McIntyre’s death. His observations were incorporated into a chatty narrative intended for publication in a magazine under the nom de plume, Boris Lanin (Petroff n.d.); a copy of this version is in the Bancroft Library archives. The third account is based on a family oral tradition recalled by Wesley Frederick (Fred) Roscoe (1992), who was an infant when the murder occurred. In his memoir, From Humboldt to Kodiak, he recounts the story as he remembers hearing it from his father, Wesley Ernest Roscoe, Kodiak’s recently arrived Baptist missionary and schoolteacher. This memoir also includes the fourth version, a letter written by the same W. E. Roscoe shortly after the murder. The elder Roscoe was a witness to McIntyre’s death when he entered the room immediately after the shooting, which he did not witness. His letter was published in the December 9, 1886, edition of The Weekly Humboldt Times.

Seton-Karr’s account follows as a contrast to Ignatius’s oral tradition. He corroborates the fire in the murderer’s sloop mentioned by
Ignatius, although he explains that the attempt to blow up the boat was unsuccessful.

“Murdered at Table,” by Heywood Seton-Karr
Reprinted from Shores and Alps of Alaska (pp 231–232)
St. Paul, Kodiak Island, Alaska,
November 3, 1886

The night before last I was the eye-witness to a shocking murder—none other than that of the general agent, whose corpse is on board. We start at noon for California, nearly two thousand miles distant.

We were seated at supper at six o’clock in the evening—McIntyre at the head of the table, and Woche, a storekeeper, at the foot. Ivan Petroff was by my side. The meal was nearly over, and McIntyre had half-turned to get up from his chair, when a terrible explosion suddenly occurred, filling the room with smoke and covering the table with fragments of plates and glasses.

McIntyre never moved, for he was killed stone-dead in a moment. Woche fell under the table, and then rushed out streaming with blood in torrents, for he was shot through the lower part of the head. The double glass window was smashed to atoms, for a cowardly fellow had fired through it, from just outside, with a spreading charge of slugs, presumably aiming at McIntyre, who received the main part of it in his back. Meantime the murderer who had thus shot into a group of unarmed and unsuspecting persons had time to escape.

I succeeded in stopping the bleeding from Woche’s wounds, everyone appearing paralysed!

The suspected man, Peter Anderson, a Cossack of the Don, cannot be found. He had, we found, attempted to fire his sloop, lying at anchor near the wharf; and had refused employment at cod-fishing, in order, as he said, to be present at the departure of the schooner. He had also been seen loitering with a gun behind the house. He owed money to McIntyre, who had twice fitted him out for sea-otter hunting, but both times he was unsuccessful.

We have been scouring the woods with rifles, but the natives are frightened to death. Not a light can be seen in any house after dark for fear of its being shot into by this madman, who is still at large if he has not committed suicide. Nor can any of them be got to stir out at night, or to keep watch like sentries over the sloop, in case he should return, unless a white man is with them.
There is little chance that Ignatius Kosbruk's story is the result of his or his mentor having read an account of the murder. Newspaper articles are easily ruled out, for the only newspaper in existence in Alaska in 1886 was the *Alaskan* in Sitka, which was not published for half of November and all of December in 1886 due to the foreman's illness.

Both Seton-Karr's book and W. E. Roscoe's newspaper letter may have been available in Alaska after 1887, but until the 1920s, they would have been inaccessible to Alaska Peninsula Alutiiqs because they are in English. Neither of the other two authors could have been a source for Ignatius Kosbruk: Petroff's account was never published, and Fred Roscoe's only appeared in 1992.

It is more likely that Kosbruk learned the story indirectly from a locally renowned "Russian" (Creole) named Spiridon Stepanoff. He had been born in the tiny village of Eagle Harbor on Kodiak Island in 1883, and at the age of twelve had moved to Mitrofania on the Alaska Peninsula with his family. A renowned storyteller, he spent the rest of his life in the Mitrofania and Chignik areas, with occasional trips to Unalaska, Unga, and Port Moller to work in the canneries. I was given a copy of an audiotape Stepanoff had recorded in 1969, in which he recounted the tale of Macintine.23 This tape provides a fascinating bridge between the eyewitness narratives by McIntyre's friends and Kosbruk's oral tradition.

