

Around the Mission: from the Log-Journal of an Alaskan Orthodox Missionary

By Priest Tikhon Shalamov (Kodiak Parish)

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(Translation, notes, and introduction by Dawn Lea Black, MA and Daria Safronova-Simeonoff, MA; edited by Father John Dunlop, D. Min)

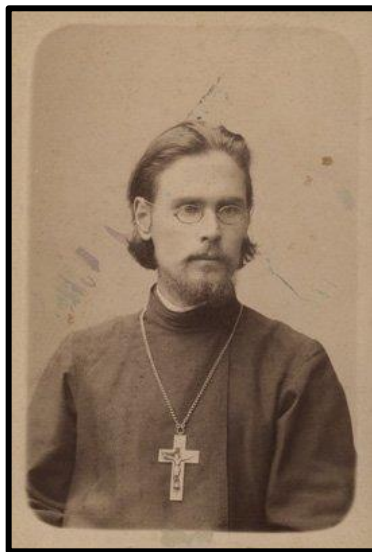


Illustration 1: Father Tikhon Shalamov in 1905

Introduction

The obligatory pastoral trip around Kodiak Parish¹ (St. Paul Harbor, Kodiak—Kaguyak—Aiaktalik—Akhiok— Triokhsviatitel'skoe (Three Saints Village)—Orlovskoe (Eagle Harbor Village)—St. Paul Harbor, Kodiak—Monk's

¹ Kodiak Parish, at various times of its existence, included different villages. In 1903, when Shalamov was a priest in Kodiak, his parish included St. Paul Harbor (Kodiak), Wood Island, Orlovskoe (Eagle Harbor), Triokhsviatitel'skoe (Three Saints Village), Staraya Gavan' (Old Harbor), Kaguyak, Aiaktalik, and Akhiok. In 1898, however, Shalamov had to visit Uzskoe (Ouzinkie), Karluk, Akhiok, Pokrovskoe, Aiaktalik, Kaguyak, Staraya Gavan' (Old Harbor), Orlovo (Eagle Harbor), Lesnoi (Wood Island). For more details, see "Kodiak Vital Statistics Records," St. Herman Theological Seminary Archive, Kodiak, AK, Box 9, Folder 1.

Lagoon, Spruce Island—St. Paul Harbor, Kodiak) took place in June-July-August² of 1903.³ As a companion, Tikhon Shalamov chose the Creole, Tikhon Sherotin [also spelled in English as “Sheratine”], a church Reader since 1898⁴ in the village of Afognak. In fact, the trip would not have been entirely possible without Sherotin’s bilingual skills as an interpreter, as is acknowledged by Father Tikhon himself.

