

Chapter 3 Respite



The best accounts of conditions in the Chain for the years immediately after Solov'ev's departure center in the vicinity of Biorka.

They are found in journals kept during the two occasions James Cook anchored his ships off Beaver Inlet in 1778. The deaths of stalwart chiefs like It'aaada' and Inghluuguza' led Unanga' leaders to abandon hostilities, to accept the inexorable arrival of Russians, and to recognize the inevitability of coexistence with foreigners. On their part, organizers of fur gathering expeditions realized that the more Unanga' leaders they could recruit or groom the better were their chances when it came to securing hunters. Skilled Native hunters had become essential with the decrease in animal populations that accompanied the multiplication of hunting expeditions. The first economic boom had begun. Cook's visits suggest that Unanga' life had entered a brief period of stability in which competition among companies allowed a degree of political and economic independence during a time of comparative calm and prosperity. This brief respite preceded the gradual emergence of the Russian-American Company. A century later, conditions were paralleled during the years between the sale of Alaska in 1867 and the growing dominance of the Alaska Commercial Company in the 1870s.



Portrait of James Cook with false, painted frame by John Webber, n.d., National Portrait Gallery, London.

By late June 1778 Cook had brought the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* up the northwest coast of North America, down the Alaska Peninsula, and along the southern side of the Krenitzin Islands. On the morning of June 27, he approached

Unalga Pass in thick fog. The moment shallow water was detected, the anchors were dropped. As the fog gradually lifted, the men's astonishment rose. They had sailed between two high pinnacles, narrowly missing disaster. Several men recorded astonishment in their journals. Cook wrote, "The Island we were now at I called *Providence* from the providential escape we had in first making it."¹ Once he learned the local name, however, he began using that.



Detail from "Chart of the N.W. Coast of America and the N.E. Coast of Asia, Explored in the Years 1778 and 1799," showing Cook's route west along the Alaska Peninsula, to Unalaska, and returning east. London, Wm. Faden, Geographer to the King, Charing Cross. 2nd edition, January 1, 1794. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

In the Aleutian Islands, the beginning of summer resembles the beginning of spring elsewhere. Yellow thick-necked cowslips crane out of swamps. Deep blue violets and white stalked hyacinths crouch in thick-bladed grass as it inches its way above the crushed and bleached remnants of previous years. Within weeks the arrogant wild rye, beach grass, overpowers everything along the shores and lower hills. This was the time whales migrated north, and, as Cook brought his ships around the northern tip of Sedanka Island into the mouth of Beaver Inlet,

¹ Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part One, 390, n.2.

men in baidarkas were towing two whales toward a village.² The wind slackened and the ships dropped anchor. A few men in *iqyaġ* and *uluġtaġ* (one- and two-hatch kayaks) approached to make hesitant exchanges with the sailors. “They rather seemed shy,” Cook wrote, “and yet seemed to be no strangers to Vessels in some degree like ours, and had acquired a degree of politeness uncommon to Indians.”³ Had he known their recent history, he would have been astounded that they approached at all.



After spending the night at anchor, the ships entered Unalga Pass the next morning. Sighting a harbor off the south side of the channel and needing fresh water, they attempted to enter but wind and tide drove them beyond its entrance. While Cook and Charles Clerke, second in command, struggled to keep their ships from being swept back through the pass, Unangaġ deftly maneuvered around the vessels in their kayaks. The ships dropped anchor just outside the harbor until the rush of tide was over. Before noon the rowboats began towing the vessels into the long narrow bay Unangaġ called *Samgan uġaa*.⁴ After Cook's departure, Russians referred to the bay as *Anglinskaia Bukhta* or English Bay.

There was no village in the bay. Nevertheless, curious Unangaġ arrived. Four of the Englishmen hired a guide for a few leaves of tobacco to take them to a settlement. The men included the assistant surgeon David Samwell, Lieutenant

