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**“Russian America” and its meaning for the cultural memory
of citizens of former Russian colonies in North America**

*“Rosyjska Ameryka” i jej znaczenie dla pamięci kulturowej mieszkańców dawnych,
rosyjskich kolonii w Ameryce Północnej*

Praca doktorska

napisana pod

kierunkiem naukowym

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OŚWIADCZENIE

Ja, niżej podpisany Kacper Dziekan, doktorant na Wydziale Historii Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, oświadczam, że przedkładaną pracę dyplomową pt: *“Russian America” and its meaning for the cultural memory of citizens of former Russian colonies in North America* napisałem samodzielnie. Oznacza to, że przy pisaniu pracy, poza niezbędnymi konsultacjami, nie korzystałem z pomocy innych osób, a w szczególności nie zlecałem opracowania rozprawy lub jej części innym osobom, ani nie odpisywałem tej rozprawy lub jej części od innych osób.

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Jednocześnie przyjmuję do wiadomości, że gdyby powyższe oświadczenie okazało się nieprawdziwe, decyzja o wydaniu mi dyplomu zostanie cofnięta.

.....

“Russian America” and its meaning for the cultural memory of citizens of former Russian colonies in North America

ABSTRACT

Rozprawa doktorska analizuje funkcjonowanie dziedzictwa rosyjskiej kolonizacji Ameryki Północnej w pamięci kulturowej mieszkańców terenów Ameryki Północnej należących w XVIII i XIX w. do Rosji. Spośród całości tych ziem do analizy wybrane zostały trzy konkretne miejsca, badane i analizowane jako studia przypadku. Pierwszym miejscem jest miejscowość Sitka na Alasce, dawna stolica rosyjskich kolonii w Ameryce, która nosiła wówczas nazwę „Nowy Archangielsk”. Drugie miejsce to osada znana pod nazwą Fort Ross, znajdująca się w północnej Kalifornii. Dziś ma ona status Stanowego Parku Historycznego. Ostatnim miejscem jest pozostałość po Fortcie Elżbiety, który znajduje się na wyspie Kaua’i, należącej do archipelagu Hawajów. To miejsce również ma status Stanowego Parku Historycznego.

Kompozycyjnie praca składa się z pięciu rozdziałów: pierwszy stanowi wprowadzenie teoretyczno-metodologiczne, prezentujące zastosowane w pracy teorie naukowe oraz metody badawcze. Rozdział drugi prezentuje historyczne tło stanowiące podstawę do omawianych elementów pamięci kulturowej. Pozostałe trzy rozdziały analizują kolejno wspomniane trzy studia przypadku. Każdy z nich analizuje charakterystyczne elementy pamięci kulturowej mieszkańców danego terytorium: ważne postaci historyczne, wydarzenia kluczowe dla kształtowania się zbiorowej tożsamości, instytucje i organizacje pełniące funkcję strażników pamięci, a także materialne oraz niematerialne dziedzictwo. Te elementy są analizowane także pod kątem zróżnicowania w ich funkcjonowaniu w lokalnej pamięci kulturowej w zależności od konkretnej grupy (etnicznej, kulturowej, religijnej), bądź konkretnych aktorów pamięci. Szereg tych elementów jest źródłem lokalnych kontrowersji, a także w związku z tym konfliktów pamięci.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	p. 8.
Acknowledgements.....	p. 12.
Chapter I: Theory and methods	
1. Cultural memory.....	p. 14.
2. Study of cultural memory.....	p. 15.
3. Memory and history.....	p. 17.
4. Cultural history.....	p. 19.
5. Cultural history and memory.....	p. 20.
6. Methods.....	p. 21.
Chapter II: Historical background	
1. Introduction.....	p. 24.
2. The very beginnings.....	p. 27.
3. The development of the Russian fur trade.....	p. 29.
4. The Baranov's era.....	p. 33.
5. Russians and the Indigenous peoples.....	p. 36.
6. The two battles of Sitka.....	p. 39.
7. New capital.....	p. 42.
8. The first Russian circumnavigation (1803–1806).....	p. 44.
9. Fort Ross.....	p. 45.
10. Russia's Hawai'i Adventure.....	p. 47.
11. Baranov's final years.....	p. 48.
12. RAC as a state enterprise.....	p. 49.
13. Russian America in the new international environment.....	p. 53.
14. Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska.....	p. 55.
15. Final years of Russian America.....	p. 56.
16. Conclusion.....	p. 58.
Chapter III: Who had and has the right to Alaska? Sheetka / New Archangel / Sitka	
1. The beginning.....	p. 60.

2. Redoubt St. Archangel Michael / Форт Архандела Михаила.....	p. 61.
3. Battles of 1802 and 1804 – the two Battles of Sitka.....	p. 66.
4. Katlian – a Tlingit hero.....	p. 68.
5. Various narratives on the battles.....	p. 72.
6. 2004 – bicentennial of the battle.....	p. 76.
7. Perception of Baranov among the indigenous Alaskans.....	p. 81.
8. Baranov commemorated.....	p. 82.
9. Cultural legacy in Sitka.....	p. 84.
10. Baranof Elementary School.....	p. 85.
11. Baranov statue.....	p. 87.
12. Baranov in cultural memory of the Tlingit.....	p. 91.
13. Baranov statue in Sitka History Museum (SHM).....	p. 93.
14. Sitka History Museum as a memory agent.....	p. 96.
15. Sitka National Historical Park (SNHP).....	p. 104.
16. Alaska Day celebrations.....	p. 109.
17. Russian Orthodox Church.....	p. 113.
18. The Finnish connection.....	p. 117.
19. Conclusions.....	p. 121.
 Chapter IV: Metini / Fort Ross	
1. Russians in California – beginnings.....	p. 122.
2. Controversies surrounding the name <i>Fort Ross</i>	p. 125.
3. Life in the colony of Ross.....	p. 126.
4. The sale.....	p. 129.
5. Fate of the Settlement Ross after the sale.....	p. 130.
6. Meaning of Fort Ross to Russian Americans	
6. 1. Beginnings.....	p. 133.
6. 2. New century.....	p. 135.
6. 3. Towards regaining the lost heritage.....	p. 137.
6. 4. New world order, new complications.....	p. 140.
6. 5. Breakthrough.....	p. 142.

7. Meaning of the Fort Ross to local non-Russian Americans.....	p. 145.
8. Fort Ross Interpretive Association (FRIA) / Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC) ...	p. 148.
9. Meaning of Fort Ross for Indigenous Californians.....	p. 153.
10. Fort Ross in popular culture.....	p. 157.
11. Conclusions.....	p. 158.
Chapter V: Russia’s Hawaiian adventure or rather Hawai’i’s Russian adventure?	
Pā‘ula‘ula o Hipo / Russian Fort Elizabeth	
1. Unification of Hawaii and the conquest of Kaua’i.....	p. 160.
2. Hawaiian Identity.....	p. 163.
3. Historical background of the fort.....	p. 164.
4. First reconstruction attempts.....	p. 166.
5. The breakthrough moment – 1970s.....	p. 168.
6. The decolonial turn.....	p. 171.
7. 1992 Visitor Survey by Martha Yent.....	p. 174.
8. Media coverage.....	p. 177.
9. Current state.....	p. 179.
10. Pā‘ula‘ula o Hipo - Hawaiization of the fort.....	p. 180.
11. Memory of King Kaumuali’i.....	p. 182.
12. Russian episode in local awareness on Kaua’i.....	p. 186.
13. Empress Elizabeth’s Fort – Russians as a mnemonic agent.....	p. 187.
14. Competitive vs. multidirectional memory.....	p. 191.
15. Conclusion – a conflicted memory.....	p. 192.
Conclusions.....	p. 196.
Bibliography.....	p. 199.

Introduction

Exploring, mapping, and explaining the cultural memory of Russian colonization in North America is an extremely difficult task. There are no clear boundaries or strict lines marking what belongs to the subject matter. There are no fixed definitions of cultural memory either. Even the very legacy of Russian America is an inconsistent issue and lacks fixed set of elements comprising it. Russian exploration of the north American continent dates back to 17th century¹. Russia's permanent presence begins with the first settlement founded on Kodiak Island by Grigorii Shelikhov in 1784². More impetuous development starts in 1808 following the transfer of the colony's capital into the settlement on the Tlingit territory, which received a name New Archangel³. Russians did not expand considerably inwards Alaska staying satisfied with the settlements reached until then. However, there were two attempts on acquiring additional colonies in other parts of North America. Ivan Kuskov, a representative of Russian American Company successfully established new colony in California in 1812⁴. In 1816-17 Doctor Georg Anton Schaeffer, acting on behalf of Russian American Company attempted to turn Hawaiian island Kaua'i into a Russian colony, however unsuccessfully⁵. Fort Ross was eventually sold in 1841 and the remaining part of the American colony in 1867. All places inhabited by the Russians had a prior, long-lasting occupation of Indigenous peoples. The interactions between the native population and Russian settlers, and the uneasy legacy of those interactions is among the main concerns of my research. Russians left numerous examples of tangible and intangible heritage. In some cases, mixed with the indigenous heritage, in others mixed with the American heritage, that followed. They all take various formats of cultural media representation and memory practice.

¹ M. S. Alperovich, *Rossia i Novy Svet. Poslednyaya tret XVIII veka*, Moscow 1993, p. 4.

² A. Postnikov, M. Falk, *Exploring and Mapping Alaska. The Russian America Era, 1741-1867*, Fairbanks (Alaska) 2015, p. 145.

³ S. Fedorova, *Russkaya Amerika: ot pervykh poseleniy do prodazhi Alyaski. Konets XVIII v. — 1867*, Moscow 2011, p. 92.

⁴ A. A. Istomin, *Kaliforniyskie ekspeditsii I. A. Kuskova*, ed. N. N. Bolkhomitinov, Moscow 1999, p. 147.

⁵ R. A. Pierce, *Georg Anton Schäffer, Russia's Man in Hawaii, 1815-1817*, [in:] *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, November 1963, pp. 397-405.

This dissertation aims to cover the following three case studies – specific sites: the town of Sitka – former capital of Russian America, New Archangel; Fort Ross – a Russian colony in California, and Fort Elizabeth – a remnants of the fortified settlement, serving as a material reminder of Russian colonial attempt on the Kaua’i island in Hawai’i archipelago. Each of the cases is analyzed through the remaining tangible heritage, commemorative practices surrounding this legacy and memory agents who take active role in influencing the cultural memory of Russian America. The subject matter is analyzed both historically and contemporarily.

Chapter one discusses the theoretical and methodological framework of the dissertation focusing on the fields of memory studies and cultural history. Discussing contributions from most renown scholars of those fields. Among the top contributors to the scholarship of memory studies are Maurice Halbwachs⁶, Pierre Nora⁷, Aleida and Jan Assmann⁸, as well as contemporary Alon Confino⁹ and Jeffrey Olick¹⁰. Besides, the first international, interdisciplinary handbook on memory studies edited by Astrid Erll together with Ansgar Nünning¹¹ is an invaluable source of literature. Historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, credited with founding the social history are the inspiration for the cultural history. Historians Peter Burke¹² and Lynn Hunt¹³ contributed significantly to its development. Chapter two presents the historical background to the topic Russian colonization of America. It analyses the Russian presence in America from its beginnings to the Alaska Purchase in 1867. History of Russian America has been researched thoroughly. Mostly by Soviet, then Russian and American scholars.

⁶ M. Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la memoire*, Mouton & Paris & La Haye 1976 ; M. Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, ed. L. A. Coser, Chicago 1992.

⁷ P. Nora, *Les lieux de memoire*, Paris, 3 tomes : t. 1 *La République* (1 vol., 1984), t. 2 *La Nation* (3 vol., 1986), t. 3 *Les France* (3 vol., 1992).

⁸ A. Assmann, *Cultural Working Memory: The Canon*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nünning, Berlin, and New York 2008; Assmann J., *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, New York 2011.

⁹ A. Confino, *Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method*, [in:] *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5, December 1997; A. Confino, *History and memory*, [in:] *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 5: Historical Writing Since 1945*, ed. Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf, Oxford 2011.

¹⁰ J. K. Olick, *From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nünning, Berlin, and New York 2008.

¹¹ A. Erll, A. Nünning, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin & New York 2008.

¹² P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 3rd edition, Cambridge (United Kingdom) 2019.

¹³ L. Hunt, *the New Cultural History*, Oakland 1989.

Among the former, top contributors are Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov¹⁴, Svetlana Fedorova¹⁵, Andrei V. Grinev¹⁶, Aleksandr Yu. Petrov¹⁷, and Alexei A. Istomin¹⁸. Among the latter Lidia T. Black¹⁹, Ilya Vinkovetsky²⁰, Richard A. Pierce²¹, and Sergei Kan²².

Chapter three examines the cultural memory of New Archangel in Sitka. One of its elements is material culture. Such places as the site of Old Sitka, Russian Bishop's House, 1804 battle location, St. Michael's Cathedral are the subject of research. A focus is also placed on the indigenous Tlingit perception of the history, including the Russia period. The key figure is chief Katlian, who commanded Tlingit forces in the battle of 1804. He is shown as a counterpart of Aleksandr A. Baranov, the first Chief Manager of Russian American Company. Controversies surrounding the Baranov statue and Baranov Elementary School are researched as well. A separate attention is given to the commemorative practices surrounding Alaska Day – a celebration reminding the Alaska Purchase. Finally, the main institutional memory agents: Sitka National Historical Park and Sitka Historical Society are analyzed.

Chapter four concentrates on Fort Ross. It presents its history and analyses its meaning to various memory groups: in particular Russian Americans in Northern California, but also Native Californians and local residents of Sonoma County, where Fort Ross is located. A separate focus is given on institutional memory agents: Fort Ross State Historical Park and Fort Ross Conservancy.

Lastly, chapter five presents the memory of Russian attempt to colonize the Hawai'ian Island Kaua'i. This is the chapter where Russian factor is the least visible.

¹⁴ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, ed., *Istoriia Russkoi Ameriki, 1732 – 1867*, 3 vols., Moscow 1997–99.

¹⁵ S. Fedorova, *Russkaya Amerika: ot pervykh poseleniy do prodazhi Alyaski. Konets XVIII v. — 1867*, Moscow, 2011.

¹⁶ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741 – 1867*, Lincoln and London 2005; A. V. Grinev, *Russian Colonization of Alaska. Preconditions, Discovery, and Initial Development, 1741-1799*, Lincoln (Nebraska) 2018.

¹⁷ K. N. Owens, A. Yu. Petrov, *Empire Maker. Aleksandr Baranov and Russian Colonial Expansion into Alaska and Northern California*, Seattle, and London 2015; D. L. Black, A. Yu. Petrov, *Natalia Shelikhova: Russian oligarch of Alaska commerce*, Fairbanks 2010.

¹⁸ A. A. Istomin, *Kaliforniyskie ekspeditsii I. A. Kuskova*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow 1999.

¹⁹ L. T. Black, *Russians in Alaska. 1732 – 1867*, Fairbanks 2004.

²⁰ I. Vinkovetsky, *Russian America. An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867*, New York 2011.

²¹ Pierce R. A., *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, Kingston (Ontario) 1990

²² S. Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, Seattle and London 2015.

The focus is made on the Native Hawaiian perspective and their perception of Russian adventure on their island. Similarly to the chapter three, the Kaua'i story features a dichotomy of a local key figure king Kaumuali'i who is confronted by the Russian envoi doctor Georg Anton Schaeffer. Further analyses are dedicated to institutional memory agents: Kaua'i Historical Society, Friends of King Kaumuali'i and Fort Elizabeth initiative.

The time scope of the research covers the period of Russian colonial presence (until 1867) and more than 150 years that followed since. Special attention was given to the various anniversaries: Alaska Purchase centennial in 1967, Battle of 1804 centennial in 1904 and bicentennial in 2004, Fort Ross foundation bicentennial in 2012 and finally – the year 2017 – bicentennial of Russian adventure in Hawai'i and the sesquicentennial of Alaska Purchase. Those dates were full of events and publications that are a very crucial part of this research. The closing date of the analysis is the year 2021. There are two exceptions, however. Since certain critical elements founded its end already in 2022, they were included into this dissertation: the decision to keep the name Baranov Elementary School unchanged was eventually made in April 2022 and the Russian Fort Elizabeth got officially renamed into Pā'ula'ula in June 2022. In this research I continue to use both names “Russian Fort Elizabeth” and “Pā'ula'ula” in order to present it both historically and contemporarily.

The dates presented in this dissertation are according to the Gregorian calendar. Transliteration and romanization of Russian vocabulary, originally in Cyrillic script was done according to the ALA-LC (American Library Association – Library of Congress) standard.

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The work on this dissertation was a great intellectual, academic, and personal journey. It also included several actual journeys to conduct research and field work in the sites covered within the scope of my doctoral thesis. It would not be possible without the help, assistance, and advice of numerous people and institutions. I would like to express my gratitude to them all for the support and kindness I received. It would be hard to list everyone whose help allowed me to complete this work. Nevertheless, I would like to name a few. First and foremost, I would like to thank the faculty of History at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where I had a chance to major in three disciplines: History; Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies; Ethnology & Cultural Anthropology. Although I did not complete the last one, it proved itself extremely useful for this work. The training received in all these fields gave me the skills necessary to complete the task of conducting my doctoral research. I would like to personally thank my academic supervisor Professor Grzegorz Skrukwa, whose guidance allowed me to navigate through this work. Thank to him, my often-chaotic ideas could turn into structured and coherent chapters. I would also like to thank Professor Krzysztof Pietkiewicz, who initially served as my supervisor and Doctor Ivan Peshkov, who inspired me to take up the research subject of Russian Colonization of America. My doctoral work would not be possible without my participation in academic exchanges, fellowships, and summer schools. I started working on this topic during my student exchange program at the Irkutsk State University in Russia – History Department, where I was able to consult my findings with Professor Vadim Shakherov, whom I would like to thank for his openness, inspirational conversations, and big knowledge he was always willing to share.