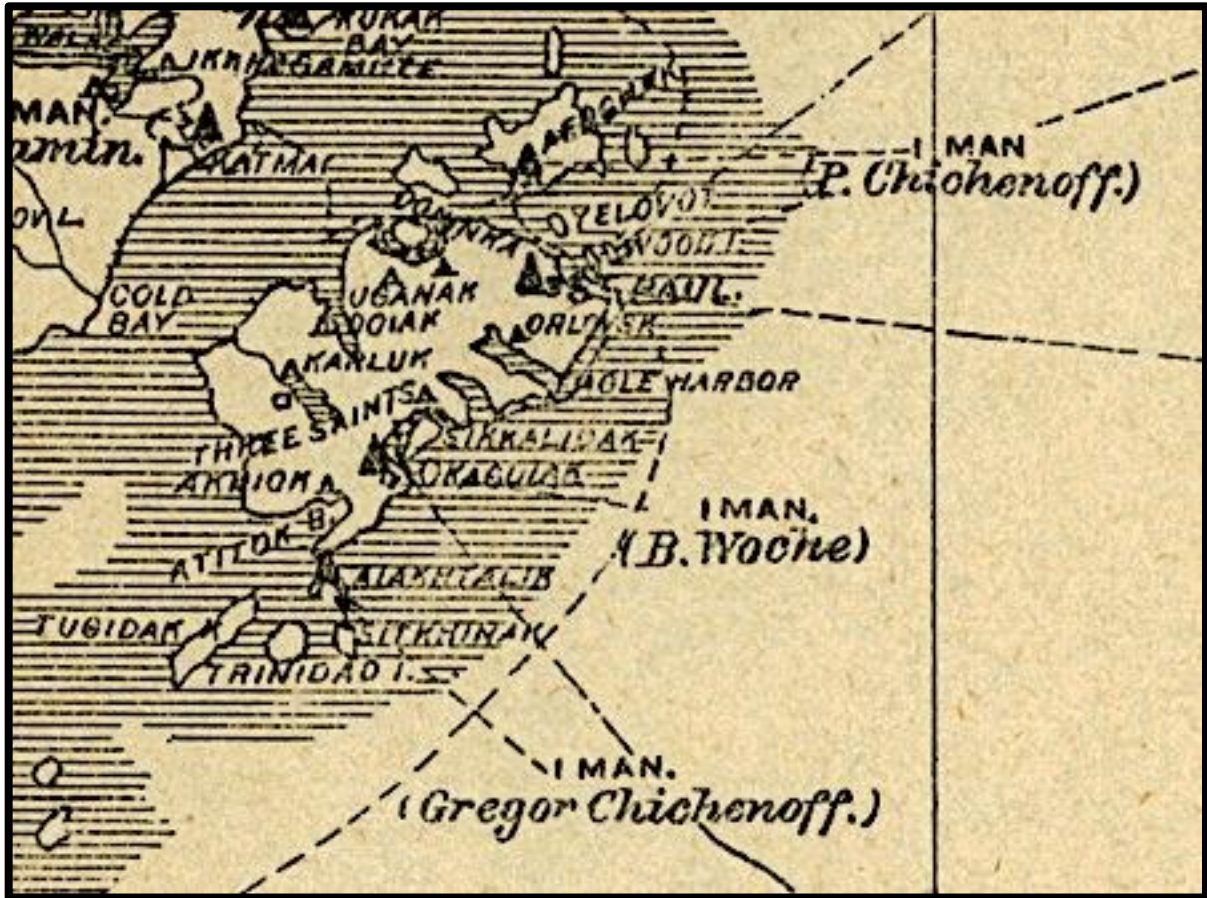


Illustration 2: Map of Kodiak Island in 1888.

A Segment Taken From “Sketch Map of Alaska Showing the Location of

² When reading the journal, the reader should be aware of the difference between Julian and Gregorian calendars: in 1903, for instance, the difference was 13 days more for Gregorian calendar. Thus, when Shalamov arrives in the vicinity of Kaguyak on June 28th (Julian Calendar date), it is July 11th (Gregorian Calendar date).

³ Shalamov never specifically mentions “1903” in his travelogue. However, Kodiak Parish Vital Statistics records clearly indicate that the trip, indeed, took place in 1903 (“Kodiak Vital Statistics Records,” St. Herman Theological Seminary Archive, Kodiak, AK, Box 9, Folder 6).

⁴ See under “Clergy, appointments: Sherotin, Tikhon, reader, 1898-1900” in “The Alaskan Russian Church Archives” (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Container D260, microfilm reel 180).

**Trading Posts of the Alaska Commercial Company, Season of 1888”
(Courtesy of the Baranov Museum, Kodiak, AK).
(Note the names of commercial agents in parenthesis).**

Shalamov and Sherotin travelled by boat, *baidarkas*, and on foot. During the trip, Father Tikhon took multiple pictures⁵ that he later used in the 1904 four-part publication⁶ “По миссии” (“Around the Mission”) in the *Американский Православный Вестник* (Russian Orthodox American Messenger), a partially bilingual newsletter of the Russian Orthodox North American Mission with Reverend Alexander Hotovitsky serving as its editor. The translation below follows the original division made by the author.