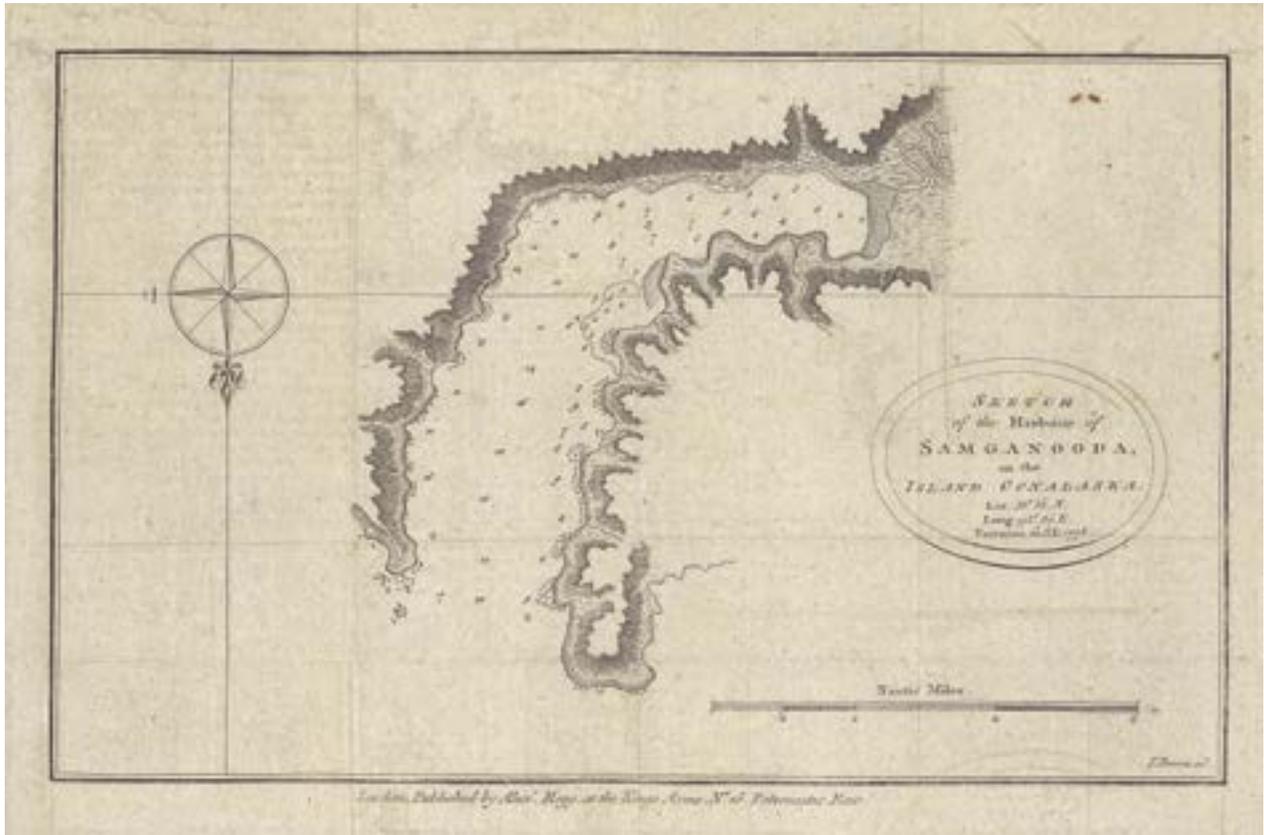
Enlarged view of highlighted selection on chart, preceding page, showing the islands from Kodiak to Atka. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

2 See Elliott's description and drawing of whaling in this vicinity a century later in *Our Arctic Province*, 152-153.

3 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 390.

4 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 602-603. Possibly “bay of snouts.” Uġaa means “bay” in Aleut.

John Gore, and John Webber, the official expedition artist. The fourth participant may have been William Ellis, the surgeon's mate aboard the *Discovery*, who left drawings that probably date from this excursion. Lieutenant King, although not part of this group, wrote that the village was "over the hills on the East side of the harbour." Leaving English Bay on July 4, the men climbed a steep but frequently used trail for about a mile and a half. A map prepared at this time shows a break in the mountainous terrain on the east side of the bay that may have been their route as it corresponds to a ravine that reaches the crest of the ridge before descending into Deep Bay in Beaver Inlet.⁵



Sketch of the Harbour of Samganooda on the Island Oonalaska "English Bay." Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

The village they visited and the small bay where it was located were both called *Uuchuyuuux*, a name that may have been related to the sucking currents in nearby waters.⁶ Russians called the village *Bobrovskoye*, using the same word they applied to the entire inlet. The English, not knowing what to look for, saw no sign of a village other than a few people milling about and large numbers of split fish drying on racks.

⁵ Joppien and Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, 195.

⁶ Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 603. Clerke said Unanga{ called the village "Se'zar'nuck" (*Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part One, 1334*).