Assuming that Spiridon Stepanoff was the source for Kosbruk's story, the narrative has undergone an interesting transformation through the years. Like the Katmai story, it has become part of the Alutiiq self-definition, converted from a diverting anecdote about the murder of a particular individual to a narrative about the destruction of a symbolic social persona. Whereas Stepanoff maintains narrative distance from the characters and action of the story, Kosbruk identifies closely with the Alutiiq hunters and the assassin in turn.

Stepanoff maintains distance in two ways. First, he reminds his audience that the murderer was a Russian (not an Alutiiq or Creole) from "outside" (i.e., from the Lower Forty-Eight). Second, the man was a lazy good-for-nothing: "He wouldn't do nothing!" Spiridon implies that it was only natural that Macintine denied him his request for part of the slaughtered cow: "So this fella he come up too. 'Won't you give me a little piece for my supper?' Macintine says, 'Ah! You! You're not my man. You're not a working man. You don't do nothing! You don't get nothing from me! You get home!'" (Stepanoff 1969).
Stepanoff also recognizes that Macintine suffered from moral weakness: At the beginning of his narrative, he implies that Macintine may have been partly responsible for the death of an Orthodox bishop he resented because this prelate would not allow the Alutiiqs to hunt on Russian Orthodox holidays. Furthermore, Macintine had sold the Russian stranger defective gunpowder at the beginning of Stepanoff's narrative. It was apparently partly in retaliation that Macintine was killed.

More importantly, Stepanoff frames his narrative about the "Kodiak king" in terms of the fur trade that exploited generations of Alutiiqs, including his father. Stepanoff begins the story only after explaining that during the nineteenth century, Mitrofania was the site of a major sea-otter hunt. The teacher making the tape comments, "Yeah, used to make a lot of money?" and Stepanoff answers, "Yeah, not people! People for nothing! But they say company made a lot of money. They could get two thousand dollars for the skin; they pay sixty dollars."

Stepanoff's perspective is most like that of neither the assassin nor the fur buyers in the story, but rather the Alutiiq onlookers. Seton-Karr, Petroff, and Roscoe make much of the fact that the local Natives and Creoles were afraid to chase the murderer and so did nothing to apprehend him. Stepanoff depicts the locals not as fearful but as clever opportunists who were able to benefit from a drama that did not directly affect them by feeding unhelpful information to the American "bosses" for money:

And there was [unclear] right on the post, "Anybody seen somebody walking strange places, and you get $10...." Lots of people made the money for nothing. Once in a while they'd say, "There he is, up there! See the man up on the hill!" One of the bosses would go, go find him; they find nothing. Never find him, all over the Kodiak, and they're climbing mountains, look for that man. Never find him. Never find him. (Stepanoff 1969)

Ignatius Kosbruk, on the other hand, has recast the story in a form reminiscent of traditional Eskimo tales about the redistribution of wealth (see Lantis 1953: 164; Norton 1986: 79–88). In depicting the Russian Macintine as greedy, selfish, and despotic, he portrays a man who is in direct conflict with the Alutiiq values of sharing and downplaying good fortune or superior ability. Macintine is similar to the rich men in many qulirat, but as an outsider to the
cultural values, he does not understand that according to Alutiiq mores, he must willingly give away some of his goods. Instead, he demands a large payment for them. There seems to be no way to correct the imbalance brought on by his greed and arrogance other than murder.