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Chapter I

Theory and methods

My dissertation is a result of a multidisciplinary research, with main focus on classic history method, the new cultural history and cultural anthropology. The primary theory serving as a base for this research is an emerging interdisciplinary field known as memory studies.

1. Cultural memory

Memory is not an easy concept to study and even to define. “A representation of the past” is a definition one could think of. “Cultural memory” is a concept even harder to study, to define and event to name. The idea of the memory shared by certain group of people has been named variously throughout the last century: “collective memory”, “social memory”, “historical memory”, “communicative” memory and other. In this dissertation I would like to use the name “cultural memory” as introduced by Jan and Aleida Assmann. This term has been adopted by numerous scholars of the field and has been actively used recently²³. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, who edited the first complex interdisciplinary handbook in English, propose to define cultural memory as follows: *the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts*²⁴. Final definition to be established regards the very concept of culture. Especially in relation to memory and in the context of this particular research area. Again, according to Erll and Nünning (basing on anthropological and semiotic theories) *culture can be seen as a three-dimensional framework, comprising social (people, social relations, institutions), material (artifacts and media), and mental aspects (culturally defined ways of thinking, mentalities) (cf. Posner).*

²³ Consider *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nünning, Berlin & New York 2008.

²⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 2.

Understood in this way, “cultural memory” can serve as an umbrella term which comprises “social memory” (the starting point for memory research in the social sciences), “material or medial memory” (the focus of interest in literary and media studies), and “mental or cognitive memory” (the field of expertise in psychology and the neurosciences)²⁵.

2. Study of cultural memory

The study of memory has a very long tradition. It could be traced back to Ancient Greece, with the concept of memory palace.²⁶ The Romans developed the concept and were the first to coin a term of *sites of memory - loci memoriae*. This phrase could be found in the works of Cicero and Quintilian²⁷. The modern academic study of this phenomena dates back to 19th century, with the work of such prominent intellectuals as Friedrich Nietzsche²⁸ and Sigmund Freud²⁹. Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist, is considered to be the father of the first concept for the research of the memory not understood solely as an individual phenomenon of an each individual human being. In 1925, he published the result of his pioneering research *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire (the Social Frameworks of Memory)*³⁰, which is considered by many scholars as a starting point for the development of the field know as *Memory Studies*. Halbwachs argued that the shared mnemonic experience of groups of people does exist. He coined the term *collective memory*, which is very commonly used until today. Halbwachs’ publication sparked a debate in French circles of social scientists, especially that he himself was a student of Émile Durkheim. It’s important to note however, that Halbwachs himself has never published a book that has a collective memory in the title. It wasn’t until 1950 (5 years after his death) when the book titles *La mémoire collective* was published.

²⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 4.

²⁶ J. Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval memories. Studies in the reconstruction of the past*, Cambridge 1995, p. 90.

²⁷ P. Den Boer, *Loci memoriae—Lieux de mémoire*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nünning, Berlin & New York 2008, p. 19.

²⁸ Consider: F. Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, [in:] *Untimely Meditations (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy)*, ed. D. Breazeale, trans. R. Hollingdale, Cambridge (United Kingdom) 1997.

²⁹ S. Freud, *Moses and monotheism*, New York 1959.

³⁰ M. Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la memoire*, Mouton & Paris & La Haye 1976.

For an English-speaking world, it was a German American sociologist Lewis A. Coser, who contributed the most to popularizing the Halbwachs' opus magnum. The 1992 version of Halbwachs' works translated and edited by Coser remains the main reference point. It was titled: *On collective memory*³¹. In general, during the interwar period, the academic debate didn't expand outside of France. Even within, it lost its significance after the World War 2. It wasn't until another renown French scholar, Pierre Nora came up with a concept of the *les lieux de mémoire (the sites of memory)* and published his research findings under the same title (three volumes, published in 1984, 1986 and 1992 accordingly)³². His work was initially published in English under the name *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past*³³. Eventually, the name *sites of memory* prevailed, and this is how it's most commonly referred in English. Nora, a historian, inspired by the Halbwachs' original theory developed a concept, in which he argued for an existence of special *sites of memory* belonging to the collective identity shared by a respected group of people. Those *sites* though, don't necessarily have to constitute actual places. They could also mean moments, events and people that bear a particular significance to that collective identity. Nora focused on nations and discussed what he understood as national identity. Thus, for Pierre Nora, *les lieux de mémoire* are the sites of memory of particular nations.

Ever since, the study of memory has flourished and resulted in numerous publications and debates. What is the relationship between individual and collective remembering, what are those frameworks that Halbwachs described?

One of the most prominent modern scholars of memory Jeffrey K. Olick argues: *But are individual memory, social and cultural frameworks, and collective representations really separate things? The term collective memory—with its sometimes more, sometimes less clear contrast to individual memory—seems to imply just that! But only if we forget that collective memory is merely a broad, sensitizing umbrella, and not a precise operational definition. For upon closer examination, collective memory really refers to a wide variety*

³¹ M. Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, ed. L. A. Coser, Chicago 1992.

³² P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, Gallimard (Bibliothèque illustrée des histoires), Paris, 3 tomes : t. 1 La République (1 vol., 1984), t. 2 La Nation (3 vol., 1986), t. 3 Les France (3 vol., 1992).

³³ P. Nora, *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past*, trans. A. Goldhammer, New York 1996.

of mnemonic products and practices, often quite different from one another. The former (products) include stories, rituals, books, statues, presentations, speeches, images, pictures, records, historical studies, surveys, etc.; the latter (practices) include reminiscence, recall, representation, commemoration, celebration, regret, renunciation, disavowal, denial, rationalization, excuse, acknowledgment, and many others. Mnemonic practices—though occurring in an infinity of contexts and through a shifting multiplicity of media—are always simultaneously individual and social. And no matter how concrete mnemonic products may be, they gain their reality only by being used, interpreted, and reproduced or changed. To focus on collective memory as a variety of products and practices is thus to reframe the antagonism between individualist and collectivist approaches to memory more productively as a matter of moments in a dynamic process. This, to me, is the real message of Halbwachs's diverse insights³⁴.

3. Memory and history

Another theoretical concept attributed to both Halbwachs and Nora is the distinction between memory and history. The former called them *Autobiographical memory and historical memory: their apparent opposition*³⁵. The latter argues: *Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or*

³⁴ J. K. Olick, *From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nuenning, Berlin, and New York 2008, p. 158.

³⁵ M. Halbwachs, *Historical Memory and Collective Memory*, [in:] *The Collective Memory*, New York 1980, p. 50.

*symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism*³⁶.

This analysis strengthens a certain conventional wisdom stating that memory is subjective, emotional, fluid, and scarce, whereas history (understood as an academic discipline) is objective, static, distant from emotions and any forms of external and internal influence. Basically, history is science, and it describes the past *as it actually happened* (originally in German: *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*) – a famous quote from the father of modern historiography, Leopold von Ranke³⁷. This approach has shaped the way historiography is written and history is taught until today. However other interpretations of von Ranke's views on history and history writing emerged as well³⁸.

Throughout the last decades, various historians, but also sociologists, anthropologists, political and literary scientists have questioned this approach, especially within the field of memory studies. Peter Burke, a renown British historian presented a position, considered a moderate one: *The traditional view of the relation between history and memory is a relatively simple one. The historian's function is to be the custodian of the memory of public events which are put down in writing for the benefit of the actors, to give them fame, and also for the benefit of posterity, to learn from their example. (...) This traditional account of the relation between memory and written history, in which memory reflects what actually happened and history reflects memory, now seems much too simple. Both history and memory have come to appear increasingly problematic. Remembering the past and writing about it no longer seem the innocent activities they were once taken to be. Neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases historians are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion. In both cases they are coming to see the process of selection, interpretation and*

³⁶ P. Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, [in:] *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory*, Spring 1989, pp. 8-9.

³⁷ S. Houlgate, M. Baur, *A Companion to Hegel*, New Jersey 2011 p. 334.

³⁸ Consider the debating paper: F. Gilbert, *Historiography. What Ranke meant?* [in:] *The American Scholar*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 393-397 (5 pages).

*distortion as conditioned, or at least influenced, by social groups. It is not the work of individuals alone*³⁹.

Thus, assuming a complete objectivity in history writing is an idealistic goal: wonderful, but unrealistic. Such a belief is shared by Alon Confino, an Israeli cultural historian: *This is a neat distinction—too neat. It derives from Halbwachs’s nineteenthcentury belief in history as a science, and from Nora’s nostalgic view of the past. Scholars now view history and memory differently: they are not sharply divided but related; they converge and commingle, although they are not identical*⁴⁰

Aleida Assmann, a German literary scholar, another classic of memory studies (and, as stated above, a co-creator of the term “cultural memory”) wrote on history and memory: *A third realm of active cultural memory is history. Nation-states produce narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography. National history is taught via history textbooks, which have been appropriately termed “weapons of mass instruction” (Charles Ingrao). National history is also presented in the public arena in the form of monuments and commemoration dates. To participate in a national memory is to know the key events of the nation’s history, to embrace its symbols, and connect to its festive dates*⁴¹. Those symbols, forms of representation became a subject of the study of cultural historians.

4. Cultural history

Such an open, multidimensional approach has become a hallmark of cultural history. The theory within this subfield of history constitutes another pillar of this research. Historiography received a new dimension in 1920s when a group of French historians (particularly Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre) have found an *Annales* school⁴² and

³⁹ P. Burke, *History as Social Memory*, [in:] In: P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, New York 1997, pp. 43-59.

⁴⁰ A. Confino, *History and memory*, [in:] *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 5: Historical Writing Since 1945*, ed. Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf, Oxford (United Kingdom) 2011, pp. 36-52.

⁴¹ A. Assmann, *Cultural Working Memory: The Canon*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nuenning, Berlin, and New York 2008, p. 101.

⁴² See: <http://Annales.ehess.fr/> [access: June 21st, 2022].

postulated new approach in historiography, which would focus more on social aspects rather than political ones.

It gave birth to social history⁴³ – a type of historiography that in second half of 20th century influenced similar approach, focusing on cultural aspect. Cultural history was formed⁴⁴. Due to its subject matter, it naturally coincided with cultural anthropology and cultural studies⁴⁵. Second half of 20th century brought also heated debates within the field of anthropology and brought new approaches there as well. Cultural historians focused on cultural processes and phenomena principally. In terms of methodology, they welcomed primary sources that not always were considered as such so far. This is particularly valid for oral history, as a source of peoples and cultures without writing. Cultural historians included the historical perspective presented in those sources as equally important for their work. In 1960s and 1970s such renown anthropologists as Clifford Geertz started employing cultural historical methods into their work⁴⁶. On the other hand, trained historians like James Clifford started bringing significant contribution into the field of anthropology⁴⁷. The borders between those disciplines were more and more blurry. In the end of 1980s, the rapidly developing field received a name: “new cultural history” and was thoroughly described by one of its representatives, Lynn Hunt⁴⁸.

5. Cultural history and memory

Cultural history and memory studies have developed rapidly throughout the 1990s. Alon Confino posed a question on the methodology within those connected fields. *When*

⁴³ See the legacy of Marc Bloch: E. Weber, *Historiography: About Marc Bloch*, [in:] *The American Scholar*, Vol. 51, No. 1, Winter 1982, pp. 73-82; G. Procacci, *Ritratti Critici di Contemporanei. Marc Bloch*, [in:] *Belfagor*, Vol. 7, No. 6, 30 November 1952, pp. 662-677.

⁴⁴ Consider: P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 3rd edition, Cambridge (United Kingdom) 2019.

⁴⁵ Sharon Macdonald analyzed how history and anthropology has been intertwining. See: *Anthropology and history: towards an entanglement*, [in:] Sh. Macdonald, *Memorylands. Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, London (United Kingdom) and New York (USA) 2013

⁴⁶ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York 1973.

⁴⁷ See especially a groundbreaking publication: J. Clifford, G. E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Oakland (California) 1986.

⁴⁸ L. Hunt, *the New Cultural History*, Oakland (California) 1989.

historians attempt to interpret evidence of memory from a representation of the past, the risk of a circular argumentation through "cultural" reading is high, he wrote⁴⁹.

Confino advocated for more rigorous methodology and usage of theories. Since then, the methodology is even broader and numerous scholars (Confino included) agree that there is no one *proper* way of working with history and memory. Numerous scholars from numerous countries were contributing to the debate related to the methodology within history. Such Polish historians as Wojciech Wrzosek⁵⁰ and Ewa Domańska⁵¹ could be mentioned. A huge contribution to memory studies was made by such scholars as Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba with their monumental work *Modi Memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*⁵².

6. Methods

This dissertation is based on the research methodologies commonly used in two theories described above: cultural history and memory studies. It employs history methods: traditional archival work: I went through the Archive of the Fort Ross Conservancy, Archive of the Kauai Historical Society, Archive of the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco, Archive of the Sitka Historical Society, Archive of the Sitka National Historical Park, and the UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library. Since most of them are not fully professional public archives (they are run either by non-profit organizations or historical parks) the system of archival classification is basic and thus proves itself challenging when it comes to making academic references in this dissertation. I also worked on published primary sources (historical records of Russian American Company, diaries, memoirs, letters, reports, etc.), oral history (mostly Tlingit oral tradition, which is available as edited publications thanks to the work of a few scholars, particularly Lydia T. Black, Frederica de Laguna, Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer) and the reconstruction of

⁴⁹ A. Confino, *Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method*, [in:] *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5, December 1997, p. 1397.

⁵⁰ See: W. Wrzosek, *History – Culture – Metaphor. The facets of non-Classical Historiography*, trans. P. Znaniecki, Poznań 1997. Also: W. Wrzosek, *O myśleniu historycznym*, Bydgoszcz 2009.

⁵¹ E. Domańska, *Dekonstruktywistyczne podejście do przeszłości*, [in:] *Historyka*, vol. 50, 2020, pp. 131-155.

⁵² M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, *Modi Memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Warsaw 2014.

the events with the help of secondary historiographic literature. Moreover, the dissertation is based on anthropological methods: ethnography, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I interviewed 10 persons: Hank Birnbaum (an employee of Fort Ross Conservancy), Anna Dittmar (an associate of St. Michael's Cathedral in Sitka, of Russian descent), Nicole Fiorino (a curator at Sitka History Museum), Tommy Joseph (A Tlingit artist), Ramona Kincaid (a librarian at Kaua'i Historical Society), Chuck Miller (Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Culture and Community Liaison II), Mary A. Miller (Superintendent at the Sitka National Historical Park), Kaylee Pinola (a member of the Kashia Band, an anthropologist and a Park Interpretive Specialist at California State Parks), Pua Rossi (a researcher in Anthropology and Hawaiian Studies from Kauai Community College/University of Hawai'i), and Hal Spackman (the Executive Director of Sitka History Museum). Each of them represents a different perspective and one way or another is connected to the subject matter. Either through their personal or professional connection. Finally, the method within the field of memory studies is based on the analysis of various forms of media representation (monuments, exhibitions, commemorative events, popular literature, and journalistic work), and memory agents (local and national institutions and organizations, social movements, informal groups).

7. Historiography

The study of Russian America has been an academic interest of mostly Soviet/Russian as well as American scholars. The most renown among the former in the Soviet times were Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov⁵³, an editor of the colossal, 3-volume-long historical work on the subject matter and Svetlana Fedorova⁵⁴, one of the first Soviet historians to conduct archival work in the US. Although calling their contribution extremely crucial would be an understatement, certain parts of the narrative present in their work is influenced by the ideology present in the social sciences in Soviet times. Therefore, major credits need to

⁵³ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, ed., *Istoriia Russkoi Ameriki, 1732 – 1867*, 3 vols., Moscow 1997–99.

⁵⁴ S. Fedorova, *Russkaya Amerika: ot pervykh poseleniy do prodazhi Alyaski. Konets XVIII v. — 1867*, Moscow 2011.

be given to one of the most prolific Russian authors in recent years – Andrei V. Grinev⁵⁵, whose remarkable work is published in both English and Russian. American academic contribution could be seen in various dimensions. Lydia T. Black⁵⁶ and Sergei Kan⁵⁷ were particularly crucial to the study of Native Alaskan aspect of Russian colonization. The former put an emphasis on the Native Alaskan part of the Russian colonial presence there whereas the latter is one of the greatest contributors to the research of the Tlingit culture. In recent years, Ilya Vinkovetsky published an important synthesis of the Russian colony in Alaska⁵⁸. Several scholars brought enormous achievements to the regional aspects of the colonization, whose impact cannot be overestimated. Richard A. Pierce founded his own publishing house to translate into English, edit and publish various primary sources⁵⁹ as well as his own works on the topic, including the extremely valuable biographical dictionary⁶⁰. He also published an important work on the Hawaiian chapter of Russian colonization⁶¹, which was eventually critically evaluated by the most prominent scholar of Hawaiian-Russian relations, Peter R. Mills⁶². Finally, a lot is known about the Russian presence in California thanks to the recent work of Glenn Farris⁶³.

⁵⁵ See for example: A. V. Grinev, *Russian Colonization of Alaska. Preconditions, Discovery, and Initial Development, 1741-1799*, Lincoln (Nebraska) 2018.

⁵⁶ L. T. Black, *Russians in Alaska. 1732 – 1867*, Fairbanks 2004.

⁵⁷ S. Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, Seattle 2015.

⁵⁸ I. Vinkovetsky, *Russian America. An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867*, New York 2011.

⁵⁹ See: K. Khlebnikov, *Baranov: Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America*, ed. R. A. Pierce, Kingston (Ontario) 1973 or F. P. Wrangell, *Russian America. Statistical and Ethnographic Information*, trans. from the German edition of 1839 by Mary Sadowski, ed. Richard A. Pierce, Kingston (Ontario) 1980.