In Webber's drawings the slopes bordering the bay are crusted with rocky outcroppings. The foreground has low grass and tall flowering plants that are probably lupine although the leaves more resemble those of monkshood. In one of Ellis's drawings, the ground cover is even lower than what is shown in Webber's sketch. Samwell's only comment apart from noting "a few low Bushes of underwood here & there" was that "the Hills present nothing but barrenness being covered with wild Heath only & that not every where." Samwell and the others saw men busy near the shore. An upright kayak rested on the ground while another leaned on its side against a post. A third was raised upside down between two sets of curved driftwood supports, the bow and stern resting where the curved pieces touched. These were all single hatched, as was a kayak being carried ashore by two men on either side of the hatch. The *iqyaâ* was light and could be easily carried by a single person, and so this one was probably weighted with fish. Although Samwell referred specifically to halibut, the fish drying may also have included cod and perhaps even early salmon. When dried they were stuffed into sea lion stomachs. Nick Galaktionoff said that after being prepared, the sea lion stomachs were thoroughly dried, rolled and put away until needed when they were softened by soaking for two or three days. These containers were strong and could be jumped on in order to pack in around two hundred fish.⁷

"Natives of Oonalashka and their Habitations." This 1790 engraving was made for Bankes' *New System of Geography*, published by royal authority. While based on John Webber's original work, this engraving was reversed for the original publication. It has been corrected here. Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

7 Nick Galaktionoff, interview with Ray Hudson, April 1, 1976.

In his sketches, Webber detailed a circular fish net on a pole, the netting probably made from fine sinew with which Unangaꝯ made exceptional cordage. A gut raincoat was draped over a fish rack to dry, and a net covered rectangular frame rested near the ground. As the English approached the beach, the path terminated at the top of a knoll where people were resting. The women stood back, but the men came forward, greeted them with polite bows, and gestured toward a pole that rose from a square hole. Samwell was “much surprized” at finding himself on top of a dwelling. There were seven or eight of these communal homes at Deep Bay. “We descended down a Ladder made of a thick piece of wood with steps cut in it,” Samwell wrote in his journal, “into a dark & dirty Cave seemingly under ground...” He provided a detailed description of the dwelling while Webber made preliminary sketches from which he later prepared a drawing that became the famous engraving “The Inside of a House, in Oonalashka.” From these we get a fairly detailed description of what dwellings at Biorka would have been like.

Briefly, the Unangaꝯ home, *ulaꝯ* or *ulaagamax* (or *barabara* as it came to be called by the Russians and subsequent visitors to the islands), was a large, multi-family dwelling. A frame of whale ribs and driftwood was erected in a rectangular pit, dug about three feet into the ground. Dried fresh grass was laid over the frame and this was covered with sod. Two overhead openings provided the only light in the structures. One opening held the notched log used as a ladder while the other was opened for ventilation. A central passage way was surrounded by living quarters. Individual family areas were separated with grass matting. Above each apartment were frame and mat covered lofts for storage. Only archaeological research will reveal the extent to which the dwellings at Deep



“The Inside of a House, in Oonalashka,” by John Webber. Tinted engraving courtesy Francis Broderick.

Bay and Biorka shared characteristics with those complex structures recently unearthed at other sites.

Webber's interior drawings included bentwood containers with sinew and wooden handles, extended and rolled-up mats, bundles of grass, and what may be sea lion or seal stomachs used for storage of oil or dried fish. There were a number of grass baskets (including one partially folded fish basket) and a raincoat draped over a pole. With one curious exception, no fishing or hunting weapons were included in any drawing, nor did Webber sketch any bentwood visors or full crowned hats although both were observed and collected. A drawing of the inside of a barabara by William Ellis may show two open crowned visors stored over the end of a post. The exception in the depiction of implements or weapons is mystifying. What appears to be a strung bow hangs on a post on the left in one drawing. The English were emphatic about the absence of any offensive weapons (not realizing, of course, the effectiveness of the sea otter and whale spears if an offensive weapon were needed). Bows and arrows were primarily restricted to warfare. This small bow, however, does not resemble the weapon drawn by Levashov in 1768 or that in the collection of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad.⁸ It may represent the type of bow that formed part of a fox trap (*chalkanaĕ*).⁹ It may be the handle of a bentwood bowl being slowly dried into shape. It may, however unlikely, have been a child's toy.