Kosbruk is also alone in transforming Macintine’s assassin into a folk hero whose story “shaped the past into narrative that made inevitable changes more bearable” (Ives 1988: 3). Kosbruk shows the way the assassin avenged the economic exploitation that the Alutiiqs had experienced throughout the nineteenth century. Like another folk hero, George Magoon (chronicled by Edward Ives), Macintine’s killer is an outlaw hero, a type “which arise[s] in a time and locale of economic and social crisis and become[s] symbolic champion of one segment of this highly particularized society” (Meyer 1980: 116). Outlaw heroes, Ives reminds us, need not be approved of by the storyteller or audience. Rather, they allow a sensitive subject to be aired without anyone having to take an explicitly illegal stand (Ives 1988: 295–96). Further, the fact that Macintine’s murderer is an outsider and a man of considerable spiritual power allows for a measure of distance between his actions and the storyteller’s values. In this case, it is obvious to Kosbruk’s audience that he approves of the assassination, but it does not follow that he would support a person he knew doing such a thing.

For Ignatius Kosbruk, then, this is the story of the Alutiiqs’ victory over the Russians, and by extension over all white men, through the agency of a stranger sent to save them. Its parallels with the story of Christ as savior are marked. In addition, the story shows the power of the traditional (i.e., shamanic) religion, which enabled the assassin to escape detection both before and after the murder. The tale recounts a turning point in Alutiiq history, a time when the people were victorious over the white man because they possessed a spiritually and morally superior culture.

As would be expected, the written versions of the death of McIntyre display different attitudes about Natives, Creoles, Russians, and Americans. For instance, all printed documents (and Spiridon Stepanoff’s oral testimony as well) declare that the murderer, Peter Anderson, was a Russian. This fact accounts for some assumption about his character by the American raconteurs, for relationships between the recently arrived Americans and the Russians who had remained in Alaska after its sale were strained at best. Baptist missionaries like Ernest and Ida Roscoe resented the Russian Orthodox
priests, who hampered their attempts to establish a mission and orphanage on Kodiak. In 1887, Ida Roscoe wrote,

The old priest . . . is very much displeased with the American school. He told some of the men that as soon as the children learn to read English they would leave the Greek church, so he does all he can to make them go to the Russian school which they started two days after E. commenced his. They even went so far as to send a man around to gather the children up in the morning, when they first commenced, but I think we will come out best in the end. (1992: 10)

Several years later another missionary, C. C. Currant, echoed the anxiety about the priests: “The Greek priest here is doing what he can to oppose. Pray God that he may not harm us” (Roscoe 1992: 124). Following his 1899 survey of the fishing industry in southcentral and southwestern Alaska, Capt. Charles P. Elliott expressed similar sentiments: “The Indians [sic] under the domination of the Russian church, and the personality of the priest in charge determines to a considerable extent the condition of the Indians. The priest at Kadiak [sic] preaches sedition against the United States, his influence being distinctly for evil” (Elliott 1900: 741).

The Orthodox priests’ point of view is reflected in an 1898 article in the American Orthodox Messenger entitled, “Short Church Historical Description of the Kodiak Parish”: “Only this year on Woody Island the Baptists, weaving a nest for impertinently taking Orthodox children, are building a prayer house, and, it seems, not so much for vagrants without pastors of the heterodox, as much as for the seduction and luring of Orthodox Aleuts” (266). The strained atmosphere in Kodiak between Americans and Russians at the time of McIntyre’s murder may have been a factor in the murder itself and undoubtedly influenced the way it was perceived and reported.

The younger Roscoe adds a new twist to this tale of interethnic conflict. Writing fifty years after the murder occurred, he depicts negative attitudes not toward Russians (who were no longer a threat to the Protestants in Alaska) but rather toward Natives. In Roscoe’s account, Peter Anderson was no longer a Russian. Instead, he was a dissolute white man living among the Alutiiqs. He “was a shiftless, irresponsible sort of person. He lived with his squaw by the Aleut village outside the town of Kodiak” (1992: 6). Anderson had sunk to what Roscoe implies was the Natives’ uncivilized level and was immoral
as well. Roscoe has restructured the story to demonstrate the rift not between Russians and Americans but between whites and Natives.