⁶⁰ R. A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, Kingston (Ontario) 1990.

⁶¹ R. A. Pierce, *Russia's Hawaiian Adventure, 1815-1817*, Kingston (Ontario) 1976.

⁶² P. R. Mills, *Hawai'i's Russian Adventure. A New Look at Old History*, Honolulu 2018.

⁶³ G. I. Farris, *So Far From Home. Russians in Early California*, ed., Fort Ross Conservancy 2019.

Chapter 2

Russian colonization of America – the historical background

1. Introduction

Russian America is a general term describing the Russian possessions in North America. The very name poses a challenge for a researcher. Such an exact phrase: *Russian America* (in Russian: Русская\Российская Америка – Russkaya/Rossiiskaya Amerika) was not used in Russian until 1860 and in official documents was not applied at all throughout its existence⁶⁴. The names that were actually used were: *Russian-American settlements*, *Russian colonies in America*, *Russian North American colonies*, etc.⁶⁵ The word *America* was introduced to the Russian language in 18th century⁶⁶. The name *Alaska* existed initially in Russian sources - till the end of 18th century. It disappeared following the foundation of Russian American Company (RAC) in 1799⁶⁷. When describing Russian possessions in America the English name *Alaska* was not commonly used by Native English speakers from the United States, Great Britain and Canada either. Senator Charles Sumner is credited with starting using this name to describe new land purchased by the US in 1867⁶⁸. The treaty signed between the US and Russia was written in English and French. English version of the document defined the subject matter as follows: *Treaty concerning the Cession of the Russian Possessions in North America by his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias to the United States of America*⁶⁹.

Russian America was not an entity incorporated into the administrative system of Russian Empire. It did not have an official governor, although such a name is commonly attributed

⁶⁴ S. Fedorova, *Russkaya Amerika: ot pervykh poselenij do prodazhi Alyaski. Konets XVIII v. — 1867*, p. 8.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁶⁶ V. N. Burlak, *Russkaya Amerika*, Moscow 2009, p. 13.

⁶⁷ S. Fedorova, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ S. W. Haycox, *Alaska. An American Colony*, Washington D.C. 2020, p. 176.

⁶⁹ *Treaty with Russia. March 30, 1867*, [in:] *Statuses at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations, of the United States of America. From December 1867 to March 1869*, ed. G. P. Sanger, Boston 1869, Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774 – 1875*, pp. 539 – 544.

to the Chief Managers (Russian: *Главный Правитель / Glavnyy Pravitel'*⁷⁰) of RAC. In particular to the first one Alexander Andreyevich Baranov. Therefore, it is important to note that the accurate name of the position is: Chief Manager⁷¹, not the governor. Chief Manager was hired by RAC and acting on their behalf. The colony formally belonged to RAC, which initially was a private enterprise, although supported by the tsar under the charter issued as an *ukase* by tsar Paul I⁷². This situation changed in 1821 when the new charter was issued by tsar Alexander I⁷³. RAC became a state enterprise. Nevertheless, it still operated as a separate entity. Ilya Vinkovetsky argues that the best description of its role is to call RAC a contractor of the imperial government in St. Petersburg⁷⁴, Therefore, the charters should be understood as contracts between the tsar and the company.

Another aspect requiring clarification is the geographic scope of the territories. Russian America clearly did not consist of lands which constitute current US State of Alaska. In fact, Russian possessions were limited to what is considered today Southeast Alaska as well as Kodiak Island and Aleutian Islands⁷⁵. Officially, the geographical boundaries of Russian America were set in the 1821 second charter of RAC and finally determined in 1825, when the treaty between England and Russia was signed. The agreed boundaries were: 54° 40' N latitude to the 141st meridian⁷⁶. See more on Russian America's borders in the section *Russian America in the new international environment* within this chapter. Therefore, the territories that Russians sold to the Americans in 1867 consisted of merely small part of current state of Alaska. This is an issue currently raised by the Tlingit - indigenous inhabitants of Southeast Alaska. It is more broadly discussed in the chapter 3 *Who had and has a right to Alaska? Sheetka – New Archangel – Sitka*.

⁷⁰ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *Deyatel'nost' Rossiysko-amerikanskoy kompanii 1799 - 1825*, [in:] *Istoriia russkoy ameriki 1732 - 1867*, t.2, Deyatel'nost' Rossiisko-amerikanskoi kompanii 1799 – 1825, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow 1999, p. 5.

⁷¹ L. T. Black, *Russians in Alaska. 1732 – 1867*, Fairbanks (Alaska) 2004, p. 122.

⁷² Archive of Museum of Russian Culture, San Francisco, List of Documents of the Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire on the Russian Presence in California and the history of the Ross Fortified Settlement (1806-1843), *Letter of Emperor Paul I concerning the establishment of the Russian-American Company, the protection over the Company and the granting of privileges to it for the period of 20 years*, December 27, 1799.

⁷³ *Imperatorskiy ukaz 1821 goda*, [in:] *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii*, Tekst ukaza 1821 goda, No 28747, t. 37, p. 903.

⁷⁴ I. Vinkovetsky, *Russian America. An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867*, New York 2011, p. 66.

⁷⁵ To learn more on Russian possessions in Alaska see: A. Postnikov, M. Falk, *Exploring and Mapping Alaska. The Russian America Era, 1741-1867*, Fairbanks 2015.

⁷⁶ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 198

Finally, it is important to determine the number as well as ethnic and cultural structure of Russian settlers in the American colonies. The number of settlers who came from mainland Russia was around few hundred. Captain-Lieutenant Golovin was sent by Navy Ministry (together with Active State Councilor S. A. Kostlivtsev, who was sent by the Finance Ministry) in 1860 to examine the American colonies in order to determine its condition and make judgement whether it was still worth keeping the colony⁷⁷. Golovin and Kostlivtsev conducted a survey and prepared a full report, which was published two years later. Golovin noted that in 1860 the *Russian* population in of the colonies consisted of 595 settlers (529 men and 66 women)⁷⁸. They were an absolute minority within the colonial premises. According to N. N. Bolkhovitinov, the relation between the indigenous population and Russian settlers was around 20 to 1⁷⁹. That depended on the exact time. For example, in 1833 Ferdinand von Wrangel, the Chief Manager of Russian American Company compiled a report on the colony's population. According to this report, the entire population was 10,659 persons. Among them, there were 652 *Europeans*⁸⁰. Both parties, the indigenous population and Russian settlers were quite diverse internally as well. New Archangel had the highest number of settlers. According to Wrangell's census – 847, out of which – 406 *Europeans*⁸¹. As we can see, the capital did not reflect the huge disproportion. However, it needs to be taken into consideration, that most of the indigenous peoples lived outside the premises of the settlement. The indigenous population consisted not only of the various clans of Tlingit, who were native to that territory, but also various ethnic groups from Aleut and Kodiak islands, which were not distinguished by Wrangell⁸². The latter groups were brought by Russians from their islands.

The Russian part did not consist of ethnic Russians only either. It is interesting to note that, although Golovin calls the party *Russian*, Wrangell uses other term – *Europeans*.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 436.

⁷⁸ P. N. Golovin, *Obzor russkikh kolony v Severnoi Amerike. Iz Morskogo Sbornika*, no. 1, St. Petersburg 1862, p. 18.

⁷⁹ A. V. Grinev, *Russkie Kolonii na Alyaske na rubezhe XIX veka*, [in:] *Istoriia russkoy ameriki 1732 - 1867*, t. 2, *Deyatelnost' Rossiisko-amerikanskoi kompanii 1799 – 1825*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow 1999, p. 25.

⁸⁰ F. P. Wrangell, *Russian America. Statistical and Ethnographic Information*, trans. from the German edition of 1839 by Mary Sadouski, ed. Richard A. Pierce, Kingston (Ontario) 1980, pp. 4-5.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.

⁸² He put them all together, listing 134 Aleuts and Kodiaks in total in New Archangel: *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.

That could be attributed to the fact that Wrangell was not ethnically Russian himself and understood those nuances better. Therefore, among Russian settlers were many Baltic Germans (such as Wrangell), Finns, Ukrainians, indigenous peoples of Siberia and few others. There was also a special, third group: Creole – the offspring of Russian men and indigenous women, who had a special status in the colony. This aspect is further analyzed in the section *the new capital* within this chapter.

2. The very beginnings

With this basic introduction to the topic, the further historical background could be discussed. Russian colonization eastward dates back to mid-16th century, when Ivan the Terrible granted the Stroganov family permission to conquer the territories of Siberia belonging back then to Tatars (Khanate of Sibir)⁸³. Conquests followed throughout the next century and by 1647, Russians reached the western borders of the Pacific Ocean– the Sea of Okhotsk⁸⁴. This achievement laid the ground for the first expeditions across the ocean. Throughout the 18th century several of them were organized. The most recognizable ones were commanded by a Danish sailor, Vitus Bering, whose achievements were of highest significance, as he proved the idea of Asia and America being connected by land to be false. Despite the scope of the missions, however, no permanent settlements on the American soil were established at the time. Nevertheless, the two Bering expeditions (1728 and 1741) had an important influence on geographical, economical, but also social and political aspects of Russia's further development eastwards⁸⁵. Both expeditions largely depended on supplies provided by the indigenous peoples of Kamchatka (Itelmens, also known as Kamchadals). The demands imposed on them resulted in an uprising that started in 1741 and lasted through 1742⁸⁶. The rebellion

⁸³ R. Bartlett, *Historia Rosji*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 75-76.

⁸⁴ Yu. G. Akimov, *Severnaya Amerika i Sibir v kontse 16 – seredine 17 v. Ocherk sravnitel'noy istorii kolonizatsii*, Sankt Petersburg 2010, p. 33.

⁸⁵ Allen C. Lynch did the analysis of Russian political development, including social and economic aspects in comparison with other superpowers. For 18th and 19th century see the chapter: *Historical Patterns of Russian Development* [in:] A. C. Lynch, *How Russia Is Not Ruled. Reflections on Russian Political Development*, Cambridge (United Kingdom) 2005.

⁸⁶ I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, New York 2011, p. 31.

was quashed and the exploitation of the indigenous peoples in this capacity continued throughout the entire history of Russian expansion to the America. It is important to note that a large part of Russian sailors and settlers in the new colony was in fact of non-Russian ethnic background. Among them, many indigenous of Siberia, Far East and Far North were to be found. A substantial number of those settlers was also of a mixed (Russian and Native) background. Therefore, in time, sometimes those ethnic diversities were hard to spot, especially given the fact that most of those people held Russian names.

Ethnic Russian settlers also constituted of a particular type of people. Given the fact that serfdom, a curse of the European part of the empire, never actually functioned in Siberia, the Far East and the North⁸⁷, many resourceful settlers moved eastwards and established new towns. By doing so they were creating an estate of merchants, sailors, traders, and burghers. They became to be known as *promyshlenniki* (which could be translated as *entrepreneurial traders* or *industrialists*. Russian word *промысел/Promysel* means *industry*)⁸⁸. This name is most commonly used in scholarship, and I'll be following this trend by using it further on. The high influence of the indigenous peoples from Russian Empire's Asian resulted on the *promyshlenniki* resulted in an interesting phenomenon. After having settled down in North America, various Russian settlers found it easy to adapt to local conditions of life, and some of them integrated with local indigenous population beyond their own expectations as well as contemporaries. George Vancouver, a British explorer, and officer, who travelled around Alaska in the late 18th century, left an account describing the relations between Russian settlers and local indigenous tribes of Kodiak Island. In 1790 he noted:

(...) Russians had been at this station nearly four years, yet there was not the least appearance of cultivation, although in the summer season the soil most probably was capable of producing many useful artefacts of food. This, however, seemed to be of little moment to the European residents [Russians], as they appeared to be perfectly content to live after the manner of the Native Indians of the country; partaking with equal relish and

⁸⁷ D. Moon, *Peasants and agriculture*, [in:] *the Cambridge History of Russia*, v. II, *Imperial Russia. 1689 – 1917*, ed. Dominic Lieven, Cambridge (United Kingdom) 2006, p. 371.

⁸⁸ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *predislovie*, [in:] *Istoriya Russkoy Ameriki 1732 – 1867*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow 1997, p. 5.

*appetite their gros and nauseous food, adopting the same fashion, and using the same materials for their apparel, and differing from them in their exterior appearance only by the want of paint on their faces, and by their not wearing any of the Indian ornaments. So far as any conclusion could be drawn from this short interview, the Russians seemed to live upon the most intimate terms of friendship with the Indians of all descriptions, who appeared to be perfectly satisfied in being subjected to the Russian authority*⁸⁹.

This account sheds a light not only on a close proximity of Russian-Native American cultural relations but also provides a context of the power relations and a social structure of the colonies. This aspect will be more thoroughly covered in further sections of this research.

3. The development of the Russian fur trade

At the end of the 18th century, major social changes were taking place in Russia. Catherine II's rule changed the nature of the state. Mercantilist thinking was born, the townspeople (*meshchane*)⁹⁰ were more and more willing to expand their trading activities⁹¹. Serfdom was still considered a substantial drawback within Russian social life though⁹². Most of the population lived in precarious conditions, which was subjected to popular public criticism. However, those few places in the empire worked differently. Expeditions eastwards were organized by traders from Moscow, Kursk, Yaroslav, Tobolsk, Irkutsk, Yakutsk and Kamchatka⁹³. The particular role in the early days of Russian colonization of America was played the merchants from Irkutsk⁹⁴ In 1781, all companies taken together

⁸⁹ G. Vancouver, *A voyage of discovery to the North Pacific Ocean...* Vol. 3, London 1798, p. 122-123.

⁹⁰ V.V. Shilkina, V.A. Fedorov, "Meshchane," [in:] V.L. Ianin et al., eds., *Otechestvennaia Istorii, Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 3, Moscow, 2000, p. 570.

⁹¹ R. V. Makarova, *Russkie na tikhom okeane vo vtoroy polovine XVIII v.*, Moscow 1968, p. 96.

⁹² N. V. Riasanovski, M. D. Steinberg, *History of Russia*, sixth edition, Oxford 2000, pp. 292-294.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

⁹⁴ On Irkutsk see especially the works of Vadim P. Shakhrov: V. P. Shakhrov, *Irkutsk – kolybel Russkoi Ameriki*, [in:] *Sibir i Russkaya Amerika. Materiali vsrossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferencii*, Irkutsk 2012, pp. 102-109; V. P. Shakhrov, *Irkutsk kupecheskii*, Khabarovsk (Russia) 2006; V. P. Shakhrov, *The Role of Irkutsk Merchants in the Trade Hunting of the Pacific Ocean and Alaska*, [in:] *Over the Near Horizon. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, ed. J. Dusty Kidd, Sitka (Alaska) 2013, pp. 203-204, but also: E. W. Emelyanova, *Irkutyanie – uchastniki morskikh voyazhei k beregam Russkoy Ameriki peryoda s 1777 po 1794 god*, [in:] *Sibir i Russkaya Amerika. Materyali vsrossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferencii*, Irkutsk 2012, pp. 110-112.

collected fur coats of a total value of over 300,000 rubles⁹⁵. In the 1770s one of the most active merchants was Grigory Shelikhov⁹⁶, a member of a rich, merchant family. Having received a home education, he worked as an assistant to the merchant Ivan Larionovich Golikov in Rylysk⁹⁷. During the plague epidemic in 1770 he lost his mother and younger brother. He traded in the Kuril Islands together with another promyshlennik - Pavel Sergeevich Lebedev-Lastochkin⁹⁸. Shelikhov, accompanied by a fellow merchant Ivan Larionovich Golikov founded his own fur trade company in 1781 – the Golikov-Shelikhov Company⁹⁹. The other significant promyshlenniki of that period (besides Golikov, Lebedev-Lastochkin and Shelikhov) were Alexander Andreyevich Baranov and Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, who later became key figures in the Russian colonization of America. In 1773 Shelikhov left for Irkutsk and in 1774 he became a shareholder in eight different companies. Marriage (1775) with a girl with a considerable dowry strengthened his financial position. In 1776-83 he already became a shareholder in 10 commercial enterprises. Analysis of the statistics of hunting ships that were lost led him to the concept of the need to create a large state-trade company. With commercial and industrial plans in mind, Grigory Shelikhov undertook two expeditions to Okhotsk in 1775 and 1778-79. In 1783, Shelikhov and Golikov started their expedition to America¹⁰⁰. They visited Bering Island, where they spent a harsh winter. The following year they sailed further and got to one of the Aleutian Islands, Unalaska, where Shelikhov undertook the task of counting the number of all the islands of this archipelago. He was the first to correctly present the real length (2600 km) of the distance between the Commander Islands and the Aleutian Islands. Then Shelikhov reached the Kodiak Island, where he founded a settlement (1784), which became a center of Russian America for over 20 years.

⁹⁵ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *Osnovanie russkoy ameriki 1732 – 1799*, [in:] *Istoriya Russkoy Ameriki 1732 – 1867*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, v. 1, Moscow 1997, p. 116.

⁹⁶ There are several variations of the spelling of his name: *Shelikhov*, *Shelekhov* and *Shelekhof*. The last one is an archaic one, and the first one is the most commonly used. I will also use the version *Shelikhov* in this dissertation.

⁹⁷ S. W. Haycox, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁹⁸ D. L. Black, A. Yu. Petrov, *Natalia Shelikhova: Russian oligarch of Alaska commerce*, Fairbanks 2010, p. 17.

⁹⁹ I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ Shelikhov kept his journal during the voyages. See: G. I Shelikhov, *The voyage of Gregory Shelekhof a Russian merchant, from Okhotzk, on the eastern ocean, to the coast of America, in the years 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, and his return to Russia, from his own journal*, Ottawa 1984.