Priest Tikhon Shalamov was born in 1868 in Us’t’-Sysol’sk (Vologda Region in the Northwest of Russia). After graduating with honors from Vologda Seminary in 1890, he, at first, worked as a teacher in a parochial school. He then met a newly graduated teacher Nadezhda Vorob’iova and soon the two idealists married. In 1893, while Nadezhda was pregnant with their first son, Valerii, Shalamov left for his assigned parish in Kodiak, Alaska. Nadezhda joined him only a year later. The young family’s life in Kodiak was not easy: out of five children born in Kodiak, three children died in infancy. The fourth child, Varlam, a world-renowned writer, was born in 1907, three years after the family moved back to Vologda.⁷

During his years as a missionary priest in Kodiak, Father Tikhon was extremely active in that he became the President of St. Innocent’s Brotherhood, started sobriety societies in Kodiak and parish villages, organized two orphanages (for boys and girls), and became an avid protector of the Native Orthodox. Shalamov also proved himself a prolific writer: he started by writing a short history of Kodiak Parish and then publishing notes and articles about his pastoral trips around his

⁵ For some reason, Shalamov’s original composite photos (three to four photos together with no spacing between them) do not exactly correspond with his own division of the text. Thus, we took the liberty of cutting out the corresponding photos and matching them with the text.

⁶ Part I: Vol. VIII, #7, April 1-14, 1904, pp. 132-136; Part II: Vol. VIII, #8, April 15-28, 1904, pp. 149-154; Part III: Vol. VIII, #9, May 1-14, 1904, pp. 165-172; Part IV: Vol. VIII, #10, May 15-28, 1904, pp. 188-196, *American Orthodox Messenger*, New York, NY. The all-inclusive special publication “По Миссии” (“Around the Mission”) was also published in 1904 by the same publishing house. The copy of the publication used for this translation (now a rare edition book) was donated to the Alaska State Library by Priest and the first State Library Director Andrew Kashevaroff.

⁷ For more details, see Chapter 2 “The Atypical Family of An Atypical Russian Priest” in Шаламов (Shalamov) by Valerii Esipov, Moscow, Molodaia Gvardiia, 2012, pp. 22-47.

parish. Also, Father Tikhon established a shrine with a burning *lampada* over the site of the cell of the future St. Herman of Alaska in Monk's Lagoon. Finally, it was under his supervision that the Chapel of Sts. Sergius and Herman of Valaam was built near the site of the original chapel that had deteriorated over time.⁸ Notably, Father Tikhon's wife, Nadezhda, worked in the parish school, and her service was even awarded with a special proclamation by the Bishop. Overall, Father Tikhon Shalamov was beloved by his parishioners and valued by his superiors, among whom was Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin), who, in 1904, awarded him with a gold pectoral cross and the Order of St. Anna of the 3d degree.⁹

The Shalamovs returned to Vologda in 1904. At first, Father Tikhon was appointed priest in the small church of Alexander Nevsky. Soon after that, he was transferred to the ancient Saint Sophia, the main Cathedral in Vologda. The family lived at the rectory¹⁰ some fifteen feet away from the Cathedral. In Russia, Shalamov was also active in his social and political activities – he was the initiator of the sobriety society in Vologda, taught God's law in various schools, and published articles in newspapers. After the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, however, the vocation of a clergyman became dangerous – the only reason Father Tikhon was not sent to a gulag was, most probably, because by 1920 he had become blind. At the same time, Shalamov's pension from his missionary work was stopped, and the family started experiencing financial difficulties. It was only the monetary help from his Kodiak parishioners that provided his support in those days. Still, in 1934 he died in complete poverty.

⁸ For more details, see Chapter II "Monk's Lagoon Chronicle, 1794-1997" in *New Valaam at Monk's Lagoon on St. Herman's Spruce Island* by St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, 1997.

⁹ The order of St. Anna was a Russian Imperial award established by Paul I in 1797. The order was awarded to people of various social ranks who had notably served the country. Only the order of the 1st degree granted hereditary nobility; that of the 3d degree provided a yearly stipend of 90 rubles. The gold pectoral cross was highly cherished by Father Shalamov. Unfortunately, during the years of poverty, the cross had to be sacrificed (in pieces) at the *Torgsin*, a state run hard-currency store (for more details, see Esipov, *Shalamov*, p.31).