The character of the victim likewise differs in the various accounts. In contrast to the oral traditions recounted by Ignatius Kosbruk and Spiridon Stepanoff, all written versions show McIntyre to have been a reasonable, responsible manager who fulfilled his duties well. Seton-Karr and Petroff, the two eyewitnesses, agree that McIntyre was competent. Petroff depicts him as so valuable that his vacation was delayed to deal with company matters no one else could handle. He is also shown as exceedingly generous; he assists Anderson one (Roscoe), two (Seton-Karr), or three times (Petroff) before finally refusing to outfit him again for trapping.

As already discussed, the Alutiiq Macintine story ignores the distinction between the precontact, Russian, and American periods and, except for its chronological setting and the identity of the victim, sounds very like a traditional Yup'ik quliraq. First, there is the suggestion that the assassin had strong spiritual powers connected with ancient Alutiiq beliefs which, like Pugla'allria, he used for the good of the people. Second, this is a story about the restoration of social balance and order that had been upset by the despotic deeds of a rich man. And third, the task was accomplished, as in many qulirat, by an unnamed hero whose own social position was marginal (see Lantis 1953: 114, 158). Instead of an orphan whose only known ancestor is a spiritually powerful grandmother, we have an itinerant hero with no known home but, similarly, a great deal of spiritual power. The story of Macintine serves as a model for proper behavior, for it distinguishes between the righteous and unrighteous, the Alutiiq hunters and the Russian traders.

Conclusion

The stories reproduced here exhibit characteristics of both myths and legends, quliraq and qanemcit, unigkuat and quli’anguat. Further, they describe a world in which Eskimo, Russian, and American elements meld smoothly to project a pre-eruption Alutiiq worldview and delineate the image that today’s Perryvillers have of that time. The diverse cultural strands that historians and anthropologists delight in discovering and separating are inextricably woven together in the stories—and presumably in the minds of Perryvillers as well.
These stories are also part of Alutiiq history. Combined with the story of the Novarupta eruption, they illustrate that the essential separation between mythical time and modern time occurred not with Raven’s machinations or the first glimmerings of human society, as among the Yupiit, but when the catastrophic eruption of a mountain on the Alaska Peninsula buried all that was old. People were left to reconstruct their lives and reinvent their culture.

This point is illustrated in several ways. First, the preeruption period is characterized as a paradise. It is also seen to be substantially different from modern times. It was a time when God spoke directly to people, when a shaman-in-the-making spent an entire year in a pit before emerging in his full spiritual strength, when only a spiritually powerful stranger was capable of vanquishing the evils of the “Russian” economic system. Second, the structure and content of the eruption story mimic origin myths, and third, with the death of all the survivors of the disaster, this story has become the primary origin narrative within the villagers’ communal oral tradition.

Finally, Katmai has become an imaginary place for today’s Alutiiqs, none of whom has seen it. Although pre-eruption stories are set in a named location (as are Yup’ik qaņemcit and, presumably, Alutiiq quli’anguat), the people actually have no visual referent for that place. Katmai has become a symbolic setting similar to the generalized locales in Yup’ik qulirat.

The fact that Alaska Peninsula Alutiiqs can no longer distinguish between unigkuat and quli’anguat is thus not merely a product of translation difficulties but also derives from the conception of history embedded in the stories. All “old” stories are seen as essentially alike, parts of the same genre, having taken place during a homogeneous epoch. People see only one major discontinuity in Alutiiq folklore, a rupture that coincides with the major historical break between the pre- and post-Katmai eras. Events that occurred before the eruption and move to Perryville are stories. Those that happened afterward are history.

Notes
1. This account appears to be the source for most of the information contained in a book written by a teacher who lived in Perryville for five years during the 1960s (Johnson and Johnson 1977).
2. Vansina (1985) suggests that specific predictable changes occur as eyewitness report turns to oral tradition. There is disagreement among oral historians and folklorists about the timing and causes of some of those changes, but most agree that variations in form and content conform to a general pattern.

3. In the Alutiiq language, the plural term is Alutiit, while the dual is Alutiik. In this article, I follow common Alaska Peninsula usage: When speaking English, the people call themselves either “Aleuts” or “Alutiiqs.”