Additional settlements followed through 1785 and 1786¹⁰¹ marking the official beginning of Russian permanent presence in North America. Foundation of the Three Saints Bay settlement on Kodiak Island was a turning point for another reason as well. It was possible only after the Shelikhov party took control over the island. Initially they tried to negotiate surrender with the local Alutiiq population. Once the negotiations failed, Shelikhov launched an attack, and the 192 men-strong troop orchestrated a massacre. In its aftermath, several hundred were killed – men, women, and children. Many more, were taken hostages. This event became known as the Awa'uq Massacre or Refuge Rock Massacre¹⁰². Russians suffered no casualties. This bloodbath paved a path for further development of Russian America.

Such long-distance expeditions, especially in harsh conditions, were a novelty for Russian sailors and shipbuilders. Many of them were only beginning to learn how to construct proper vessels and how to sail in such conditions. Hubert Howe Bancroft, one of the main chroniclers of Northwest Pacific, noted in 1884: *The Russian craft were small, hastily constructed by men who knew but little of their task, and were often [the craft] mere boxes of planks held together by leathern thongs, without iron. They were in every way inferior to the worst vessels employed by navigators of other nations in any art of America. In these frail boats, poorly supplied with food, generally without remedies against scurvy, these bold sailors did not hesitate to commit themselves to the icy waves and furious gales of the Arctic seas. Rarely was an expedition unattended by shipwreck and starvation; but sea-otter was plentiful*¹⁰³.

Bancroft is famous for authoring some among the first compilations of the histories of Alaska, California, Oregon and Washington. His account indicates how dangerous and risky this activity was. Nevertheless, Russian *promyshlenniki* continued to explore the lands eastward and seek further opportunities there.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

¹⁰² See more on it: S. Dickson, S. Haakanson, R. Knecht, *Awa'uq: discovery and excavation of an 18th century Alutiiq refuge rock in the Kodiak Archipelago*, [in:] *To the Aleutians and beyond: the anthropology of William S. Laughlin*, ed. Bruno Frohlich, Albert B. Harper, and Rolf Gilberg, National Museum Ethnographical Series, no. 20, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen 2002

¹⁰³ H. H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 1. 1543-1800, San Francisco 1884, p. 30-31.

In 1788 two navigators from Okhotsk, Dmitry Ivanovich Bocharov and Gierasim Grigorevich Izmailov, clerks of Shelikhov's company, discovered (it was in fact a partial rediscovery, after A. Chirikov and J. Cook) about 800 km of the northern continental shore of the Bay of Alaska, from the Kenai Peninsula to the Lituya Bay, including the Yakutat Bay¹⁰⁴. The materials collected by Shelikhov and his assistants allowed him to create the first detailed ethnographic characteristics of Kodiak Eskimos, as well as Alaskan Indians and coastal islands.

Shelikhov's party consisted of 3 ships and 192 men.¹⁰⁵ Those settlements remained as a main headquarters for all trade initiatives. Soon after the economic outpost was established, a spiritual one followed. In 1793, the empress Catherine II issued an *ukase* stating that the mission of the Orthodox Church to the new colony was to be founded. Ten monks left Russia and arrived on Kodiak in the following year.¹⁰⁶ The mission developed throughout Alaska alongside the development of the Russian presence on the new continent. Shelikhov dreamed of becoming the sole operator in all trade activities in the new land. Already in 1788, he and Golikov submitted a petition to empress Catherine II, asking her to grant them a monopoly on activities in Alaska. It is said that the empress laughed at their proposal¹⁰⁷.

Shelikhov died in 1795, having made a huge contribution to the development of Russian trade in Alaska. His business was taken over by his wife Natalia. In 1799, the Russian-American Trade Company (known as RAC – Russian American Company) was founded as a result of the *ukase* of Catherine's successor Tsar Paul I. Its headquarters were initially located in Irkutsk (where its founders lived). However, a year later the headquarters were relocated to the capital, St. Petersburg¹⁰⁸. This decision was informed by several factors. First, Natalia Shelikhov and her family wanted to limit the influence of other local

¹⁰⁴ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, Fairbanks 2004, p. 113.

¹⁰⁵ S. Fedorova, *op. cit.*, Moscow, 2011, p. 76.

¹⁰⁶ T. Voronina, *Ot Valaama do Alyaski. K 200-letiyu pravoslaviya v Russkoy Amerike*, [in:] *Russkaya Amerika*, v. 2/3, Vologda (Russia) 1993, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *predislovie*, [in:] *Istoriya Russkoy Ameriki 1732 – 1867*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow 1997, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Ukaz Pavla I Senatu o perevode Glavnogo upravleniya RAK iz Irkutsk v S.-Peterburg, 19 oktyabrya 1800, Polnoye Sobranie Zakonov Rossiyskoy Imperii*, [in:] *Rossiysko-Amerikanskaya Kompaniya i izuchenye tikhookeanskogo severa 1799 – 1815. Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. A. I. Alekseev, N. N. Bolkhovitinov, T. S. Fedorova, Moscow 1994, p. 25.

shareholders on the company. Since those shareholders were not able to move to St. Petersburg themselves, their ability to take an active part in running the company would be vastly limited. Second, bringing the company close to the court would make it easier for the Shelikhovs to lobby for their cause among the aristocrats and royal family. Third, such new location would allow them to attract more state investments.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the RAC entered its new chapter in 1800, which among others resulted in the company being more closely controlled by the state. It also gained a monopoly on operations in Alaska, which ended the era of individual merchant and promyshlenniki expeditions. Alexander Baranov (who has been serving as a manager in the company since 1790¹¹⁰) became the Chief Manager and a key figure of the development of Russian colonization of America for almost two decades (his mission ended in 1818).

4. The Baranov's era

Alexander Baranov was born in 1746 in Kargopol, a small town in the Russian north. He moved to Irkutsk in 1780 and was involved in various businesses¹¹¹. Ten years later, Baranov was appointed as a manager of Shelikhov's company and sent to Alaska to supervise the activities of the fur trade there. Upon his arrival, Baranov was entitled to hire his own assistants. Ivan Kuskov, a townsman from Tot'ma (also in the Russian north), who moved to Irkutsk in 1787 and got acquainted with Baranov, became one of them. The cooperation between Baranov and Kuskov developed and the latter became his closest associate, holding a position of senior assistant. Eventually, Kuskov was sent by Baranov to establish a new outpost of the Russian Empire. He sailed to California with a group of settlers and founded Fort Ross in 1812. Kuskov became the first commander of the newly established colony.

Throughout 28 years of his presence in Alaska (1790 - 1818), Alexander Baranov earned himself quite a reputation and still today remains as one of the main symbols of Russian

¹⁰⁹ I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, p. 59-60.

¹¹⁰ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

presence in Alaska. Barret Willoughby, one of the most popular writers of the interwar period and an Alaska native, described him in her 1930 novel *Sitka: a Portal to Romance* in a following manner:

This strange and peerless commander, the greatest pioneer Alaska has even known, was in truth both 'a candle to God, and a poker to the Devil.' He was a Napoleon of the wilderness who colored the pages of Alaska's history with such deeds of unflinching courage, such victories over apparently insuperable obstacles, such triumphs of boldness and strategy, that they read like a fascinating epic. With his own sword he defended himself against his personal enemies. If he used the knout on lawbreakers, it must be remembered that the whipping post was at that time vogue in New England. He could labor with hammer and saw to build a shed for his cow, yet he himself was waited upon hand and foot by his turbaned East India servant. He had a passion for music and a love of reading, but he had also a genius for barter and trade that has never been since seen equaled. Master of wassail and song, Baranov could drink under the table any captain of the Seven Seas who visited him, yet he never permitted his beautiful half-breed daughter to see him under the influence of liquor¹¹².

Willoughby's popular, romanticized account reflects the legends circulating around Baranov among some local citizens of Alaska. The author herself grew up there in first decades of 20th century, and she was therefore able to listen to stories of people who still remembered the times of Russian rule over Alaska.

One of the main chroniclers of Russian America was Kirill Khlebnikov. He worked for RAK since 1801 in various places in various capacities. Since 1817, he has worked in New Archangel as a director the company's office for 15 years¹¹³. Therefore, he eye-witnessed the development of Russian colony in America, which he described in his survey of 1833. According to Khlebnikov Baranov received a good offer from Shelikhov, because the latter needed a "worthy and capable man"¹¹⁴. The contract entitled Baranov

¹¹² Willoughby B., *Sitka. Portal to romance*, Boston and New York 1930.

¹¹³ J. R. Gibson, *Russian America in 1833: The Survey of Kirill Khlebnikov*, [in:] *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1, January 1972, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ K. Khlebnikov, *Baranov: Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America*, ed. R. A. Pierce, Kingston (Ontario) 1973, p. 1.

to hold 210 shares in the RAC (with annual dividends paid to him in money, not in furs), numerous benefits, responsibility solely to Shelikhov and the privilege to control the trade with any foreigner operating there¹¹⁵. The latter proved in time to be a real challenge for Baranov. Since the claim to some lands was still disputed, various sailors and frontiersmen attempted to conduct trade with Indigenous peoples on their own. Another chronicler of that era, Petr Alexandrovich Tikhmenev noted in his first publication that Baranov had struggled in 1800 with American and British sailors, who insisted on trading with the indigenous peoples without Russians as middlemen¹¹⁶. Tikhmenev was a Captain 1st rank, a member of the Navy, who authored the first comprehensive study of the Russian America's history.

The new Chief Manager had difficulty adapting to the new situation. The land was severe and inhospitable, and the conditions of life were harsh in general. Baranov had to establish and maintain peaceful relations with indigenous Alaskans, making sure at the same time that the endeavor conducted there was profitable. What is more, even the relations with some of his own fellow settlers proved to be demanding. The main core of his subjects consisted of former serfs and townsmen. Around 150 of them came with Baranov upon his arrival¹¹⁷. Moreover, some of the Russians, who came to develop new colony were recruited from the Russian Navy. Those men were often proud soldiers, who sometimes also had earned a relatively high rank. Receiving orders from a civilian and a merchant of a relatively low rank was beneath their honor¹¹⁸.

Having learned that Shelikhov's headquarters at Three Saints Bay were no longer in a good shape to serve as such, Baranov decided to found a new capital. Three Saints Bay were partly destroyed by an earthquake and tsunami. In 1792 Baranov established a new settlement on Kodiak Island, which he named after the Crown Prince (and future tsar) Paul – *Paul's Harbor* (Pavlovskaya Gavan / Павловская гавань)¹¹⁹. This town remained a

¹¹⁵ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, 122.

¹¹⁶ P. A. Tikhmenev, *Istoricheskoe obozrenie obrazovaniia Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii i deistvii eia do nastoiashchego vremeni*, v. I, St. Petersburg 1861, p. 83.

¹¹⁷ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹¹⁸ Ch. Manning, *Russian influence on early America*, New York 1953, p. 42.

¹¹⁹ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

main settlement till 1808, when the capital was moved to New Archangel (Sitka) and remained the second biggest town of Russian America until its sale in 1867.

5. Russians and the Indigenous peoples

First Russian interactions with the indigenous population of North America took place during the voyages and conquests of second half of 18th century. Although Bering's crew members reported spotting people at shores during the Great Northern Expedition, no contact was made. As was mentioned before, capture of Kodiak Island in 1784 was the turning point in Russian colonial activity in America. The Awa'uq Massacre remained as a significant and most importantly, fateful event in the cultural memory of the Alutiiq (Sugpiaq in their own language) people¹²⁰. It is considered a turning point as ever since, the population decreased, and their lives have changed irreversibly. A huge toll that resulted from the massacre has an understandingly strong reflection today as well¹²¹. Its memory was transmitted from one generation to another¹²².

Another turning point in Russian interactions with indigenous population was the foundation of New Archangel. It was established in 1799 as Fort Saint Michael (Форт Архангела Михаила)¹²³. The settlement was located on a bigger island (now known as Baranof Island), much closer to the mainland of the American continent. This territorial development took Russians to a new level of colonial conquest. Khlebnikov pointed out the economic potential of the new settlement:

Baranov decided to establish the main office here. Even earlier he had brought to the attention of the Governing Board of the Company the fact that the advantages of this location would bring much profit to the Empire. Consider the fact that English and American vessels had been putting in here for ten years, six to ten times per year, to trade

¹²⁰ See more on the Aleutiiq: A. L. Crowell (2001), *Looking Both Ways, Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People*, Fairbanks 2001.

¹²¹ Consider: Unknown author, *The Afognak Alutiiq People Our History & Culture*, "Afognak Alutiiq History", May 2012.

¹²² Marianne Hirsch coined a term: *postmemory* to describe this phenomenon. See more: M. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York 2012.

¹²³ C. L. Andrews, *The story of Sitka. The historic outpost or the Northwest Coast. The chief factory of the Russian American Company*, Seattle 1922, p. 18.

for 2,000 to 3,000 pelts in various places. An average for the six vessels might be considered to be 2,000 pelts. One must thus conclude that some 12,000 pelts were being taken out each year. Even if that figure were reduced to 10,000, it is apparent that over a period of ten years, some 100,000 pelts were exported. These sold for 30 piastres or 45 rubles apiece in Kamchatka; thus, the revenue was 4,500,000 rubles. If the cost of procuring the pelts was 1,500,000 rubles, then the net profit over the ten-year period would be 3,000,000 rubles¹²⁴.

Eventually, as the history will show, the colony turned out to be not as profitable as expected. The disappearing number of sea otters came among many other reasons.

Upon arrival to New Archangel, the party of settlers consisting of Russians and Aleuts encountered a different indigenous population there – the Tlingit (referred to by Russians as *Koloshi* or sometimes even *Galoshi*). This encounter begins one of the most complicated interethnic relations in the history of Russian presence in North America. Tlingit in fact consisted of groups of various clans, often unrelated to one another. According to Andrei Grinev, one of the main researchers of the topic, their shared name *tlinkít* (*tingit*, *lingit*, *klinkit*) came from a word in their mother tongue meaning *human*, or *people*¹²⁵. The Russian word *Koloshi* came from the wooden or stone-made labret worn by Tlingit women. This labret was called *kaluzhka* (калужка)¹²⁶. Apart from the Tlingit, other indigenous peoples populated what became Baranof Island. Their names are known in English and Tlingit languages respectively: Haida (Deikeenaa), Tsimshian (Ts'ootsxán), Eyaks (Gutéix' kwáan), Athapaskans (Gunanaa), Kwakiutl (T'aawyáat), and Eskimo (X'atas'aak)¹²⁷. The Tlingit clearly distinguished themselves from those other ethnicities. The division into specific clans and moieties was also very important for the Tlingit¹²⁸. Russians however did not pay much attention to those nuances and regarded all local Natives as *Koloshi*. It reflected a common practice among the European colonial

¹²⁴ The numbers provided by Khlebnikov are hard to judge. It is possible that they are fairly speculative. See: *Colonial Russian America: Kyrill T. Khlebnikov's reports, 1817-1832* / translated, with an introd. and notes by Basil Dmytryshyn and E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, Portland 1976, p. 3.

¹²⁵ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741 – 1867*, Lincoln and London 2005, p. 21.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

¹²⁸ Consider the Tlingit own perspective on their culture: S. Henrikson, S. Kan, *Sharing Our Knowledge: The Tlingit and Their Coastal Neighbors*, Lincoln 2015.

empires to construct identity of indigenous peoples based on colonizers' own assumptions¹²⁹. The simplified perception of locals resulted in numerous bloody conflicts that could have been avoided. Local peoples in the eyes of the Russian colonists were most commonly brutal, wild, crude, dangerous, and aggressive. The image remained for the most part of Russian rule over Alaska. A letter sent in July 1859 by Anna Elizabeth von Schoultz, the wife of Johan Hampus Furuhjelm, the penultimate Chief Manager of Russian America, to her mother serves as a good example.

Thirty of these wild creatures will be here tomorrow – when there will be a dinner laid out for them upstairs in the Ballroom. I hear the men placing tables and chairs already tonight – Hampus does not intend to have the guard about the house, as Woewodsky [a former Chief Manager] had – and I think that is already a good thing – for you must not let them think you are afraid of them. I intend placing myself at the window to see them arrive, dressed out in their fine red and yellow blankets, and their faces hideously painted and tattooed. They will not show any homage to the Governor – they will not acknowledge him as their Superior – and while every man and child [of other settlers: Russian, Creole, and other indigenous groups] stands up and pull off his cap as you pass, and the women courtsey, the Galosches remained crouched on the ground, looking perfectly frightful, and laugh and make remarks as you pass – I would not walk alone where they are for anything in the world – nor would Hampus allow me to do so¹³⁰.

Anna Elizabeth von Schoultz was an interesting representative of her social estate, the European bourgeoisie. Her father was Nils Gustaf von Schoultz, a Finnish-Swedish¹³¹ merchant, military officer and adventurer. Her mother was Ann Cordelia von Schoultz, a Scottish-German socialite. Anna Elizabeth had married Johan Hampus Furuhjelm, a Russian naval officer (of Finnish roots) in February 1859 and only few weeks later they sailed for Russian America where Furuhjelm was to begin his term as a Chief Manager of

¹²⁹ On the relations between colonizers and the colonized, identity construction and power relations, consider a pioneering work of Benedict Anderson: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition, London and New York 2006. See particularly the chapter: *Census, Map, Museum*, pp. 163-186.

¹³⁰ A. C. Christiansen, *Letters from the governor's wife. A view of Russian Alaska 1859 – 1862*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus 2005, p. 85.

¹³¹ A Swedish-speaking aristocrat from the Grand Duchy of Finland. Those ethnic and linguistic nuances are quite ambiguous also today. People like von Schoultz are now usually referred to as *Swedish-speaking Finns*.