"Man of Unalaska" by Captain Mikhail Levashov, 1768. From an atlas of drawings by M.S. Levashov in the Hydrographic Section, Ministry of Marine, Petrograd. Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

Webber's drawings inside the barabara are remarkable, especially since they were done with little light. "They are rather dark," Samwell wrote about the dwellings,

⁸ Liapunova, Essays, 28, 102.

⁹ Bill Tcheripanoff and Sergie Sovoroff in Hudson, ed., Unugulu{ Tunusangin, Oldtime Stories, 151-152.



"A Woman of Unalaska," by John Webber (original sketch). Museum of the Aleutians.

“having no light but what comes by the Door or Hatchway.” Unangaġ had lamps, of course, and eventually the English would write about them, but for this visit they chose to keep their visitors in the dark.

More than anyone else, Cook is responsible for portrayals of Unangaġ as a conquered people, a population of slaves. He referred to “the great subjection the Natives are under” and called them “the most peaceable inoffensive people I ever met with.”¹⁰ Webber’s Unalaska drawings, at once perceptive and Arcadian, contribute to this view twenty years after the first Russians arrived. A closer examination of the expedition’s journals and drawings suggests something else. As the four men returned from Deep Bay and reached the crest of a hill overlooking English Bay, they met a man and a woman. While he may have been the subject of one of Webber’s drawings, she definitely was. Several drawings of her exist, one of which was later engraved and is known as “A Woman of Oonalashka.” In the drawings and engraving, although positioned for a three-quarters portrait, she has turned her eyes to confront the viewer with assurance, curiosity and humor. The impression this “very beautiful young Woman” made on the hikers is reflected in her portrait and in Samwell’s journal. “We were all charmed with the good nature & affability with which she complied with our Wishes in staying to have her picture drawn,” he wrote,

& with what readiness she stood up or sat down according as she was desired, seeming very much pleased in having an opportunity to oblige us. She was withal very communicative & intelligent & it was from her I learnt that the Name of the Harbour where the Ships lie is Samgoonoodha. We gave her Husband all the Tobacco we had about us, and made her a present of Beads & other Trinkets with which she was well pleased, & so we took our leave of them, highly delighted with our short Excursion, more particularly with the affable & obliging behaviour of this beautiful & truly good natured young Woman.¹¹

There are variations among the drawings, but in each the woman is tattooed across the cheeks and from the lower lip to the chin. She wears an assortment of jewelry: earrings, a necklace, a circle of beads from the septum of the nose, and an elaborate “winged” labret. Her hair is cut in bangs above the eyebrows, hangs to just below the ears, and is gathered at the back of her head in a type of figure-eight. In 2001 the original sketch, “A Woman of Unalaska,” returned permanently to Unalaska. Purchased from an auction house in Sydney, Australia, the drawing



An engraving based on John Webber’s original sketch “A Woman of Unalaska.” Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

10 Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part One, 458, 459.

11 Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part Two, 1124-1125.

was acquired by the Museum of the Aleutians through the generosity of business firms, the Ounalashka Corporation, and individuals.

Although Cook himself left no account of meeting this woman, he was impressed by the bearing of an older woman whom he saw during a walk on the beach at English Bay. "There was a middle aged woman among them," he wrote after seeing a group of people enjoying a meal of fresh halibut, "of such a mien as would at all times and in all places command respect." While everyone else was dressed in gut raincoats and bird skin parkas, she wore a "seal skin" parka trimmed with fur fringes to which puffin beaks were attached (like small bells). A middle-aged woman in 1778 would have been at least a teenager twenty years earlier when Russians first came to the Fox Islands. This woman had witnessed the conflicts that had descended on the island and had survived with a composure and dignity that awed the great navigator. To say that Unanga had become slaves, had become nothing more than hapless victims, is to ignore the testimony of this woman's presence and to deny the vitality and intelligence of the younger woman Webber sketched.

"Portrait of an Unangax male, perhaps 'Yermusk,' who was taken aboard Captain James Cook's vessel, the *Resolution*, after his kayak capsized, 28 June 1778." Watercolor by John Webber, 1778. British Library, Reference no: Add.Ms.15514 f.22, Record no.: C3119-03.