4. The term “Russian Aleut” describes people who recognize both Russian and Alutiiq forebears. Indeed, the vast majority of today’s Alutiiqs can claim such ancestry, but those who call themselves Russian Aleuts believe they were and were regarded by others as distinct from the Alutiiqs they lived with. They grew up in homes where Russian rather than, or in addition to, Alutiiq was spoken. Their parents were literate, usually church readers. Many Russian Aleuts on the Alaska Peninsula trace their ancestry to Kodiak or Mitrofania, which was founded in 1880 by Creoles from Kodiak Island (Tanner 1888: 36).

5. This locale is no longer called Cold Bay, which is now the name of a village and bay located 250 miles to the southwest near the tip of the Alaska Peninsula. The bay which contained the 1910 Alutiiq settlement of Cold Bay is now called Puale Bay.

6. Also spelled “Wrangell” and called “Port Wrangell” or “Wrangell Bay,” this locale should not be confused with the town of the same name in southeastern Alaska.

7. The name “Savonoski” is a corruption of the Russian term severnovskie, which was originally a designation for a group of people (severnovskie being the plural form of the adjective “northern”) who lived in several settlements in the region around what are now Naknek, Grosvenor, and Brooks lakes in the interior of the Alaska Peninsula, northwest of Katmai. The name Savonoski was eventually applied by the local people to a particular village near the mouth of Iliuk arm of Lake Naknek. There is also a New Savonoski on the Naknek River, established after the Novarupta eruption and inhabited by the people from the original Savonoski but recently abandoned.

The ethnicity of the Severnovskie people is uncertain. Russian Orthodox church records report their self-ascription as Aleut (the English version of the term Alutiiq [Dumond 1986: 5]), although Spurr notes that “even between two such closely adjacent settlements as Savonoski and Katmai there is a marked difference in the speech” (Spurr 1990: 93).

8. In 1911, sea otter hunting was prohibited altogether by law and international treaty.

9. Although Wasco and Vanka are nicknames for Wasillie, or Vasilii, and Ivan respectively, neither man is ever referred to by his formal name.
10. The postbase -nguaq (plural, -nguat) used with nouns means "little, small."

11. One animal story recalled was an Aesop's fable from the woman's childhood schoolbook.

12. For extended discussions of this and related phenomena, see Wagner (1975) and Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983).

13. I did not hear Alutiiqs generalize about the overall effect of Russian contact. Instead, I most often heard them discuss particular Russian imports, such as religion or the fur trade. Most Alutiiqs characterize Russian Orthodoxy as beneficial and the Russian fur trade as detrimental to their culture.

14. Even the Americans who carried on commerce in the area understood the importance of the Russian language. Father Harry Kaiakokonok explains,

   [Foster, the owner of the Kaflia Bay saltery] speak a little Russian too! All those people that lives in Kodiak speak little Russian. That the language Kodiak used to use—even the Kodiak natives hardly speak their dialect, mostly in Russian. That's why this Foster guy speak a little Russian, too, so the people can understand whenever they inquire for something. (1975b)

Alfred B. Shanz, who gathered information on the Nushagak district for the 1890 census, similarly reports,

   The fact that the territory is now owned by the United States cuts no figure and many of the native members of the church are not even aware of that fact. The natives of the north peninsula villages divide mankind into two classes, Russians and non-Russians, and to all of the latter class they apply the generic term Americanski, no matter whether the individual specimen be a German, a Scandinavian, a Finlander, or a Kanaka. One unable to speak any Russian whatever is looked upon as pitifully ignorant and is treated with contempt. (1893: 96)

15. I have titled the narratives for easy reference, but Kosbruk did not name the stories. Rather, he would say, "Have I told you that one about the piculi?" or "Did I tell you that one about Macintine?"