RAC and the supervisor of the colony. Encounter with Native Americans was of course a new experience for Anna Elizabeth. She didn't have much contact with the indigenous peoples of non-European part of Russia and with non-Europeans in general. Her perception of Tlingits was also influenced by the general bad reputation they held among the Russian settlers in Alaska. However, Russians did acknowledge and distinguish the social status among the Tlingit. The engaged in specific interactions with chiefs and members of nobility¹³².

6. The two battles of Sitka

Troubles began shortly after Russians settled in in Fort Saint Michael. In 1802 the first major violent event took place. Tlingit tribes attacked Russian settlers on June 18th or 19th, killing most of them and forcing the rest to escape¹³³. As a result, Fort Saint Michael was abandoned. This conflict became known as the First Battle of Sitka. By no means was this battle the first conflict between two parties. Some minor acts of violence had occurred before, in the first years of the mutual relations¹³⁴. Often, the reason for the violence came from the lack of understanding of cultural specificities within each group. Requiring interpreters, Russians followed a common practice of overseas empires and kidnapped young members of local tribes to teach them Russian and turn them into translators. Both Russian written sources (Khlebnikov, Lisianskii) and Tlingit oral sources (Alex Andres, Sally Hopkins) admit that the translators failed to perform their duties effectively and thus were unable to prevent bloodshed¹³⁵. In addition, the Russians (whose party consisted of Russian settlers of various ethnic origin as well as Aleuts of various tribal affiliation) failed to understand that the attack of 1802 was conducted only by a certain (Kiks.adi) clan of

¹³² Consider: J. R. Dean, "Uses of the Past" on the Northwest Coast: *The Russian American Company and Tlingit Nobility, 1825-1867*, [in:] *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Spring 1995, pp. 265-302.

¹³³ N. M. Dauenhauer, R. Dauenhauer, *The battles of Sitka, 1802 and 1804, from Tlingit, Russian and other points of view*, [in:] *Russia in North America. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Russian America. Sitka, August 19-22, 1987*, ed. R. A. Pierce, Fairbanks 1990, p. 14.

¹³⁴ See: M. Jacobs, *early encounters between the Tlingit and the Russians*, [in:] *Russia in North America. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Russian America. Sitka, August 19-22, 1987*, ed. R. A. Pierce, Fairbanks 1990, p. 1-5.

¹³⁵ N. M. Dauenhauer, R. Dauenhauer, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

the Tlingit. To the contrary, the Russian perception of it as a common act by united Tlingit forces prevailed, establishing the image of the Tlingit as brutal, violent, and aggressive warriors. It remained dominant in the Russian community until the end of its political presence in Alaska and in some cases even longer. This vision of the Tlingit was often juxtaposed with the opposite image of Aleuts, whom the Russians perceived as peaceful, calm hunters. The account of Anna Elizabeth von Schoultz serves as a good example. Oral sources revealed only in the 20th century that only a part of Tlingit was responsible for the attack. An interview with Sally Hopkins was conducted in 1958 and with Alex Andrews in 1960 indicate that only the Kiks.adi Tribe participated in the rebellion¹³⁶. Other groups were not keen on fighting and the whole mutual relations between Russians and Aleuts on one side and various Tlingit clans on the other were much more complicated. Nevertheless, the Tlingit earned their reputation, and the conflict of 1802 became known as a First Battle of Sitka, remembered as the brutal invasion of the Tlingit on Russian settlement. As a result, two years later Baranov returned with strengthened troops and retook the settlement. This skirmish became known as the Second Battle of Sitka. Since almost of the buildings were destroyed after the battle of 1802¹³⁷, Baranov had to rebuild his settlement almost from scratch. Since then, the colony has never been destroyed and thus the battle of 1804 marks a turning point in its development. The first settlement is sometimes referred to as the Old Sitka. After 1804, the Fort Saint Michael was no more. A new town – New Archangel (Novo-Arkhangel'sk) fully emerged and shortly after, in 1808 became the capital of the whole Russian America, replacing Paul's Harbor in this capacity¹³⁸. Nevertheless, the battle of 1802 remained in the memory of both parties as a main reference point of their interethnic relations. Sergei A. Kan argues: *It was the most significant [memory] from the point of view of subsequent Tlingit-Russian relations. In fact, for many generations of Russian and Creole inhabitants of Sitka (Novo-Arkhangel'sk), even as late as the 1900s, the "battle of Sitka" remained what Fogelson*

¹³⁶ M. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹³⁷ M. Budzisz, *Koniec rosyjskiej Ameryki*, Krakow 2017, p. 61.

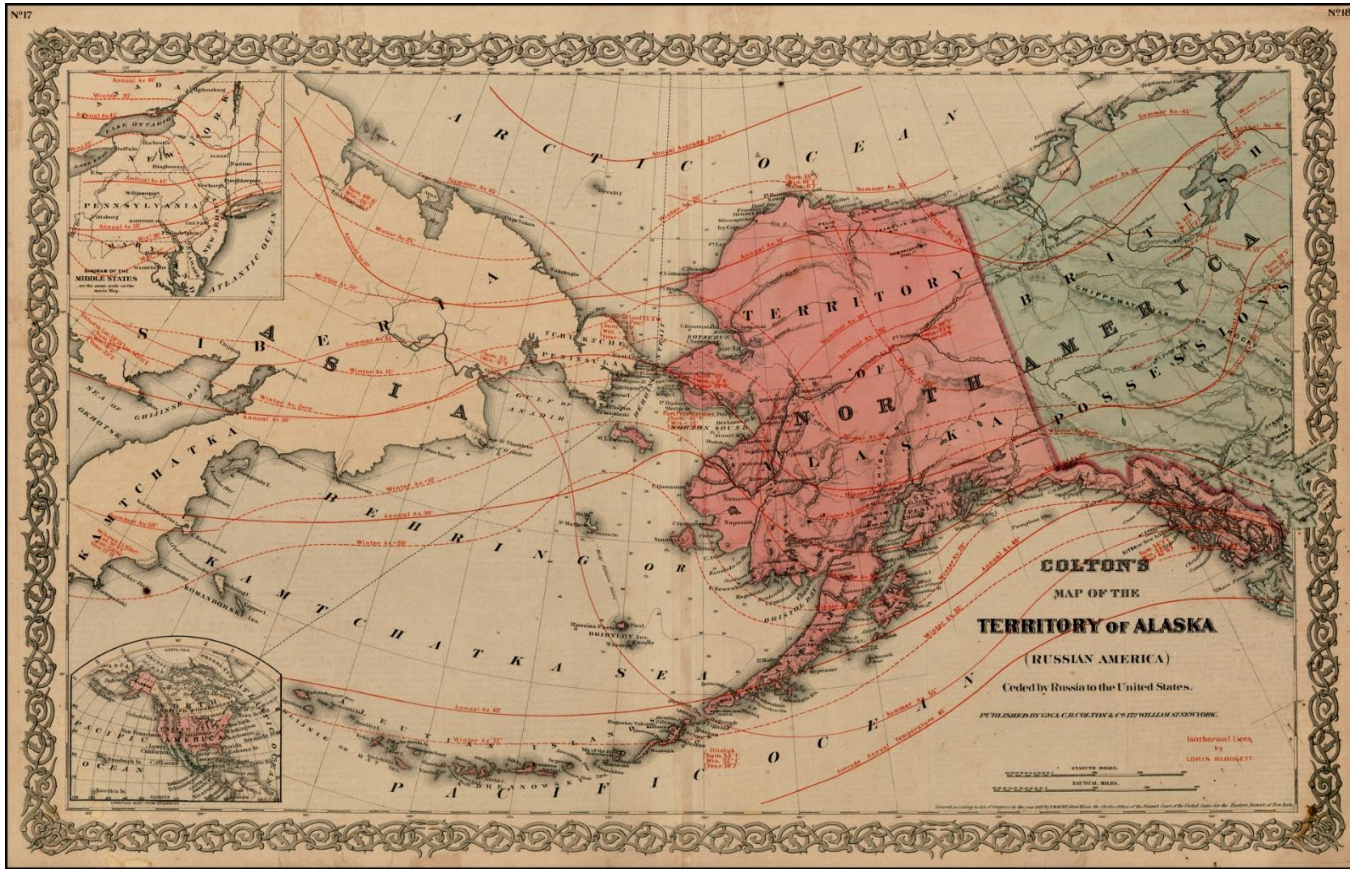
¹³⁸ I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

calls an "epitomizing event,"¹³⁹ and every time Russian-Tlingit relations deteriorated, the memories of 1802 were refreshed by recounting the vicious attack of the "bloodthirsty and treacherous Kolosh" on the peaceful inhabitants of St. Michael. For the Sitka Tlingit the event also remained of utmost importance, although, as we shall see, its symbolic as well as practical implications for the Kiks.adi, on the one hand, and the Kaagwaantaan (and other clans), on the other, were quite different¹⁴⁰.

Further research of Tlingit interpretation of those events is analyzed in the chapter three: *Who had and has the right to Alaska? Sheetka / New Archangel / Sitka.*

¹³⁹ According to Fogelson, "epitomizing events" are narratives that condense, encapsulate, and dramatize long-term historical process. Such events are inventions but have such compelling qualities and explanatory power that they spread rapidly through the group and soon take on an ethnohistorical reality of their own. See: R. D. Fogelson, *The ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents*, [in:] *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring, 1989), p. 143.

¹⁴⁰ S. A. Kan, *Memory Eternal. Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, Seattle and London 2015, p. 59.



Colton's map of the Territory of Alaska : Russian America : ceded by Russia to the United States, 1868. Courtesy of the American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection

7. New capital

The interethnic relations between all groups are considered to have improved after 1804, although occasional violent conflicts still occurred. Several Tlingit tribes living outside of New Archangel maintained a degree of independence from Russian and traded with them frequently. Ongoing mutual contacts resulted also in interethnic relationships and marriages as well as in increasing numbers of the Tlingit converting to Orthodoxy¹⁴¹. Intermarriages between Russians and the indigenous population was a policy conducted by RAC already in Kodiak. It continued in Tlingit territories as well¹⁴². The general idea

¹⁴¹ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹⁴² See: A. V. Grinev, *Interethnic Marriages and Relationships of the Tlingits in the Russian–American Period and Their Significance*, [in:] *Sexuality & Culture*, Vol. 22, no. 4, 2018, pp. 1340-1360.

was to develop a specific group of intermediaries - people, who would be *in between*, represent both cultures and thus could serve as a bridge between them. Those people (the offspring of Russian settlers and indigenous women) received the official name as *Kreoles* (or *Creoles*) and a special status with it. They were neither fully Russian, nor indigenous. Therefore, they did not belong to any specific estate within the Russian Empire becoming a special, separate estate¹⁴³. Many received an education, and some were even sent to continental Russia for that purpose. They were also baptized in Orthodox faith and received Russian names. Therefore, in many cases, it is hard to determine whether a certain individual hired by RAC was considered Russian or Creole, and the exact number of Creoles in Russian America is difficult to estimate. The Creoles were meant to serve as translators and key actors in the process of russianisation¹⁴⁴ of the indigenous population – a cultural assimilation (rather than integration) that would turn them into Russians. It was done through the conversion into Orthodox Christianity, adoption of Russian names, teaching Russian language, promoting Russian customs (such as a steam bath or a tea from *samovar*), and introducing Russian cuisine. As a result, the indigenous population would acquire similar cultural features to the ones present among the settlers coming from Russia.

Apart from social development, the manufacturing also emerged in early years of New Archangel. Already in 1804, the shipyard was built, and the first vessel was completed in 1806¹⁴⁵. It was named *Avos*¹⁴⁶ and later, this ship played an important role in Russian development down south – to California, earning by the way its place in cultural remembrance of Russian America. *Avos* was one of the two ships (alongside *Juno*) on which the delegation led by Nikolay Rezanov reached the Presidio of San Francisco. The

¹⁴³ To learn more about the Creoles, see especially: S. Smith-Peter, *Creating a Creole estate in early nineteenth-century Russian America*, [in:] *Cahiers du monde Russe*, 2010/2 (Vol 51), p. 441-459 and: G. A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America*, Cornell University Press, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Ilya Vinkovetsky dedicated an entire chapter of his book to the issue of russianisation. See more: I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-154.

¹⁴⁵ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁶ It is interesting to note the further development of this word. The Russian original *Авошь*, transliterated as *Avos*’ received a special meaning in Russian culture since mid-19th century. It refers to a specific philosophy of behavior – expressing hope although there is not much chance for success, relying on luck. See more: A. Guzeva, *The untranslatable word AVOS’ and why Russians rely on it*, ‘Russia Beyond’, <https://www.rbth.com/education/332624-russian-avos> [access: June 27th, 2022].

story of this voyage was brought to the wider public by the rock opera *Juno and Avos* (named after the ships) which gained popularity in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. It was also promoted abroad as “Russian Pocahontas”. The opera tells the story of Concepción Argüello, a 15-year-old daughter of José Darío Argüello (the commander of the presidio) and her romantic relationship with Rezanov.

8. The first Russian circumnavigation (1803–1806)

At the same time as Baranov was struggling to retake and reestablish New Archangel, the first Russian circumnavigating voyage was organized in St. Petersburg. Its purpose was to discover potential trading opportunities for Russia, but some RAC members saw it as an opportunity for the company. The official command of the voyage belonged to the Navy. The first captain was Ivan Fedorovich Kruzenshtern. His deputy was Yuri Fedorovich Lisianskii, who became an author of one of the first written accounts of Russian America from the perspective of a Russian officer. However, as the RAC had its own interest, a main sponsor of the voyage and its *spiritus movens* Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantsev (who later became commemorated as patron of the first Russian outpost in California – Port Rumyantseva, known today as Bodega Bay) instructed Nikolai Rezanov, one of the Shelikhovs’ closest associates, to take advantage of the voyage and establish new partnerships for RAC. Rumyantsev hoped to open diplomatic and trading relations with Japan. In order to initiate them, Rezanov was officially granted to act on behalf of the Tsar Alexander I (sometimes he is referred to as ‘a Russian ambassador to Japan’, which is inaccurate as no diplomatic relations were established). Board members of RAC hoped also to use Japan as a new focal point for supplying Alaska. They also expected to see potential sites for the development of Russian colonies on the American continent. The special status of Rezanov led to tensions between him and Kruzenshtern over leadership¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

Eventually, Rezanov left his party in Alaska and led yet another expedition to California to gain supplies and to establish a trade relationship with Spain. This was the abovementioned voyage on the vessels Juno and Avos. His efforts were futile, as both commander of the San Francisco Presidio Argüello and the Governor of the Alta California, José Joaquín de Arrillaga were forbidden to sign such treaties. Nevertheless, Rezanov spotted unclaimed lands north of the Spanish-controlled territories. Since one of the main challenges of Russian America was nutrition, Baranov actively sought opportunities to establish a new outpost of the empire, south of Alaska, where agriculture was more promising. When Rezanov came to New Archangel, he was disappointed with the living conditions in the colony¹⁴⁸. They were harsh and the colonists were facing starvation during long-lasting winters. Rezanov described the situation in a rather dramatic manner in his letter to count Rumiantsev in June 1806: *from my latest dispatches to Your Excellency and to the Main Administration of the Company, you are well aware of the desperate situation in which I found the Russian American territories. You know of the famine which we experienced all last winter. People barely managed to stay alive on the provisions we bought along with the ship 'Juno'. You also know about the illnesses and the miserable condition which affected the entire region, as well as the resoluteness with which I made a voyage to New California, putting out to sea with an inexperienced and scurvy-ridden crew and risking everything to save the region or die*¹⁴⁹. The new colony in a warmer and milder climate could fulfill the need of food supplies. Although Rezanov's expedition was not successful, the territory for such new colony was spotted.

9. Fort Ross

In 1808, Baranov began sending his most trusted man, Ivan Kuskov, to explore the Californian shore and eventually, in 1812, a new colony (known today as Fort Ross) in California was established. Kuskov became the first Commander. Baranov explained his

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁹ N. P. Rezanov, *Iz doneseniya N. P. Rezanova N. P. Rumiantsevu o puteshestvii v Kaliforniyu na korable "Yunona"*, [in:] *Rossiysko-Amerikanskaya Kompaniya I izuchanye tikhookeanskovo severa 1799 – 1815. Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. A. I. Alekseev, N. N. Bolkhovitinov, T. S. Fedorova, Moscow 1994, p. 146.

reasoning in the directions he sent to Kuskov on October 14th, 1808: *My dear Ivan Aleksandrovich: because of the present unsatisfactory progress of our hunting efforts on Kodiak and in this area, and the substantial diminution of common assets because of various unforeseen expenditures, we are compelled to seek sources of revenue in regions other than those which have been assigned to us in order to improve and enlarge our fur trade and other activities. This will benefit our current shareholders and whose interests are inseparable from the benefits of the entire Company, and the future goals of the Empire.*¹⁵⁰

Initially, Russians faced protest from the Spaniards, who claimed rights to the entire territory of today's California. Nevertheless, the Spanish administration was unable to interfere with Russians presence there. What is important to note, unlike in Alaska, Russians interactions with indigenous peoples in California – Pomo band of Kashaya Indians were generally correct¹⁵¹. This is often attributed to the fact that Russians wanted to win the local population over against the potential threat from the Spanish side. As time would tell, Fort Ross did not serve its purposes. The population of sea otters started to deplete, and it was the main source of income. The idea to use Ross as a base for food supply did not work either. Eventually, the colony was sold in the end of 1841, ending a Californian chapter of Russian colonization of America. This experiment lasted almost exactly 30 years. See more on Fort Ross in the chapter 4 *Metini – Fort Ross*, which is entirely dedicated to the cultural memory of this site.

However, in early 1810s, Baranov was full of hopes. Not only did he dispatch Kuskov to California, but he also considered establishing a new Russian outpost even further – On Hawai'i.

¹⁵⁰ A. A. Baranov, *Directions from Baranov to Kuskov as to his expedition to California (October 14th, 1808)*, [in:] *So far from home. Russians in early California*, ed. G. J. Farris, Jenner, CA 2019, p. 49.