¹⁰ Currently, "The Museum of Varlam Shalamov" is located in the same house. Personal items of Tikhon Shalamov are on display.



**Illustration 3: Father Tikhon Shalamov on his deathbed.
His wife, Nadezhda, is by his bedside.**

Father Tikhon, despite all of his remarkable qualities, was a person of his time: his attitude toward the colonized Natives was that of a colonialist – while criticizing American colonial practices, he, inadvertently, idealized Russian colonial practices that, in fact, were similarly damaging to the Native population. His descriptions of the poverty and suffering of the villagers betray his sense of superiority in that he distances himself from “them”. At the same time, he did try to elevate the lifestyle of his Native parishioners by bringing them necessary (from his, Russian, perspective) supplies like tea, flour, and also fabrics. He also gave credit to the Native ability of navigation and the exemplary piety and reverence of the converted Natives.

Around the Mission
Part I
[St. Paul Harbor, Kodiak—Kaguyak]



Illustration 4: Shalamov’s boat route “St. Paul Harbor (Kodiak) to Kaguyak via Sitkalidak Strait” on the map of Kodiak Island by Russian American Company, 1849 (Map obtained through the Courtesy of The Baranov Museum, Kodiak, AK)

It has not been long since the end of a harsh, seemingly interminable winter with its blizzards, storms, piercing dampness, cold, gusty winds, and endless nights. The beautiful summer has now arrived with its warmth and caresses, with the aroma of the fields and meadows, with the bright dawns and quiet, magical sunsets, and with the heavenly singing of birds in the foliage and greenery of the forest. The summer was half gone, however, as it was already July, the last blessed month of summer in Alaska.

The missionaries had hardly had any time to rest from the busy winter season of schooling, readings, fasts, lengthy services in the days of Great Feasts and passionate preaching of the word of God, when the time of a new, difficult mission approached: we were to visit our parish's remote villages, these truly forgotten and lost sights on the proud and enlightened map of the world.

The first thing to take care of was an interpreter, or as they are called here, a *tolmach*¹¹. Another thing was to provide transportation.

In Alaska, the *tolmach* plays a large and honorable role in preaching: he is the priest-missionary's first friend and helper. Without him, and the knowledge of the Aleut language¹² with all its dialects and variations, preaching would be fruitless and lead to nothing. That is why it is so important to choose for this role an enlightened and noble parishioner with firm faith, morally upright life, and with the soul of an ardent missionary.

In this respect, this year, I was faced with an obstacle: this winter, by God's will, a regular companion of my missions, Creole¹³ Ivan Panfilov was called to heaven. His impassioned faith, boundless loyalty to Orthodoxy, a firm upbringing in

¹¹ *Tolmach* («толмач») is a Russian term for interpreters, especially in scientific, commercial, and military expedition and religious missions.

¹² Russian colonizers mistakenly applied the ethnonym "Aleut" to many more native peoples and languages than those to whom the term had originally pertained. Thus, the native people of Kodiak were referred to and also called themselves for a time as "Aleuts" («алеуты»). Similarly, their language was referred to as "Aleut" («алеутский»). However, currently, native people of Kodiak identify themselves as Alutiiq people and identify their language as "the Alutiiq language". In this translation, Shalamov's own term "Aleut" («алеут» and «алеутский») is going to be used throughout his journal.

¹³ *Creole* («креол») is a Russian term, applied specifically in Alaska to natives of both Russian and Native ancestry.

the best of Russian tradition, intelligence, and native knowledge of both Aleut and Russian contributed greatly to our efforts in the mission of strengthening and enlightening the Aleut spirit. May God grant him a crown of glory in the heavenly realm, which was prepared from the foundation of the world for those who love Him! And so, sadly remembering my old companion, I had to look for a new interpreter. This was not an easy task to accomplish on Kodiak: the only worthy candidates were either away or busy with urgent tasks.

I was already leaning towards the idea of taking a student from our orphanage, when Father Martysz, the Afognak priest¹⁴, offered his Reader, Tikhon Sherotin, a student of a former theological school¹⁵ organized in San Francisco by Bishop Vladimir (1888-1891).