16. The narratives that follow are arranged in paragraph form pending a more detailed analysis of pauses (see Tedlock 1983). Each paragraph begins with a lexical marker indicating the beginning of a new thought or episode. Ignatius Kosbruk's most common marker is "nu-taan tawaken," meaning roughly, "now then . . ." or "and then . . ." or "and after that . . . ."
17. Ignatius Kosbruk used the term *kallagalek*, which he glossed as "shaman," to describe Pugla’allria. French scholar Alphonse Pinart, who traveled in Alaska in 1871 and 1872, referred to two types of Alutiiq spiritual practitioners: the “kahlalik” (which Leer transliterates as *kallagalek*) or shaman, and the “kachak, un homme suppose avoir des relations avec les [sic] hlam-choua [person or power of the universe] et connaitre l’avenir; il etait en meme temps le depostaire des traditions et de la foi religieuses de ces populations; ils etaient . . . tres-reveres et places bien au-dessus du kahlalik” (Pinart 1873: 677).

18. Not all Alaska Peninsula Alutiis agree with this characterization of shamanism. Several people became uncomfortable when I introduced the topic, disclaiming any knowledge of *kallagaleks*. They stated that the practice was the devil’s work. The region’s current priest, Father Maxim Isaac, does not share this view. He is a Yup’ik who has great respect for the healing ability of the shamans of the past. He recounted to me his father’s recovery from an accident, reportedly made with the invaluable assistance of the local shaman. Father Max’s attitude toward shamanism may have facilitated the discussions of the topic that I was privileged to hear.

19. “Pugla’allria” contains many interesting motifs, most of which are beyond the scope of this paper. For instance, shamanistic contests are common themes in Eskimo lore (Lantis 1953: 156). In addition, the maternal uncle’s role is significant as an indication of precontact social structure. Davydov notes that in the early nineteenth century among the Koniag Alutiiqs, heredity passed from uncle to nephew, precisely as it did among the Tlingits (1977: 190). Ignatius Kosbruk’s story lends support to the idea that the Katmai Alutiiq social system was similar. Further, Golder reports the motif of the cruel uncle in Kodiak folklore (1903: 90–95), and Boas compares the motif with similar Northwest Coast stories (1919: 796–817, 951–52). Lantis sees the motif as an indication of close cultural contact between Koniag and Tlingit cultures (Lantis 1938: 128, 154).

20. Jeff Leer (personal communication with the author, April 1993) reports that a common folk belief among Russian Orthodox faithful is that a person who dies on Good Friday automatically goes to Heaven. See also Fienup-Riordan (1988) for the story of the death of a Yup’ik Christian, also during Holy Week.

21. I did not understand this detail about the cow until I heard a 1969 recording made by Spiridon Stepanoff, in which he explained that Macintine and his crew were slaughtering a cow for their dinner when the assassin asked for a share.

22. See Partnow (1993) for a detailed discussion of the differences among the Katmai story versions.


24. The bishop in question is undoubtedly Bishop Nestor, who died in 1882
during McIntyre’s tenure at Kodiak while on a visit to the west coast of Alaska. Almost a century later, the American Orthodox Messenger described his death as follows:

In 1882 he was in the far north, at Mikhailovsky Redoubt [St. Michael]. On the return trip to San Francisco, Bishop Nestor unexpectedly disappeared. Apparently he was washed completely overboard off the little steamship on which he was traveling. After some time, Aleut fishermen from Mikhailovsky Redoubt found Bishop Nestor’s cassocked body. Over him circled a seagull. The body was taken to Unalaska for burial. (AOM 1972: 113)

To my knowledge, there was no suspicion of foul play at the time of Bishop Nestor’s death. Spiridon’s motif of discord between the economic activity of hunting and the religious observance of holidays also appears in Fred Roscoe’s memoirs (1992: 50–51).

25. Anderson is not, of course, a Russian name. Vladimir Stafeev, an agent stationed at the Alaska Commercial Company’s post at Tyonek, received word of the murder and wrote in his diary that Anderson was a “Russian Finn” (Diary: April 18, 1887). Roscoe posits that the man’s name was Andresoff in Russian (1992: 6).

References


Anchorage Archives. Microfilm. American Orthodox Messenger (AOM). See Pravoslavnyi Amerikanskii Vestnik'.


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Alaska, Yukon Territory, and the Northwest Territories, showing locations mentioned in the text. Map by Robert Drozda.