¹⁵¹ See: E. Hirschmann, *The Kashaya Pomo and Their Relations with the RAC at Fort Ross*, 1992, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/138/the-kashaya-pomo-and-their-relations-with-the-rac-at-fort-ross.pdf>, [access: June 27th, 2022].

10. Russia's Hawai'i Adventure

The first encounters of Russians with those islands (discovered for Europeans by James Cook in 1778, known as *Sandwich Islands*¹⁵²) took place already in 1804 during the first circumnavigation¹⁵³. Rezanov and Kruzenstern hoped to establish trading relations with the Hawaiians as well as found a new base for Russian colonies. Eventually, in 1815, Baranov sent an expedition commanded by Dr Georg Anton Schaeffer to negotiate with the ruler of the Hawai'i, king Kamehameha. However, Schaeffer decided to act on his own. Ignoring Baranov's orders, he commenced the relations with Kamehameha's rival, the king of Kauai Island – Kaumuali'i¹⁵⁴. Schaeffer considered the latter as a better ally, hoping that Kaumuali'i would take over the entire Kingdom. Kaumuali'i granted Schaeffer permission to build three forts on his island. In 1817, Fort Elizabeth, Fort Alexander and Fort Barclay-de-Tolly were partially completed¹⁵⁵. In the meantime, Kamehameha was gaining the upper hand in the conflict, and Russian presence on the islands was seen as a threat by the United States. As a result, Schaeffer was forced to leave Kauai'i in June 1817, never to return. Even though several actors within RAC, Schaeffer in particular, expressed hopes on the new colony, neither the RAC office in St. Petersburg, nor the tsar Alexander I himself voiced the need and eventually in 1821 Schaeffer moved to Brazil giving up plans on turning part of Hawai'i into a Russian colony. This way, the Russian adventure on Hawai'i ended¹⁵⁶. See more on that topic in the chapter 5: *Russia's Hawaiian adventure or rather Hawai'i's Russian adventure? Pā'ūla'ūla o Hipo - Russian Fort Elizabeth*, which is entirely dedicated to the cultural memory of this site.

¹⁵² J. W. Vandercook, *Great sailor, a life of the discoverer, Captain James Cook*, New York 1951, pp. 291-304.

¹⁵³ M. Budzisz, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁴ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

¹⁵⁵ P. R. Mills, *Hawai'i's Russian Adventure. A New Look at Old History*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

11. Baranov's final years

During the second decade of 19th century, Baranov tried to develop his Alaskan colony. Shipbuilding continued, hunting and trade were further developed. Baranov hired some better-skilled American shipmen as an aid. He still faced difficulties with his subordinates, especially those from navy. Some even attempted a *coup* and intended to kill Baranov in 1809¹⁵⁷. Other officers tried to have Baranov sent home, particularly, by pointing out his age (Baranov was born in 1747). Eventually, Baranov was sent into retirement, but also to face a possible trial for his alleged misconduct. Some navy officers were accusing Baranov on various occasions of cruelty, and mismanagement¹⁵⁸. He left New Archangel in November 1818 but became ill on his way home and died at the sea on April 16th 1819¹⁵⁹. Thus, he never faced trial and therefore he was never sentenced.

Baranov was replaced as a Chief Manager of RAC by Ludwig von Hagemeister, who came to New Archangel in November 1817 and took his post in January 1818¹⁶⁰. This timeline created a certain confusion, which brought to life a misunderstanding circulating in some popular sources of information on Russian America. There, Hagemeister's post is mistakenly said to begin already in 1817, and not in 1818 as it actually was.

Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov was the first and longest-serving Chief Manager of RAC, as well as being the only civil servant to hold that position. He is definitely also the most memorable manager of Russian America. His rule has been differently perceived by his contemporaries, the future generations of Sitka's citizens and by scholars¹⁶¹. Nevertheless, his presence there left a considerable imprint in Alaska.

¹⁵⁷ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 184

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 184-185.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

¹⁶⁰ S. Fedorova, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁶¹ See more about the perception of Baranov: K. N. Owens, A. Yu. Petrov, *Empire Maker. Aleksandr Baranov and Russian Colonial Expansion into Alaska and Northern California*, Seattle and London 2015.

12. RAC as a state enterprise

Hagemeister was the first of many non-ethnically Russian Chief Managers who were to follow. He was a Baltic German noble, with origins in Livonia (modern Latvia)¹⁶². Hagemeister's term lasted less than a year. On October 24th, 1818, he was replaced by Semyon Ivanovich Yanovsky, another navy officer with the rank of lieutenant. His tenure did not last long either. After almost two years, on September 15th, 1820, another lieutenant from the navy, Matvey Ivanovich Muravyev took the office. Both Hagemeister and Yanovsky intended to explore Alaska's interior further. Russian settlements were located either on the islands or at the shore of the Pacific Ocean. Already in 1818, Hagemeister sent an expedition into the continent under the command of Petr Korsakovskii¹⁶³. The latter believed that certain people of Russian origin had been living somewhere in the inland of Alaska. They were said to be the descendants of Russian fugitives who had fled mainland Russia and somehow managed to have themselves transported to America. Russia has been struggling with the problem of fugitives and deserters throughout its history, and this occurred in Russian America as well¹⁶⁴. Korsakovskii secured funding from count Rumiantsev and after receiving the green light from Hagemeister started his exploration. Yanovsky continued to support Korsakovskii's endeavor. However, the expeditions failed to locate those legendary Russian settlers. Despite the lack of success, the Korsakovskii voyages were not entirely useless. New territories were discovered and charted by his crewmembers for the first time. Korsakovskii's party encountered also some indigenous tribes previously unknown to Russians. Alegmiut Eskimos were among them. Korsakovskii provided a first ever description of these people. In his journal he wrote:

Every man has three lines etched from the edge of his eyebrows to the middle of his ear; also into the lower lip is inserted a white roundish stone. I also saw some which resembled marble. The women's clothing is exactly like the men's. They love Russian trinkets and

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 262.

¹⁶³ S. Fedorova, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁶⁴ On fugitives in Russian America see especially a recent study: A. V. Grinev, R. L. Bland, *Deserters and Fugitives in Russian America*, [in:] *Arctic Anthropology*, Volume 55, No. 2, 2018, pp. 134-151.

decorate themselves with seed beads, small copper rings, and large beads. The young ones insert into their noses dentalium, two on each side, and decorate these with seed beads. They are gentle, kind, generous, hospitable, and merry and are very much attached to their children. When a young man marries, he does not go to live with the relatives of his wife immediately, but only after the first child is born. From that time he is considered a kinsman. Man's occupation is war! This is now disappearing little by little. Supervision of nets, fishing, household [work], berries, roots, [making] oil, all except animal hunting, is the province of women. Their labor is eased somewhat by the rivers, on which they use baydarkas and baydaras. In winter when all the waters freeze, they make small excursions on sleds which they pull themselves. At the same time, they [the women] carry out all domestic work: clean the skins, make clothing, weave nets, gather wood, carry water. Their whole life is a ceaseless progression of work and suffering. Funerals, like all other festivals, begin with smoking and end with a feast. The body of the deceased, in his best clothing or in [that of] relatives, is placed in a coffin surrounded by earth. They place several domestic instruments on it. During the ceremony, there is wailing and, if the deceased is much grieved, his nearest relatives cut off their hair and paint their faces black with charcoal. All the deceased's belongings are given away. Many and varied reasons move the savages to war: to show personal bravery, to avenge the death of relatives or countrymen through killing of an enemy. If the whole nation is setting out for war, the leaders assemble the entire [folk] to ascertain the general will. If it is for war, the [war] leader announces that he will hold a smoke at such and such a time at a sacred place if anyone needs to make up his mind. When the assembled folk has been consecrated through the rite of smoking, the leader enumerates the various reasons why he has assembled the people. Then he proposes the course of action. When he finishes saying all that he had to say, he gives gifts to those who want to follow him, which is considered like an oath¹⁶⁵.

Even though Korsakovskii's reports provided a lot of insight on Alaska interior, the territorial expansion was never a serious goal for Russians. The Chief Managers were rather supposed to focus on proper development of those territories they already had under

¹⁶⁵ P. Korsakovskiy, *Russian Exploration in Southwest Alaska: The Travel Journals of Petr Korsakovskiy (1818) and Ivan Ya. Vasilev (1829)*, ed. D. H. Kraus, J. W. Vanstone, Fairbanks 1988, pp. 30-31.

their control. Since Baranov has been accused of a mismanagement, one of Hagemeister's main goals was to conduct a full audit of entire possessions of RAC, including Fort Ross¹⁶⁶. As a result, numerous employees were sent away, including Baranov's son-in-law, Sungurov. The character of agreements between RAC and its employees was changed too. Hagemeister hoped to turn Russian America into a more profitable province¹⁶⁷. The shareholders of RAC considered the colony as a business-oriented enterprise and expected tangible results.

Following the efforts of Hagemeister and Yanovsky, major changes in Russian America's situation started under Muravyev. Since the initial charter of RAC was due to expire, the board of directors have been actively discussing the future of the company. In 1821 the new charter of RAC was issued as an *ukase* by tsar Alexander I¹⁶⁸. The most revolutionary aspect of the new charter was the new ownership status. In 1821, the RAC became a state-owned enterprise¹⁶⁹. Since then, the shareholders of the company, and thus its board members were also members of the imperial government. The charter also declared that the territories at the Pacific Northwest belonged to Russia and forbade foreign ships to explore them. Another important aspect was related to the trade. The new charter forbade the RAC to transact business with foreigners, which proved quite challenging for Muravyev and the Chief Managers who superseded him. Trading with England, Spain and the US was vital for the well-being of Russian America. Many local residents considered the new rule as a mistake. Nevertheless, they had to comply and adjust to the new situation. The colony had to focus on its own provisions, supplies from the Californian settlement and on the trade with the indigenous peoples. The further territorial expansion of the Russian colonies in America became unlikely due to the strategy adopted by the US under the presidency of James Monroe. In 1823, the so-called *Monroe Doctrine* came into life

¹⁶⁶ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

¹⁶⁷ I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁶⁸ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *Russkaya Amerika na rubezhe 20-kh godov XIX v. (Prinyatyie novykh pravil i privilegii RAK)*, [in:] *Istoriya Russkoy Ameriki 1732 – 1867*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, v. II, Moscow 1997, p. 331.

¹⁶⁹ The actual character of RAC has been an ongoing debate among scholars. Consider a condensed, although old, analysis of the issue by Mazour: A. G. Mazour, *The Russian-American Company: Private or Government Enterprise?* [in:] *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, June 1944, pp. 168-173.

and set standards of the future American foreign policy that outlived him many decades¹⁷⁰. The *spiritus movens* behind the tenet was then-Secretary of State and the future president John Quincy Adams¹⁷¹. Throughout his career as civil servant, Adams, among others, acted as an ambassador to Russia in 1809-1817¹⁷².

Muravyev focused also on the social development of the colony. Ever since Russian settlements in America were founded, its inhabitants suffered from disease. Russians brought with them measles and smallpox, which turned out to be deadly for the indigenous population. For their part, Russian sailors suffered from scurvy, malnutrition, and other illnesses. None of the towns had a doctor as a permanent settler, which was an ongoing problem without solution for Baranov. He kept sending letters to Petersburg, asking for a physician to be sent. So did his successors, Hagemeister and Yanovsky. Finally, Muravyev managed to convince the authorities and the first medicine practitioner arrived in New Archangel in 1820. Soon, the first hospital was constructed¹⁷³.

Muravyev's tenure ended in October 1825, when he was replaced by Petr Iegorovich Chistiakov. Next month, tsar Alexander I died and was succeeded by his brother Nicholas I. The latter began his reign amid the Decembrist Revolt¹⁷⁴. This revolt of young, liberal statesmen, officers and noblemen had its own connection to the RAC. Several Decembrists had been contracted by the company in the past or served on the ships that traveled in the America. Dmitry Zavalishin, Mikhail von Kyukhelbeker, Vladimir Romanov, Kondraty Ryleyev were among them¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁰ L. J. Sadosky, *Antebellum Foreign Policy: The Monroe Doctrine, the Quest for Markets, and Manifest Destiny: 1815-45*, [in:] *The Concise Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*, ed. Michael Kazin, Rebecca Edwards, Adam Rothman, Princeton 2011, pp. 245-246.

¹⁷¹ D. Critchlow, *American Political History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2014, p. 36.

¹⁷² L. H. Parsons, *John Quincy Adams*, Lanham & Boulder & New York & Oxford 1999, p. 84.

¹⁷³ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁷⁴ T. Chapman, *Imperial Russia 1805-1905*, London and New York 2001, p. 46.

¹⁷⁵ J. Gibson, *The Decembrists*, Fort Ross Conservancy Library, digital content courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org; author maintains copyright of his or her written material, pp. 1-4.

13. Russian America in the new international environment

Throughout the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855) Russian America was governed by a number of Navy officers: Pyotr Yegorovich Chistiakov (1825–1830), Ferdinand Petrovich von Wrangel (1830–1835), Ivan Antonovich Kupreyanov (1835–1840), Arvid Adolf Etholén (1840–1845), Mikhail Dmitrievich Tebenkov (1845–1850), Nikolay Yakovlevich Rosenberg (1850–1853) and Aleksandr Ilich Rudakov (1853–1854). Almost all of them served a full 5-year term. Chistiakov headed the colony in new circumstances. New treaties with the United States and England were signed in 1824 and 1825 respectively. Those treaties, above all, sanctioned the boundaries of Russian possessions in Alaska. Article III of the Anglo-Russian treaty declared:

Commencing from the southernmost part of the Island called Prince of Wales Island, which point lies in the parallel 54°40', and between the 131st and 133rd degrees of west longitude (meridian of Greenwich) the said line shall ascend to the north along the channel called Portland Channel, as far as the point of the continent where it strikes the 56th degree of north latitude. From this last mentioned point the line of demarcation shall follow the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast as far as the point of intersection of the 141st degree of west longitude (of the same meridian), and, finally, from the said point of intersection, the said meridian line of the 141st degree in its prolongation as far as the Frozen Ocean, shall form the limit between the Russian and British possessions on the continent of America to the North-west¹⁷⁶.

Lydia T. Black summarizes: *The conventions recognized Alaska's boundaries as extending to 54° 40' N latitude and running from the southern extremity of Prince of Wales Island along the Portland Canal to 56° N latitude, and then northwesterly along the coastal mountain range, ten nautical leagues (55.5 km) inland to the 141st meridian. For citizens of the United States, the convention guaranteed ten years of free access by vessels to "all inner seas, sounds, harbors and bays" along the Northwest Coast "for fishing and trade*

¹⁷⁶ Convention between Great Britain and Russia, 28 February 1825, annexed to the Alaska Boundary Case (Great Britain v United States) (1903), 15 RIAA 481. A detailed analysis (from the perspective of legal studies) of this convention was done by Carole St-Louis. See: C. St-Louis, *The notion of equity in the determination of maritime boundaries and its application to the Canada-United States boundary in the Beaufort Sea*, Ottawa 2014, pp. 177-188.

*with the aboriginal inhabitants of that land,” excluding from this trade alcohol and firearms*¹⁷⁷.

The treaties with Great Britain and the US determined the trade relations between the citizens of all parties. The treaties became effective and were to remain in power for ten years. When the agreement with England expired, in 1835, tensions with the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) returned. HBC operated more and more actively in the area. Eventually, the new agreement was set to be signed. Ferdinand von Wrangel, then Chief Manager, sailed to Hamburg, Germany in 1839 to meet George Simpson, his counterpart on behalf of HBC¹⁷⁸. The new deal secured good mutual relations for the remaining part of Russian rule over Alaska. Some argue that this agreement might have convinced the RAC to sell its Californian outpost in Fort Ross (which took place two years later, in 1841).¹⁷⁹ Since the trade with the British was sufficient to secure needs in Alaska, the colony far away was no longer needed. In 1841, another important formal change took place. The second charter of RAC issued by the tsar Alexander I expired. Therefore, a new charter was drafted and eventually signed by the tsar Nicholas I¹⁸⁰. The third charter began operating on January 1st, 1842.

According to Lydia T. Black, Ferdinand von Wrangel was one of the best Chief Managers RAC ever had. He was a representative of a famous noble family of Baltic Germans. His most famous relative Pyotr von Wrangel was one of the commanders-in-chief of the Whites during the Civil War in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917. Ferdinand von Wrangel was a highly skilled navigator and an explorer. He developed the trading capabilities of the Russian America, but also took care to improve the relations with the indigenous people. Contemporarily, Baranov is often accused in particular for mistreatment of the latter, deterioration of the mutual relations and the use of alcohol as a tool of subjugation. However, Andrei Grinev's research demonstrated that alcohol had

¹⁷⁷ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 200.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 201.

¹⁸⁰ A. V. Grinev, *Rastsvet Russkoy Ameriki w 1840-e gg.*, [in:] *Istoriya Russkoy Ameriki 1732 – 1867*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, v. 3, Moscow 1997, p. 57.

never played a significant role in The Russo-indigenous relations¹⁸¹. The accusations against Baranov come mostly from the side of Tlingit and other activists. They eventually led to the removal of Baranov statue in Sitka, which is a subject of the entire section in Chapter 3 of this dissertation: *Sheetka – New Archangel – Sitka*.

14. Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska

It was also during Wrangel's term that the Russian Orthodox Church developed its mission in the new land. The 1830s are the period of the increased activity of a bishop Ivan Veniaminov. He is considered to be the most important character of the orthodox life in Alaska. Sergei A. Kan, one of the main experts on the topic calls him "undoubtedly the most important figure in the history of the Russian Orthodox mission in Alaska"¹⁸². Veniaminov has been active in Alaska since the early 1820s. In 1834 he moved to New Archangel from the Aleutian Islands. The goal was to operate in a capital, but also to engage with the Tlingit¹⁸³. Linguistic works related to Aleut and Tlingit languages are among the greatest achievements of Veniaminov. He studied local languages, working both on creating Russian-Aleut¹⁸⁴ and Russian-Tlingit dictionaries, as well as prayer books and catechisms in local languages¹⁸⁵. Already in 1820s, while on Unalaska Island, he mastered the Aleut language enough to be able to preach to locals in their mother tongue¹⁸⁶. The situation repeated in New Archangel after Veniaminov had spent couple of years there. The real breakthrough took place in 1840, when the diocese of Kamchatka, the Kurils, and the Aleutian Islands was established¹⁸⁷. Veniaminov, who just took vows

¹⁸¹ A. V. Grinev, *The Distribution of Alcohol among the Natives of Russian America*, [in:] *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2010, pp. 69-79. To learn more about the influence of alcohol in Late Imperial Russia in general see: P. Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka & Politics in Late Imperial Russia*, Oxford 2002.

¹⁸² S. A. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁸³ V. P. Petrov, *Russkoe pravoslavye na Alyaske*, [in:] *Etimograficheskoe obozrenye*, v. 2, 1994, pp. 70-77.

¹⁸⁴ To find more about the impact of Veniaminov on the study of the Aleut language, see: R. H. Geoghegan, *The Aleut language, the elements of Aleut grammar with a dictionary in two parts containing basic vocabularies of Aleut and English*, Washington D. C. 1944.

¹⁸⁵ A compelling example of Veniaminov's work could be found in the publication translated and edited by the All Saints of North America Orthodox Church: I. Veniaminov, *Observations about the Tlingit & Kodiak (Aleutiiq) languages (in the Tlingit, Aleutiiq, and Russian languages)*, Sankt Petersburg 1846, ASNA 2007.

¹⁸⁶ I. Vinkovetsky, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁸⁷ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

and became a monk under the name of Innokentii, became its first bishop. In 1850 he was promoted to the rank of Archbishop. The influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on Native Alaskans cannot be emphasized enough. Sergei A. Kan argues that the Tlingit Orthodoxy should be understood as a separate cultural system¹⁸⁸. Throughout the whole 19th century (also after the sale of Alaska in 1867), the Russian Church was very active in Alaska and kept its mission there until the October Revolution. It took the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks to end the involvement of the Russian patriarchs in America (Orthodox people also lived on the mainland). However, since the vast majority of Alaskans were Orthodox by 1917¹⁸⁹, the faith was preserved there even without the support from Russia and numbers remain strong today. In 1977, Father Innokentii (Ivan Veniaminov) was officially glorified as a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church, upon request from the Orthodox Church in America. The latter declared him *An Enlightener of the Aleuts, Apostle to America*¹⁹⁰. Ivan Veniaminov is thus definitely a central figure in the cultural memory of Orthodox Church in Alaska.

15. Final years of Russian America

The last 12 years years of Russia's overseas colony coincided with the reign of tsar Alexander II. The last three Chief Managers were: Captain Stepan Vasiliyevich Voyevodsky (1854 – 1859), Captain Johan Hampus Furuhjelm (1859 – 1863) and Prince Dmitri Petrovich Maksutov (1863 - 1867). Alexander II began ruling amid the Crimean War (1853-1856), a conflict in which Russia was eventually defeated by a coalition of Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and their proxies¹⁹¹. The peace treaty was signed in Paris on March 30th, 1856. However, previous agreements between Russia and Britain, as well as the new ones meant that Russian America was not greatly affected by the war. The RAC and HBC signed a special agreement declaring neutrality on American ground. It

¹⁸⁸ S. A. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 404.

¹⁹⁰ See the website of the Orthodox Church in America - <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2019/10/06/102884-glorification-of-saint-innocent-metropolitan-of-moscow-enlighten> [access: June 2nd 2020]

¹⁹¹ L. Zakharova, *The reign of Alexander II: a watershed?*, [in:] the Cambridge History of Russia, v. II, Imperial Russia. 1689 – 1917, ed. Dominic Lieven, Cambridge (United Kingdom) 2006, p. 594.

was ratified by Nicholas I on March 31st 1854¹⁹². Both companies kept all their possessions. Nevertheless, Russia's position weakened as a result of the defeat. What is more, the population of sea otters (a main source of RAC's income) was significantly declining. Yet, the RAC had been developing new business activities since the early 1850s. The company was supplying California with ice that was shipped to San Francisco from New Archangel. The business flourished based on cooperation with California's (a new US state) American merchants. In 1852 the Russian and North American Ice Company was founded¹⁹³. Within a year, the enterprise changed its name to American Russian Commercial Company and for a decade became the most profitable activity of the RAC. In 1864, the record total number of 4.785 tons of ice was shipped from Alaska to California. The income in first half of 1860s exceeded \$60.000, making it much more lucrative than the fur trade¹⁹⁴. Despite those successes, Russian officials started thinking of selling the colony. The idea to sell it to the US had emerged already during the Crimean War¹⁹⁵. Washington was seen as a counterweight to British supremacy. Had Alaska been acquired by the latter, Russia's international position would be even more difficult. The third charter of RAC was due to expire in 1862. Chief Manager Furuhjelm was seeking to obtain a new one from St. Petersburg, but ineffectively. His successor, Prince Maskotov, continued Furuhjelm's efforts, but he did not succeed either¹⁹⁶. The third charter turned out to be the last one. In its final 5 years, RAC was operating based on temporary regulations. The proponents of the sale on the Russian side eventually prevailed and in 1866 Alexander II agreed to the proposal. The process was initiated. Russian America was sold to the United States for \$7.2 million. The two key figures associated with this purchase were Baron Eduard de Stoeckl and William Seward. The former was a Russian representative in the US, holding a rank of a minister. The latter was Secretary of State in the administration of President Andrew Johnson. They orchestrated the whole transaction, being both criticized and praised throughout the decades for it. The official handing

¹⁹² M. Budzisz, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹⁹³ N. Saul, *California-Alaska Trade, 1851–1867: The American Russian Commercial Company and the Russian America Company and the Sale/Purchase of Alaska*, [in:] *Journal of Russian American Studies*, v. 2, No. 1, 2018, p. 4.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁵ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

¹⁹⁶ S. W. Haycox, *op. cit.*, Washington D.C. 2020, p. 154.

overtook place on October 18th, 1867, when representatives of both countries sailed together to New Archangel onboard the American ship U.S.S. Ossipee. The US was represented by General Lovell Rousseau. Russia was represented by Captain A. A. Peshchurov and finally, the RAC was represented by Captain F. F. Koskul¹⁹⁷. In the US, the purchase became quickly referred to as *Seward's Folly*, a name that stuck to the transaction for years. However, the actual opinions were more complex and divided. The full meaning of the Alaska Purchase has been discussed by scholars and politicians thoroughly¹⁹⁸.

16. Conclusion

Russia was the fourth biggest (after Great Britain, France and Spain) European colonial power when it comes to the territorial possessions the time period. Russian colonial presence in North America lasted almost one hundred years. It is a significant period. What is more, it overlapped with numerous cultural, political and social processes that were crucial for the development of not only Russia and United States, but also had a global impact. After all, 19th century is very often considered as a period of creation of national identity¹⁹⁹. Those processes as well as particular historical events serve as a main base for the cultural memory of various actors within the legacy of Russian America. The analysis conducted in the following chapters draws upon historical characters such as Alexander Andreevich Baranov, Ivan Kuskov or Doctor Georg Anton Schaeffer. Chief Katlian and King Kaumuali'i, as well as several other. It is based on such events as battles of Sitka, construction of Fort Ross, construction of Fort Elizabeth, or the Alaska Purchase. It

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

¹⁹⁸ The topic was broadly covered by the most renown researchers of Russian America, who have been mentioned throughout this publication (Black, Bolkhovitinov, Fedorova, Grinev, Petrov, Vinkovetsky), but also by many others. See especially: H. I. Kushner, "Seward's Folly"?: *American Commerce in Russian America and the Alaska Purchase*, [in:] *California Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Spring, 1975), pp. 4-26; R. E. Welch Jr., *American Public Opinion and the Purchase of Russian America*, [in:] *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Dec., 1958), pp. 481-494; R. J. Jensen, *The Alaska Purchase and Russian-American Relations*, Seattle 1975 and the most recent: Lee A. Farrow, *Seward's Folly: A New Look at the Alaska Purchase*, Fairbanks 2016.

¹⁹⁹ Consider again: B. Anderson, *op. cit.*, but also: E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983 and over a century-old classic: E. Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, paper delivered at the conference at Sorbonne, 1882.

examines mutual interactions between Russians and indigenous peoples of Alaska, Hawai'i and California.

Finally, it explores the different forms of Russian colonial heritage present in the cultural memory in Sitka, on Kaua'i Island and around Fort Ross.

Chapter III

Who had and has the right to Alaska?

Sheetka / New Archangel / Sitka

1. The beginning

Throughout the entire existence of Russian America, the undoubtedly most significant site has been New Archangel - its capital since 1808²⁰⁰. By the time it was sold to the US in 1867, New Archangel became the most densely inhabited settlement in Alaska. Today, known as Sitka, the town is still listed among the most populous cities of the state. In the 2020 census it ranked 12th out of 290 settlements all together²⁰¹. However, this location has a much longer and much richer history than the last two hundred years. Sitka - the name given to the city by the new American administration is a reference to the name, in which the native inhabitants of this place, the Tlingit people, were referring to. This territory, known officially today as Southeast Alaska and unofficially as *Alaska Panhandle* have been inhabited for thousands of years. Tlingit oral tradition considers this area as homeland since *always*. This aspect is important for the indigenous peoples also in terms of the Russian colonization of Alaska. A big international conference in Russian America took place in Sitka in 2010. It remains the biggest gathering of scholars, practitioners, experts, and other enthusiasts of this topic. Thomas Gamble, also known under his Tlingit name as Yeix Anatsees was among the speakers. Gamble is a Tlingit of Kiks.adi clan. He participated in the event to stress the position of the indigenous people. Gamble said: *Now here I am before you today, neither a scholar, nor an orator, nor the identified credentialed presenter, or even a recognized clan leader, just a Lingit²⁰² that decided that the world should never forget that Sitka, like many southeast Alaska communities is Lingit land from*

²⁰⁰ S. Fedorova, *Russkaya Amerika: ot pervykh poseleniy do prodazhi Alyaski. Konets XVIII v. — 1867*, Moscow 2011, p. 92.

²⁰¹ https://www.alaska-demographics.com/cities_by_population [access: February 8th, 2022].

²⁰² The Tlingit people commonly refer to themselves as *Lingit*, as such spelling is considered more adequate to their language's pronunciation.

*immemorial, respectfully*²⁰³. According to the scientists, human presence is dated there to 10.000 B.P.²⁰⁴ This archeological estimation coincides with the Tlingit oral tradition. Their oldest account refers to the eruption of the volcano and the last eruption in that area dates back 10 000 years²⁰⁵. Tlingit people called the whole territory *Lingiit aani* – the land of the Tlingit people²⁰⁶. Within this territory they established their own settlements. One of the main settlements was known as *Sheet'ká* (another anglicized spelling: *Sheet'káh*), which means ‘this is the place’ or ‘the best place’²⁰⁷. This particular area was chosen by the Russian settlers for their settlement and future capital. After 1867 it also became the first capital of Alaska – an American territory.

2. Redoubt St. Archangel Michael / Форт Архандела Михаила

In 1779, Alexander Baranov, future Chief Manager of Russian America arrived at the island which today is one of the many sites and places named after him. He was sent by Grigori Shelikhov to search for more sea otters as they had already started to deplete around Kodiak by then²⁰⁸. Baranov was also off to find location to establish a new outpost. He met Tlingit people near modern Sitka and negotiated with them the right to set up the outpost there. He was granted permission, but it was not until 1799, when the operatives of freshly founded Russian-American Company laid down their first construction. An official ceremony celebrating incorporation of new territories into Russian empire took place early next year²⁰⁹. A possession plate and a crest were buried in the ground as part of the ceremony. This way, Russian settlers officially declared taking this land into their possession. Baranov himself was not present during the ceremony. The new settlement

²⁰³ T. Gamble/Y. Anatees, *Shux'aa Naxh Lingit Aani Aya, Sheet'ka – From the beginning Sitka is Lingit Land*, [in:] *Over the Near Horizon. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, ed. J. Dusty Kidd, Sitka 2013, pp. 227-228.

²⁰⁴ S. Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, Seattle and London 2015, p. 3.

²⁰⁵ An interview with Chuck Miller, conducted online by Kacper Dziekan on November 5th, 2021.

²⁰⁶ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ C. L. Andrews, *The Story of Sitka. The Historic Outpost of the Northern Coast*, Seattle 2010, p. 28.

²⁰⁸ A. V. Grinev, *Russian Colonization of Alaska. Preconditions, Discovery, and Initial Development, 1741-1799*, Lincoln 2018, p. 210.

²⁰⁹ L. T. Black, *Russians in Alaska. 1732 – 1867*, Fairbanks 2004, p. 155-156.

was under the command of one of his men – Vasili Medvednikov. Even though the initial relations between the Russian party and indigenous peoples were correct, the tensions started to emerge very quickly. Tlingit people were trading with American and English sailors who would anchor their vessels in close proximity of Sitka harbour. Several Tlingit leaders were not exactly in favour of Russian permanent presence on their land²¹⁰. Eventually, after months of various situations, both friendly and hostile, the latter prevailed. A group of Tlingit warriors from Kiks.ádi clan led by the chief Katlian attacked the Russian outpost in 1802²¹¹. This skirmish is known as the *first battle of Sitka*. The settlement was seized by the Tlingit and destroyed. It brought the end to the Redoubt St. Archangel Michael.



An Interpretive panel at the Old Sitka State Historical Park - photo by K. Dziekan

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 156.

²¹¹ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741 – 1867*, Lincoln (Nebraska) 2005, p. 119.

Today, the site is known as *the Old Sitka* and holds a status of National Historic Landmark, which it received in 1963 and was later reaffirmed in 2009²¹². Old Sitka is operated as State Historical Park²¹³. There are no material remains of the former settlement.

Most of the buildings and constructions were destroyed during the Katlian's attack and the rest decayed throughout the following decades. However, the buried possession plate was found. Not only does it remain the only large example of material memory of first Russian settlement on Baranov Island, but it also bears a very strong symbolic meaning given the purpose of its creation. The plate belongs to Sitka National Historical Park and is exhibited in one of the sites belonging to the park – the Bishop's House. There were also several other small items (such as nails, hooks, or spikes) found during several excavations that were conducted at the site in 1930s. The full records of those findings were collected in 1958 by the National Park Service historian George A. Hall²¹⁴. Those items are scattered through various institutions and locations.

Once the Old Sitka was recognized as a National Historic Landmark, the idea to turn it into a memory site came up already in 1963. The whole Sitka was preparing for a centennial of Alaska sale, which was due in 4 years. Sitka Centennial Committee was established to oversee the preparation. This body appointed an initiative group to create a visitor center at Old Sitka, which would combine its role of preserving heritage, promoting tourism, and developing local transportation system. One of the group members, Romaine Hardcastle, a Sitka local, described their plans in a letter to the Superintendent of Sitka & Glacier Bay National Monuments: *It is intended that the building will serve as a tourist information center and waiting room as well as provide a means by which the ferry passenger who does not have the time or inclination to take the trip into town can have at least a glimpse of Sitka's heritage. It is planned to include a Russian Tea Room complete with steaming Samovars and delicacies of the era; a choice group of prepared and packed*

²¹² *Sitka's National Historic Landmarks. A Window into Alaska's Past*, a booklet by The National Park Service-Alaska Regional Office, National Historic Landmarks Program, ed. J. Clemens, Sitka (Alaska) 2013, p. 7.

²¹³ Old Sitka State Historical Park - <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspunits/southeast/oldsitkaahp.htm> [access: February 16th, 2022].

²¹⁴ George A. Hall, *Letter to Warner T. May of Bureau of Land Management, Sitka & Glacier Bay National Monuments*, September 14th, 1958, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 26369 SNM Record Collection_Series IV_Box 016_File Unit 035.

*native foods along with locally made jams and jellies and select curios will also be offered*²¹⁵. Although such a visitor center was never created, it is interesting to note that the site was intended to depict a certain type of a melted Tlingit-Russian-American cultural representation.

The key emphasis seems to be laid on tourism and enhancing Sitka's touristic potential. Old Sitka is located around 7 miles north from today's town of Sitka²¹⁶. As there is no material culture left of its past, the history is told through interpretive panels. The panels were prepared by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, a unit responsible for park management within the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, a state department. The panels present the story of Tlingit presence and ownership over the lands, Russian arrival, and the mutual relations between the two parties. Finally, one panel is dedicated to the Tlingit-Russian conflict, which resulted in a battle that led to the destruction of the Russian outpost. The site does not play an important role in Sitka's memory culture. This is a result of its location outside of town, small significance for local community and lack of material remains. Besides, there is a large number of other sites, rich with material culture and historical significance within the town itself.

²¹⁵ R. Hardcastle, *memorandum to the Superintendent, Sitka & Glacier Bay National Monuments*, November 12th, 1963, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 26369 SNM Record Collection_Series IV_Box 017_File Unit 037.

²¹⁶ J. D. McMahon, T. L. Dilliplane, A. V. Kharinsky, V. V. Tikhonov, J. Kinsman, S. Thorsen, *The Assessment of Data Potential for Select Colonial Russian Sites in Sitka: Results of Cooperative American-Russian Investigations in Conjunction with the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, [in:] *Over the Near Horizon. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, ed. J. Dusty Kidd, Sitka 2013, p. 280.

REDOUBT

Despite many setbacks and hardships, the Russian fort rapidly grew into a bustling community.