While the ships were still anchored outside *Samgan Udaa*, Unangaġ brought their kayaks up and began trading fishing implements for tobacco. Once a trade was completed, a man would take off his hat in acknowledgement and repeat the word “Russ.” One young man upset his kayak while trading. Now Unangaġ were among the paramount kayakers of the north and it is unlikely that the plunge the man took into the cold water was anything except deliberate. The sailors quickly lifted him out while his companions took his kayak to shore. On board the *Resolution* he was invited into Cook’s cabin. Somewhat to the captain’s surprise, he went without hesitation. He was offered dry clothes that he put on with all the ease of a European.

His dress was an upper Garment like a Shirt, made of the large gut of some sea animal, probably the Whale, and an under garment of the same shape, made of birds skins dressed with the feathers on and neatly sewed together; the feathered side he wore next his skin: It was mended or patched with pieces of silk stuff and his Cap was ornamented with two or three sorts of glass Beads.¹²

Cook did not give the man’s name. Samwell recorded it as *Yermusk*. Lydia Black discovered in the consistory records of Yakutsk that his Unangaġ name was Kaguluġ.¹³ Having changed into dry clothing, he spent the afternoon aboard the ship. One of the first things he did was to ask for a piece of tobacco followed by a pinch of snuff. The English decided to follow up with the next “luxury” that gentlemen were accustomed to sharing and offered him a small drink of alcohol. However, with a show of good humor, he refused it and amused the seamen by staggering around the ship as though drunk. He was able to point to Kamchatka on a map. Lieutenant King understood him to say that people from Kamchatka were among them, that there were people with a light complexion like the English and people with a darker skin tone like himself living there. All of these, that is the Russians and the people from various Native groups of Kamchatka, “wore crosses, to which they paid a peculiar reverence.”¹⁴ Kaguluġ, it would seem, was not baptized although, if Edgar is to be believed, he had “been with the Russians from a Child.”¹⁵ King later decided that he had, in fact, been baptized.

Although the surgeon, William Anderson, was the finest linguist aboard, he was too ill with tuberculosis to give his attention to Kaguluġ. The first Aleut/English vocabulary lists were made by Samwell and King who wrote that Kaguluġ “spoke sentences to us in that Language.” At the end of his stay the young man “went ashore enriched with Presents of Tobacco & other things which Capt Cook gave him.”¹⁶

12 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part One*, 391-392.

13 Bergsland, *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 20.

14 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1426.

15 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1359.

16 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1121.

The “innate good Disposition” of the Unanga had impressed Samwell. He conceded this behavior was due in part to the “frequent Visits of the Russians from Kamtschatka.” Cook and his men could do little more than speculate about conditions among the people on the island since they shared no common language with either Unanga or Russians. Cook wrote, “...as to honesty they might serve as a pattern to the most civilized nation upon earth.... They are remarkably cheerful and friendly amongst each other, and always behaved with great civility to our people.”¹⁷ He attributed this behavior to both the length of time the Russians had been at Unalaska, “to judge from the great subjection the Natives are under,”¹⁸ and to “some severe examples” the Russians had made “before they could bring them to any order.” For Cook, the ends justified the means, however ignorant he was of both, because “the most happy consequences have attended, and one sees now nothing but the greatest harmony subsisting between the two Nations.”¹⁹

By July 3, the fog had cleared and the English sailed out of the harbor and to the north. Three months later they returned to Unalaska Bay where Cook kept to the western side of Amaknak Island until, after taking an Unanga aboard the *Discovery* as a pilot, he again entered the familiar waters of *Samgan Udaa* on October 3. He remained twenty-three days. This October visit is most notable for meetings with Russians, about whom the English were invariably confused and often wrong. This was, of course, largely due to having to rely on pantomime and gestures for information. The Russians, in turn, were not averse to dissimulation as was evident from the contradictory information they supplied to simple questions.

Peter Natrubin was the first Russian seen by Cook’s crew although they mistook him for a Native. Shortly after Natrubin’s visit, an Unanga arrived whose “dress & Cap were conspicuous from their superior beauty & ornaments.”²⁰ King recognized him as Unanga and not Kamchatkan because of the labret hole in his lower lip. He met Captain Cook and requested a letter that could be sent to Kamchatka (and no doubt shared with the Russians back at the settlement). Cook prepared a note containing the names of the ships and their commanders. King gave the visitor a few metal crosses which “he received... with great Awe & respect.” The visitor explained how the Russians and Kamchatkans hung such crosses about their necks and crossed themselves. King deduced that their visitor was probably a Christian himself. The same man returned on the 7th with letters and fish pies for both Cook and Clerke. On receiving the fish pie, Cook remarked upon this “very singular present considering the place.” He described it as “a rye loaf or rather a pie made in the form of a loaf” with some salmon highly seasoned with pepper inside. Clerke was more effusive and said the salmon was very good, was “nicely season’d with Pepper & Salt, and the Crust, which was made of Rye Flour, was well raised and

17 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 459, 468.