Tikhon (as everyone calls him here) turned out to be quite a humble and pious person. To replace Tikhon, I had to let my Reader, Pavel Shadura help Father Martysz in services and *treby*¹⁶. Thus, with the first obstacle resolved, I had to think about transportation. Here, by complete coincidence, a skiff arrived from the village of Kaguyak (the end stop of our mission at the southern end of the island). It was an

¹⁴ Priest Vasily Martysz (sometimes spelled Martysh) arrived in Alaska in 1901, together with the newly appointed Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin). He was assigned to the Afognak Parish that included Afognak Island, Spruce Island, and Woody Island. Besides travelling in a kayak around his parish, he taught in the parish school, and ran two houses for the poor. Later, in 1906, he moved to Kodiak and served there as priest for one year. He then moved to continental US, and then, finally, to Canada. After serving for nearly twelve years as a missionary priest in North America, Father Martysz, with family, left for his native Poland where he played the most active role in the facilitation of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Poland from the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1945, some bandits broke into Father Martysz's home and beat him to death. In 2003, he was glorified by the Orthodox Church of Poland as New Martyr Archpriest Vasily Martysz.

¹⁵ The Orthodox Theological School in San Francisco (the first Orthodox Seminary in the continental US) was transferred from Sitka in 1872, together with the Bishop's Cathedra and the Ecclesiastical Consistory. In 1876, the school was closed only to be reopened in the 1890s by Bishop Vladimir (Sokolovsky). It functioned until the financial support from Russia ended due to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (for more details, see pp. 78-87 in *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska (1794-1917)* by Bishop Gregory Afonsky, St. Herman's Theological Seminary, Kodiak, AK, 1977).

¹⁶ *Treby* ("требы»), (literally "needs") are various prayers performed by a priest according to a request of a parishioner. The prayers are generally read from the *Trebnik* («требник»), otherwise known as *The Book of Needs*.

extremely humble, weather-beaten, and decrepit skiff, owned by B. Woche¹⁷, a manager of the Alaskan Commercial Company who agreed to take us to Kaguyak.

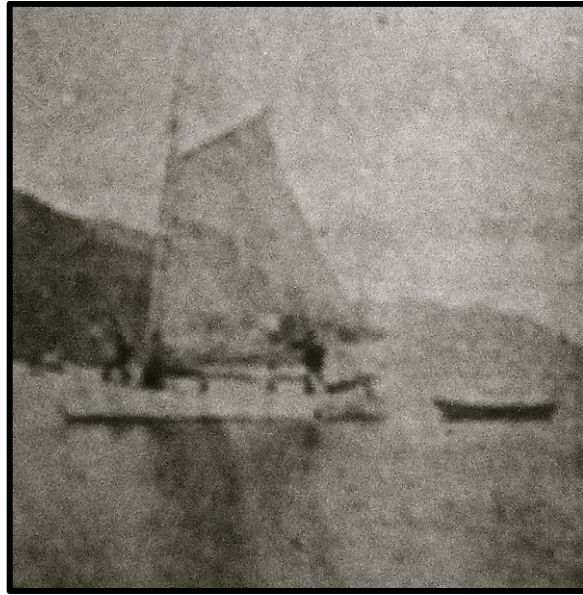


Illustration 5: Sloop “Kaguyak.”

Picture taken by Tikhon Shalamov during his 1903 trip.

American Orthodox Messenger, Vol. VIII, #7, April-May 1904, New York, NY, p. 133.

Of course, it was not safe to travel on such an ancient tub but we had no choice and, thus, hoping in God Almighty, who “sends favorable winds and rules the raging of the sea, and keeps us safe from the flood,”¹⁸ we announced our firm resolve.

Having equipped ourselves properly, that is having put on the full armor of spiritual warfare, “having shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace,” and having taken “the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit,”¹⁹ on the feast day of the prophet of repentance, our glorious John the Baptist,

¹⁷ Benjamin Woche was the manager/storekeeper of the Kaguyak branch of an Alaskan Commercial Company for thirty years, in the late 1800s. Mr. Woche first came to Kodiak in 1867 with the US Army, which established Fort Kodiak. By 1870, the Army had left Kodiak, but Woche stayed and married a local Creole woman, Alexandra Larionoff (for more details, see the website of the Baranov Museum).