18 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 458.

19 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 459.

20 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1444.

light.”²¹ Neither Cook nor King identified this visitor with the young man who had come aboard the *Resolution* in June. Only Samwell made this connection.²² In July Kagaluŕ had been described as wearing a feather parka that was patched and a cap ornamented with two or three beads. Perhaps following his daring first meeting with the English, his leadership abilities had been recognized. Now his “dress & Cap” were superior to most, more fitting for an envoy from the Russian settlement. Knut Bergsland confirms Kagaluŕ’s identification and adds his baptismal name, Yelisey Pupyshev.

John Ledyard described him as “a comely young chief” and he volunteered to accompany Kagaluŕ to the Russian settlement at Iliuliuk. They took a somewhat circuitous route, spending one night at a village on the way. For the last segment of the trip, Ledyard had to travel inside a kayak, “which I did not very readily agree to,” he wrote.

however, as there was no other place for me but to be thrust into the space between the holes extended at length upon my back and wholly excluded from seeing the way I went or the power of extricating myself upon any emergency. But as there was no alternative I submitted thus to be stowed away in bulk, and went head foremost very swift through the water about an hour, when I felt the canoe strike a beach, and afterwards lifted up and carried some distance, and then set down again, after which I was drawn out by the shoulders by three or four men, for it was now so dark I could not tell who they were, though I was conscious I heard a language that was new.²³

Thus, something like a sack of potatoes, the first Englishman arrived at Iliuliuk. He was taken to a barabara and when the door opened he saw to his joy and surprise that he had been led by two Europeans. The dwelling was particularly long, he thought. On each side was a rough plank platform on which a number of people sat. Ledyard invariably called them Indians. He made little distinction between Unangaŕ and the various people from Kamchatka. They bowed to him as he continued down to the far end where the Russians were gathered and where he was given a seat on a bench covered with furs. A change of clothes was brought to him: a blue silk shirt, a pair of pants, a fur cap, some boots and a gown. “All of which,” he wrote, “I put on with the same cheerfulness they were presented with. Hospitality is a virtue peculiar to man, and the obligation is as great to receive as to confer.” A table was set up in front of him and Kagaluŕ set out the bottles of spirits, the tobacco and snuff and other items Ledyard had brought and these were presented on behalf of Captain Cook. The Russians explained that they were all

Catherine II of Russia
by Johann Baptist von
Lampi the Elder, circa.
1780. Kunsthistorisches
Museum, (Vienna) Inv.
Nr. GG_7131.
wikipedia.org



21 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1333.

22 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1121.

23 Munford, John Ledyard’s Journal, 93-94.

subjects of the Empress Catherine of Russia. Those formalities over, Ledyard was given boiled whale, halibut fried in oil, broiled salmon, and rye bread. The Russians did not join him in the meal but set about enjoying the rum he had brought, which they drank straight. Ledyard's bed was very comfortable with furs above and below him. Before he dropped off to a sound sleep, he saw the Russians and Natives silently assemble for their evening devotions.

The next day, after a steam bath, a dose of brandy, and a breakfast of smoked salmon and ship's biscuit, he visited the Russian vessel. Snow had fallen during the night and this provided an excuse for him to remain an additional day when he was taken across the bay in a baidar, the large open skin boat, rowed by a dozen oarsmen. He was accompanied by "three of the principle Russians and some attendants."

The arrival of the three Russians with Ledyard created a sensation. The entire crew "from the Captain downwards" was moved by meeting Europeans so far from home. "To see people in so strange a part of the World," wrote King, "who had other ties then that of common humanity to recommend them, was such a novelty, & pleasure, & gave such a turn to our Ideas & feelings as may be very easily imagined."²⁴ The English accounts provide sketches of two Russian leaders with whom Unanga from the three villages had dealings along with a general description of the peaceful if somewhat distant relationships between Unanga and Russians.