¹⁸ Here Shalamov slightly misquotes an Orthodox prayer from the *Trebnik* (*The Book of Needs*) said before starting a sea journey.

¹⁹ Ephesians 6:10-18

and, with favorable weather on our side, we left Kodiak. Our domestic households and children from the orphanage waved us goodbye.

A light breeze pushed us away from Kodiak for about five miles and then died down for a long time, having left us becalmed at the mercy of the sea currents, amidst constantly moving waters, with drooping sails and without a rudder.²⁰

To us, unaccustomed to sea life, the five days spent in the decrepit so called “ship,” in the midst of the interminable tsar of all seas, the Pacific Ocean, were truly torturous and severely punitive. The sea-sickness, which during calm weather has more severe and difficult effects than usual, pressed on our brains and hearts. Irritating smoke from the oven was burning our eyes; unbelievable dirt and dust, meager food, and absence of any lavatory made the situation even worse and led the soul into a stupor of despair.

My companions did not provide much consolation, either. My soul, however, confused or, rather, twisted by seasickness did now desire any interaction, despite the fact that the captain, a retired Sergeant Major and a Civil War veteran repeatedly tried to start a political conversation on the old but always current subject of Russia taking over the whole East, both Far and Near. He got no reply from me and thus soon was quiet, quickly descending from political heights to more prosaic but relevant issues: “The wind is pretty mild,” he would say to Paul, his *matros*²¹ at the wheel, who was Japanese. “It’s “deepel” here,” Paul would say in his broken Russian. Paul, who was converted by Russians to Orthodoxy seven years ago turned out to be quite a good companion to the captain, especially with his “good” knowledge of Russian. “Yes, deepel, deepel... It takes a long to sail,” said he, “the wind has no brains.” After hearing this, my heart began to ache and my brain got completely exhausted.

As all things pass, our sufferings did as well – we soon left the “bumpy” waves and “trench-like” swells of the rough ocean and entered the quit and smooth Saklidak [Sitkalidak] Strait... The pitching and rolling stopped and my brain felt refreshed. At the very mouth of the strait we were met by a large number of whales,

²⁰ The travelogue was published with a photo of a small sailboat with an inscription “Skiff Kaguyak.”

²¹ *Matros* is a Russian word used to denote all lower-rank sailors on a ship.

the last remnants of prehistoric giants.²² It was midnight. Their powerful backs were glistening like metal in the moonlight. Some of them – apparently caring mothers, would, when caressing their giant babies, breach and produce deep rumbling sounds similar to those of the crashing waves. Others cavorted and spouted, while piercing the air with lengthy high-pitched sounds not to be found on land. They approached our humble “ship”, or, to be exact, washtub, so closely that the Aleut cook Vasilii (harmonious, peaceful, and complacent soul) threw ballast stones at them from the schooner.

The current in the Strait is stronger, also, the gentle breath of God’s bright morning pushes us forward along the surface, smooth as that of a river.

They say that in the old times there were huge village along the shores and sandy *laidas* (tidal salt marshes) of the strait... Matros A. Milovidov [also spelled Melovidov or Melovidoff] showed us the cave where, as it is said among the Aleuts, during dark stormy nights a mysterious rooster crows and flaps its wings – none other than a wandering spirit of a shaman. Right at that moment we were gliding past these very mysterious cliffs faced with huge fallen rocks and I expressed my desire to visit the dwelling of a cave man. Aleut Vasilii, not without fear, agreed to go with me to the shore in a small skiff. With great difficulty we climbed the slippery rocks and reached the entrance of the cave, which, evidently, was walled off by human hands in prehistoric times, for the rocks themselves were covered by thousand-year old yellowish rusty mold. Not without confusion, I penetrated inside in an anxious hope to see the remains of prehistoric humans. Savage Aleuts used to bury their dead in such caves.