The first of these was Gerasim Grigor'evich Izmailov, the commander of the outpost at Iliuliuk. He had left the settlement on September 2 to compile census information at Umnak, the Islands of Four Mountains, and other locations, and consequently had not met Ledyard.²⁵ As soon as he had returned from his trip to the west and had learned of Cook's arrival, he had set off to meet him. Ismailov had been at Unalaska with the Krenitsyn and Levashov expedition from 1768 to 1770. In 1776 he became Ivan Solov'ev's successor in the Fox Islands when he was hired to captain Solov'ev's former vessel, the *Sv. Pavel*. His crew included men from Solov'ev's voyage, and on arriving in the Fox Islands he occupied Solov'ev's old outpost on the north side of Unalaska Island.

Izmailov arrived at *Samgan Udaa* on the afternoon of October 14 and was given "bundles of fish and other things" by Unanga.²⁶ In the meantime, Cook had gone to visit the village in Deep Bay. On learning this, Izmailov set off around Fisherman Point and Brundage Head into Beaver Inlet. He arrived seated in the center hole of a three-person kayak, accompanied by twenty or thirty men in single hatch vessels. On landing his men immediately constructed a tent. According to Cook they used "materials which they brought with them, and then they made others for themselves of their Canoes paddles etc^a which they covered

24 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1445.

25 Beaglehold, *Cook and the Russians*, 3.

26 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1140.

with grass, so that the people of the Village were at no trouble to find them lodging." Once the tent was ready, Izmailov invited Cook inside and served him berries and dried salmon, the best he had to offer under the circumstances. "He was a sensible intelligent man," wrote Cook, "and I felt no small Mortification in not being able to converse with him any other way than by signs assisted by figures and other Characters which however was a very great help."²⁷ Cook and Izmailov met aboard the *Resolution* the next day, Thursday, the 15th, and on Friday, the Russian visited Clerke on the *Discovery* before departing. He returned on Monday with his charts and stayed aboard the *Resolution* until Wednesday.

Izmailov's intelligence and energy, thought Cook, would have served him well in a more prestigious position. "He had a quick & lively manner," wrote King who gave him instruction in the use of Hadly's octant, a gift from Cook himself. Samwell noted his Russian dress and the brace of pistols that he carried. Most Russians wore clothes similar to that used by Unanga and which Izmailov perhaps also wore on normal occasions. His dress during this visit, however, brought attention to his position. "He did not forget to let us know he was one of the chief Russians in Nowan: Alatchka (Unalaska Island), wrote Edgar before declaring, "which he is I believe beyond a doubt." Izmailov, of course, had as high an opinion of his country as the English had of theirs. On the two evenings he spent aboard the *Resolution* he drank enough to become intoxicated, and then "you would suppose he could not be less than the prime minister to the Emperess," declared Edgar, "& she of course the best sovereign & russia the best part of the world, & the russian sailors & soldiers preferable to all others."

"A little more modesty on the side of this chief," concluded Edgar, "would have made him much more agreeable." Two days later a more reserved Russian arrived. Iakov Ivanov Sapozhnikov traveled from Umnak where he was foreman of a hunting party. He was captain of the *Sv. Evpl* [*St. Euplus*], owned by several merchants who were in competition with those who had outfitted Izmailov. Sapozhnikov was from Suzdal, an ancient city southeast of Moscow. His modesty did not prevent him from making clear that his origins were superior to Izmailov's. King caught this point immediately: "This Gentleman was a native of Moskow, & valued himself upon being an old Russian." And then he added, "Ismyloff was born at Jakouts [Yakutsk]."

Sapozhnikov had left Kamchatka in late September 1773. He and his men had gathered furs for several years in the Fox Islands and near Isanotskii Strait, at the tip of the Alaska Peninsula. For three years beginning in July 1775 he had worked cooperatively with Potap Zaikov, who hunted to the east while Sapozhnikov remained at Umnak. In May 1778 Zaikov returned and the two firms divided the furs they had secured. Shortly after this, word of Cook's arrival reached Umnak and Sapozhnikov went to Unalaska where Natrubin accompanied him to English Bay.

27 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 450.