But here is the small cave-chamber: rough granite walls, smooth even floor, semi-darkness, stuffy cavern air but no dwellers, not even their remains – it seemed as if only the spirit of the wild cave man dwelled here. As for Vasilii, he was sitting by the entrance in anxious trepidation, perhaps, not even expecting to see me alive.

²² Shalamov is correct in his observation about the scarcity of the whale population in Kodiak waters: by 1857, according to Henry W. Clark, nearly four hundred US whalers hunted in Alaskan waters, most of them also engaged in contraband trade (pp. 62 in *History of Alaska*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1930).

But, to his great surprise and joy, I got out alive and well. Our skiff quickly glides with the current to the boat, with me disappointed and Vasiliï relieved.

Along this very cliff there is another cave, from which twenty years ago a Parisian professor Alphonse Pinart²³ removed a large number of Aleut wooden masks dating from the times of Aleut ancient idol-worshippers. These masks, similar to [those in] Japan, were used in pagan rituals [masked dances]. Now we are passing the village of Three Saints...²⁴

A peaceful and blissful night with a full moon in a cloudless sky set in. The mighty breast of the sea was expanding and subsiding, caressing the rocks and cliffs on the shore. The fragrant scent of flowers and cottonwood emanated from the land. The serrated and still snow-covered mountains of Old Harbor gazed at themselves in the mirrored surface of the water, reminiscent of the silhouettes of ancient magic towers and palaces. It was too stuffy to sleep. Besides, it would have been criminal [to sleep] with all this bliss and peace outside. We sat down with a *matros* on duty and had a long talk – and what do you think we talked about? – about the exhilaration of realizing the concept of eternity,²⁵ power of electricity, Marconi,²⁶ outer space planets, the greatness of the peace, and about the infinite Power of God. Waters and shores seemed to be falling asleep in the reverent stillness of the Universe, with only an occasional cry of a restless seagull or the murmur of a streaming waterfall trickling down and merging with the ocean.

By the morning of June 28th a light sea breeze approached. Unfortunately, it was not favorable to us but contrary. Still, it served us well, having pushed us to the

²³ Alphonse Pinart came to Alaska in 1871 and collected a large number of cultural artifacts from Native people themselves and also from some archaeological sites from, mainly, the Aleutian Chain and Kodiak areas. Currently, the Pinart collection is in the museum of Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. Pinart also wrote several articles about his trip.

²⁴ Triokhsviatitel'skoe Village [the Village of Three Saints] was named after Grigorii Shelikhoff's ("Тригорий Шелихов") ship "Три Святителя" ["The Three Saints"]. These three Christian saints are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom (Vasiliï Velikii, Grigorii Bogoslov, and Ioann Zlatoust in the Russian Orthodox tradition).

²⁵ "Eternity" in this context is an approximate translation of the author's neologism "Часовѣчество" that combines the words "hours" and "century".

²⁶ Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937) was an Italian inventor who is credited with Marconi's Law and an invention of a radio telegraph system.

mountain-island Nazigak²⁷ (Two-Headed Island) once mistakenly thought by Captain Bering, from a distance, to be a Kodiak mountain. There were only five miles left before the desired goal of our journey – Kaguyak. But it was not easy to cover even that small distance: the wind had subsided by nighttime and we had to throw out an anchor so we would not be pushed back by the contrary current. This was our fifth night at sea. It was the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, Chief among the Apostles, the patronal feast of the Kaguyak church.²⁸ This fact made our desire to be there even more acute. At dawn the wind came up. However, it was again contrary and unfavorable. We had to maneuver till two in the afternoon – to put it plainly, we had to tack from one side to another so by zigzagging, finally, we could cover the five mile distance. This is the torturous process of a journey by sail. One cannot wish it on an enemy.

²⁷ Two-Headed Island in modern American cartography («Назигак» in Russian and “Nasikaaq” in Alutiiq).

²⁸ Every Orthodox Church is dedicated to a certain Orthodox saint, feast, icon, or historic event. Church in the village of Kaguyak was dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul, Chief among the Apostles.