“This man seemed to be the very reverse of all the other Russians,” wrote Cook. “He had a great share of Modesty and would drink no strong liquor, which all the other were immoderately fond of.” He was able to inform Cook about conditions at Petropavlovsk, including the prices of various articles the English would need, with more accuracy than had Izmailov. He requested to be allowed to take a gift to the commander of the outpost at Kamchatka. Cook sent a small hand telescope. The following year Sapozhnikov left the Fox Islands and reached Kamchatka with 52,520 rubles worth of furs, 1,590 rubles in tribute from the Aleuts, the telescope, a report about the English explorers, and Cook’s packet containing his chart of the North Pacific and his letters to the admiralty and his wife.²⁸



Chinese Emperor Hongli (1711-1799) in court dress. The Mandarins were the original catalyst for the Aleutian sea otter harvest, prizing its pelt for trimming hats and robes. Payment for a single skin was 80 to 100 rubles—roughly the annual wage of a Russian fur laborer in the North Pacific. Original: [hanging scroll, color on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing.](#)

After five years in the Aleutians, Izmailov returned to Russia in 1781 with an above average take of furs.²⁹ From 1783 to 1786 he was skipper on the *Three Saints* (*Tri Sviatitelia*—*The Three Church Teachers*), next to Bering’s two ships the most famous Russian vessel of the 18th century. With Gregorii Shelikhov aboard in 1783, Izmailov anchored the *Three Saints* at Unalaska for repairs and to take on water and four Unangaġ. He subsequently helped Shelikhov in his ruthless subjugation of the people on Kodiak and Afognak Islands.³⁰ In 1794 he again brought a new vessel, also named *Three Saints*, into Unalaska, this time with Archimandrite Ioasaf and nine other clerics or religious personnel aboard as part of the first religious mission to Alaska. He died in 1796 or 1797.

The Russians conveyed to Cook the idea that subduing the Aleutian Islands had been relatively easy. Establishing control over the mainland, however, still met opposition from people they described as “treacherous” and “perfidious.” Several men, including Ismailov, showed scars from battle wounds. Clerke did not doubt the truth of these encounters but he thought the Russians (whom he admired as honest fellows) may have been disingenuous in decrying their misfortunes. After all, he declared, they were in effect seizing another people’s country, forcing them to become “Tributaries to they don’t know who,” and when they attempted “by stealth or any other Means” to keep what belonged to them they were destroyed “without Mercy.”³¹ Obviously the Unangaġ and the Russians (along with the English) had conflicting views about what was going on.

The following year, King met an elderly Kamchatkan in Petropavlovsk who maintained fighting in the Aleutians had erupted over nothing more than a misunderstanding. From the description of the encounter, this man may have been one of the few survivors of the 1763-64 Unangaġ attack on four Russian vessels.

28 Pierce, *Russian America*, 442.

29 Berkh, *A Chronological History*, 104-105.

30 Pierce, *Russian America*, 206.

31 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1336.

They [the Russians] met with better success in the Islands to the West of Alashka having reduced them, tho not without losing a number of men & killing still a much greater number of the natives. An old man a Corporal of the Kamskadales at this village was among the first that went & is all over scars. He told me that only 5 out of a hundred in the party he was with returned alive to Kamchatka after having been eight years away. He said with a great deal of simplicity that they fought with the natives because they could not make them understand paying tribute, but that after some years when they could talk with them & explain what this tribute meant, all went on very peaceably. Indeed by his own account there were not many left to be fractious, however he gave them an excellent character.³²

The English were puzzled by the relationships between Russians and Unanga. "We could not help observing the great distance with which these common Sailors treat'd the Natives," wrote King. "Whether they are belov'd or fear'd by them, we cannot as yet pretend to say, but they are evidently much respect'd by them."³³ They were also unable to learn the year in which the Russians "had taken a severe revenge, and had laid the country under contribution, and obliged the inhabitants to pay a certain annual tribute in skins," or "to what extent they had subdued the country." Clerke wrote that "The first settlers on these Islands, took from the natives their bows, Arrows, spears, & all other kind of warlike instruments and destroy'd them, by which means they keep them greatly under subjection making them pay tribute."³⁴ Not all Unanga, however, had consented to pay tribute as Ismailov noted when he wrote, "I ordered the fur-tribute payers among the Aleuts, to provide them [the English] during their stay with fish and to furnish them with supplies."³⁵ That the Russians kept an armed guard at the door to their dwelling and posted guards around their storehouse at Iliuliuk suggests that as late as 1778 they slept uneasily.

32 King, "Journal of the Proceedings of his Majesty's Sloop Discovery from Kamchatka to Cape of Good Hope" in Joppien and Smith, 285.

33 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1446.

34 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1355.

35 Beaglehole, *Cook and the Russians*, 3.



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