SAINT MICHAEL



SETTLING FOR FURS

Between 1795 and 1800, sea otter hunts around Sitka Sound produced the greatest yields for the newly formed Russian-American Company (RAC). In July 1799, RAC manager Alexander Baranov, requested permission from Tlingit leaders to establish Redoubt Saint Michael here on Tlingit land. After exchanging gifts, he believed they had reached an agreement.

A NEW HOME

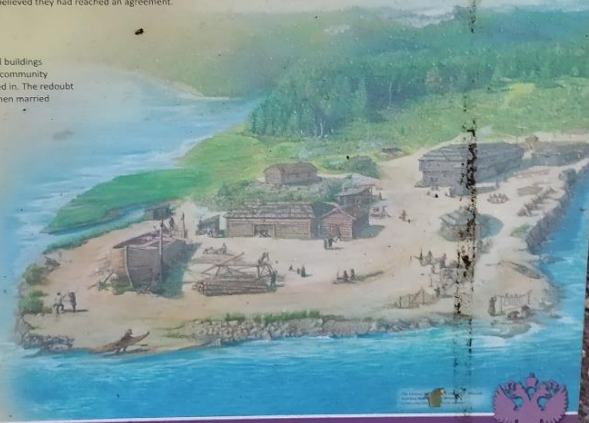
Life at the redoubt was not easy, food had to be secured and buildings constructed. Food shortages during the first winter lowered community morale, but by the third year the small population had settled in. The redoubt became more of a home, and less of a fort, as some of the men married Tlingit women and other families came from Kodiak.

RUSSIANS CLAIM THE LAND

In April 1800, approximately 25 Russians, 50 Alutiq, Aleut, and Chugach hunters, and a few Native women were stationed at Redoubt Saint Michael. During this month, a highly symbolic Possession Platte was ceremonially buried in the ground to mark the birth of this new settlement and assert the Russian's claim over the land. By 1802, the settlement's population had tripled.



In an effort to learn more about life at the redoubt, the Civilian Conservation Corps conducted an archaeological dig in the mid 1930s and uncovered 100 copper Possession Platts, the only one ever recovered from a Russian American site. If you find any historic artifacts, please bring them to park and contact Sitka Area State Parks or the Office of History and Archaeology.



An Interpretive panel at the Old Sitka State Historical Park - photo by K. Dziekan



An Interpretive panel at the Old Sitka State Historical Park - photo by K. Dziekan

3. Battles of 1802 and 1804 – the two Battles of Sitka

Russian-Tlingit relations were very complex throughout the entire period of Russian presence at Baranov Island. There were examples of friendly relationship as well as hostile events²¹⁷. The two battles of Sitka (1802 and 1804) are the only example of a significant military clash between the Russians and the Tlingit. As for the latter, it is important to note that it was the representatives of Kiks.ádi clan who were involved in the fights. Several scholars (Bancroft, Bolkhovitinov, De Laguna, Khlebnikov, Okun and others) dedicated a lot of attention towards Sitka battles. They tried to analyze them and find the reasons behind them. The deepest investigation was made by Andrei Grinev who had summarized key findings. Tlingit people were dissatisfied with Russians depleting the

²¹⁷ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 51-58.

population of sea otters in a very short time. It jeopardized their own source of income from trade. Several misunderstandings took place regarding capture and execution of certain indigenous men by Russians in the months preceding the attack²¹⁸. The Tlingit assault was a success. Warriors led by the War Chiefs Skautlelt (spelled also Shk'awulyéil) and Katlian (also known as K'alyaan or Katlean) defeated Russian party commanded by Ivan Kuskov²¹⁹. Russians came back after 2 years and attacked Tlingit warriors. The Tlingit defense was led by Katlian, who was chosen by the elders of the six Kiks.ádi houses on merits for his performance in the battle of 1802²²⁰. The battle of 1804 took place in early October and lasted for several days²²¹. Russian attacking party was reinforced by the large ship *Neva* commanded by Yuri F. Lisianskii²²². *Neva* was sailing nearby, and Baranov asked Lisianskii to assist his men. Participation of *Neva* is considered a turning point in the battle²²³. When its cannons joined the firing of Tlingit positions, the latter retreated and abandoned their fort. Russians took the lands and founded new settlements there. Soon it became known as New Archangel. The exact location of the battle and the old Tlingit fort was unknown for a very long time. The stories about the fort were preserved in the Tlingit oral tradition but given the historical turbulence the precise site was not clear. Finally, in 1958 National Park Service contracted a group of archeologists and anthropologists from the University of Alaska led by Frederick Hadleigh West²²⁴. With the aid from Alex Andrew, a Tlingit elder the Hadleigh West party conducted excavations and found archeological evidence allowing them to locate the old Tlingit Fort²²⁵.

²¹⁸ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit...*, pp. 116-132.

²¹⁹ A. V. Zorin, *Indeyskaya voyna v Russkoy Amerike: Russko-tlinkitskoe voennoe protivoborstvo*, Kursk 2004, pp. 57-58.

²²⁰ J. Dusty Kidd, *The Battle of Sitka. Generals and Soldiers*, [in:] *Over the Near Horizon. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, ed. J. Dusty Kidd, Sitka 2013, p. 115.

²²¹ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit...*, p. 136.

²²² Yuri Fedorovich Lisianski, [in:] *Morskoy Biograficheskiy Spravochnik Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii i Russkoy Ameriki. 17 - nachalo 20 veka*, ed. by A. I. Gruzdev, Vladivostok 1998, p. 117.

²²³ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

²²⁴ F. H. West, *The Search for the Sitka Fort. An Archeological Anecdote*, [in:] *The Review of Archeology*, vol. 17, no. 2, Fall 1996, pp. 43-48.

²²⁵ Unknown author, *Location of Historic Battle of Sitka Fort Found by Park Service*, *Daily Alaska Empire*, November 20th, 1958.

4. Katlian – a Tlingit hero

Those battles seem to play a role of an important *lieu de memoire* for Tlingit community in Sitka, particularly those belonging to the Kiks.ádi clan. They serve as evidence of bravery, spirit, and determination of local residents to fight for their land and their rights. The role of Katlian is particularly emphasized. He is a central figure in the Tlingit cultural memory of the battles. Katlian is commemorated in various places: among others one of the bigger streets in town (where the old Tlingit village was located) is named after him as well as a bay nearby Old Sitka. Tlingit narrative emphasize that the indigenous warriors abandoned their territories in order to *share* the space with the Russians. They honorably stepped back making room for others. Therefore, the aftermath of the battle could hardly be seen as a Tlingit defeat. The negotiations took place between the parties and the Tlingit established their new settlements outside of the Russian territory's premises²²⁶.

Katlian seen as a fiery warrior is a very powerful symbol for Tlingit cultural memory. This image was preserved in the oral tradition. He is depicted as a charismatic leader, assaulting the Russians wearing a Raven Hat (he was a member of the raven moiety²²⁷) with a hammer in his hand²²⁸. The hammer and the hat were kept in the Kiks.ádi clan member families and became a very powerful symbolic object. A material legacy of the legendary leader. A meaningful relic serving as one of the core elements of local collective identity. Katlian's hammer is currently displayed at the permanent exhibition on Tlingit culture, which is located at Sitka National Historical Park's visitor center. The Katlian's hat is displayed at the permanent exhibition on Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka. Both places are located in a close proximity from the site of the battle of 1804.

The figure of Katlian, wearing a Raven Hat, holding his hammer, and followed by other warriors was also replicated in various means of cultural production. In 1988, Louis S. Glanzman, a popular American artist and illustrator painted an artwork telling a story of the 1804 battle with Katlian in a foreground. His hat and hammer are in the central

²²⁶ L. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

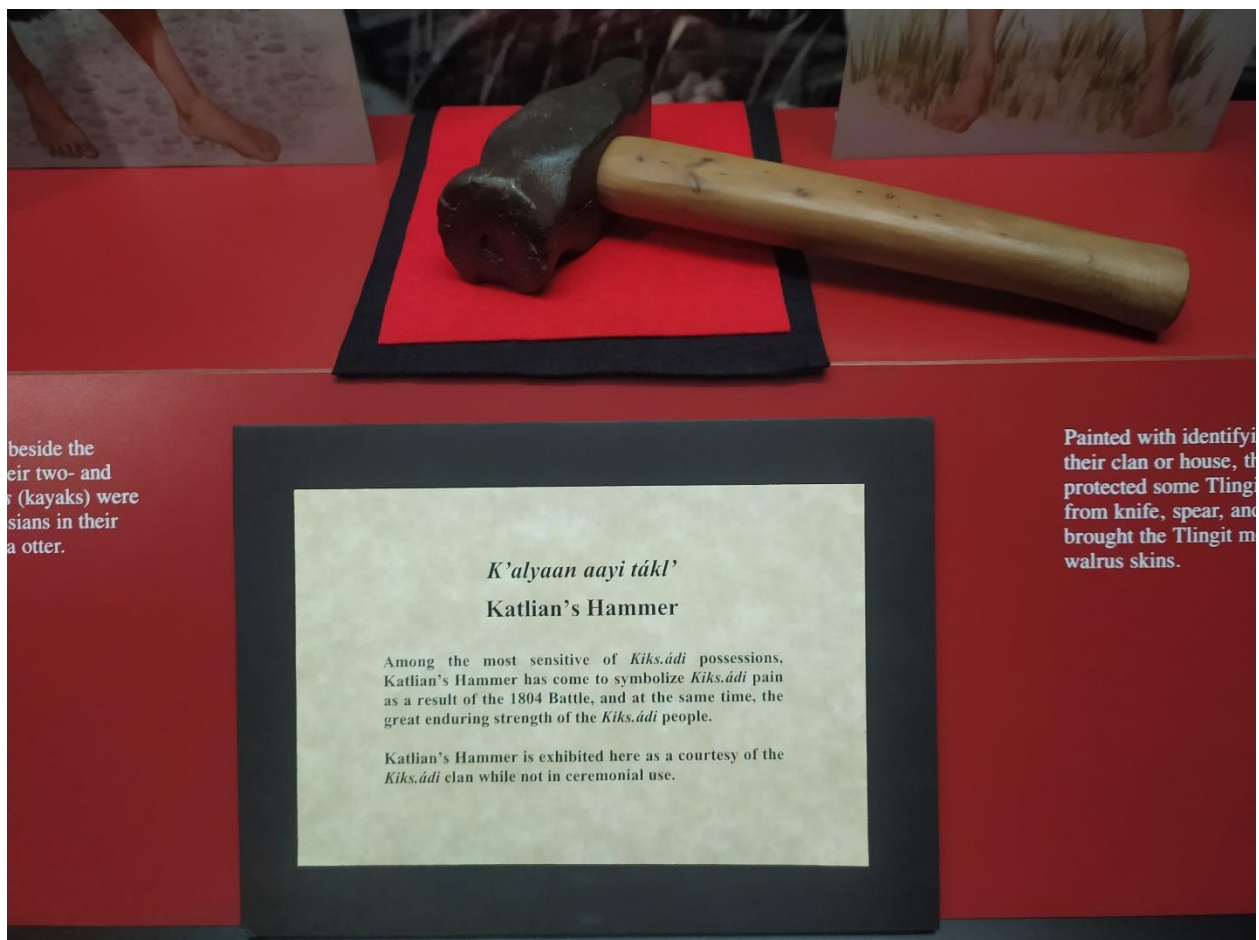
²²⁷ See more about the Tlingit culture: M. H. Pelton, J. DiGennaro, J. Brady-Morales, *Images of a People: Tlingit Myths and Legends*, Englewood (Colorado) 1992.

²²⁸ G. A. Hall, *Handbook for the Sitka National Monument. Manuscript of a history of Sitka*, Sitka 1959, p. 48.

position. The painting hangs in the foyer of Sitka National Historical Park's Visitor Center and is very commonly presented as a graphic illustration of the battle. The primary function of the painting seems to be of educational or utilitarian character rather than artistic. It fits into a broader narrative common in American art with a goal to educate the audience on certain issue. The painting's composition delivers a clear message on the presented story.



Battle of Sitka Louis S. Glanzman, 1988 Painting, acrylic on canvas H 75, W 125 cm SITK 9664 Sitka National Historical Park Photo Credit: D. Curl, Sitka National Historical Park



Katlian's hammer - exhibited at Sitka National Historical Park. Photo by K. Dziekan

As mentioned above, the very location of SNHP's Visitor Center is quite symbolic. It was built in a crucial area of historic Tlingit territory in Sitka. Not only does it neighbor the 1804 battlefield but also the former Tlingit fort which was called Shiksi Noow²²⁹ and is usually translated as *Sapling Fort*. There is a very powerful memory inscribed in this area given the fact in the Tlingit oral tradition the Kiks.adi alongside other clans have decided to abandon the fort (see further explanation in next paragraphs), rather than were defeated by the Russians²³⁰. Thus, the Tlingit withdrew from the battle and simply *left* the fort for

²²⁹ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit...*, p. 134.

²³⁰ See Tlingit oral sources of Alex Andrews and Sally Hopkins edited by Richard and Nora Dauenhauer: Black L. T., Dauenhauer N., Dauenhauer R., *Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká / Russians in Tlingit America: The Battles of Sitka, 1802 and 1804 (Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature)*, Juneau 2008, pp. 329 – 382.

Russians to settle. The area became part of Russian colony and after 1867 part of the US. Throughout the second half of 20th century new looks on history, land ownership and colonization in general were popping up. More and more scholars were adopting an emerging post-colonial theory and indigenous peoples' perspective were breaking through into a public debate²³¹. In Sitka case it meant the Tlingit claim on the land around the role it played in the construction of their collective identity and cultural memory. Different cultures create different forms of cultural commemorative representation of key memory figures, sites, or events. Monuments and statues are among the most common ones. They all play a role of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*. As the author of the concept put it himself: *Through human willpower and the work of centuries, these sites have become striking symbols: celebrations, emblems, monuments, and commemorations, but also speeches, archives, dictionaries, and museums*²³². Totem poles play such a role in the culture of indigenous peoples of North America. The Tlingit of Alaska have been using totem poles as commemorative representation of their cultural memory for centuries. Totem poles also played a role in reclaiming the Tlingit land by its people. As a result, The Poles of Historic "Totem Park"²³³ was created alongside SNHP's Visitor Center. They tell the Tlingit story of this land. They are turned into a trail known as Lover's Lane or simply the Totem Trail²³⁴. One of the key totems tells the story of Battle of 1804 and commemorates the fallen warriors. It is located where the battle took place and the former Shiksi Noow fort stood. It is called K'alyáan Pole²³⁵. The name itself places Katlian (K'alyáan) in the center of this commemoration. This is another example which features Katlian as a central figure of the Tlingit narrative on the battle, and Russo-Tlingit relations in general. In fact, Katlian could be seen as a *lieu de mémoire* itself for Tlingit cultural memory. The K'alyáan Pole was commissioned by a Kiks.adi leader Al Perkins and

²³¹ See the chapter on the *Rise, Fall, and Rise of Colonial Studies 1951-2001* in: F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley, and Los Angeles and London 2005, pp. 33 – 58.

²³² P. Den Boer, *Loci memoriae—Lieux de mémoire*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nuenning, Berlin and New York 2008, p. 21.

²³³ <https://www.nps.gov/sitk/learn/historyculture/totem-park.htm> [access: April 19th, 2022].

²³⁴ <https://www.alaska.org/detail/sitka-national-historical-park> [access: April 19th, 2022].

²³⁵ <https://www.nps.gov/places/k-alyaan-pole.htm> [access: April 19th, 2022].

installed in 1999²³⁶. The placement was preceded by the archeological excavations of the site²³⁷. The pole was curved by a local Tlingit artist Tommy Joseph who is credited for numerous works related to Tlingit tangible and intangible heritage. Carving totem poles is particularly important for Joseph. *My life has had some bumpy roads. I didn't know who I was. But when I started carving totem poles, I began to feel connected to my people, my history, my culture. My work makes me feel like I'm part of the big picture* he explained in an interview with Fine Woodworking²³⁸. Totem poles are far more than just commemorative statues. These are art works which tell stories. Therefore, they could be also considered as primary source while discovering local ethnohistory. After all, the products of historical reconstruction among such communities can take different format than written manuscripts²³⁹. What is very important, they hold a symbolic meaning for the communities which raise them. The raising of the K'alyaan Pole was a big event and was covered in local media²⁴⁰.

5. Various narratives on the battles

The significance of the battle became an important part of local narrative on an institutionalized level as well. Sitka National Historical Park was originally designated as Sitka Park by President Benjamin Harrison on June 21, 1890. It is thus the oldest federally designated park in Alaska²⁴¹. Its name changed several times and for a long time it was known and referred to as Sitka National Monument. For many years it operated in a very limited capacity. The changes came in 1960s with the opening of the new visitor center in 1965. It was followed by the final name change in 1972. Ever since, the site is known as Sitka National Historical Park. Having a new visitor center established, the park's staff started working on their collections and the ideas how to present the stories they were

²³⁶ *K'alyaan Memorial Totem Pole Raising Ceremony. Sept. 17, 1999. Sitka National Historical Park, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series II_Box 036_File Unit 082_Folder 2*

²³⁷ W. J. Hunt Jr., *Sitka National Historical Park, The Archeology of The Fort Unit: Volume I: Results of The 2005-2008 Inventory, U.S. National Park Service Publications and Papers*. 89, Washington D.C. 2010, p. 55.

²³⁸ <https://www.finewoodworking.com/2007/11/01/the-totem-pole-art-of-tommy-josephs> [access: April 19th, 2022].

²³⁹ R. D. Fogelson, *The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents*, [in:] *Ethnohistory*, vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring, 1989), p. 141.

²⁴⁰ Unknown author, *Raising the past*, [in:] *Daily Sentinel. Weekend edition, September 17th, 1999, vol. 61, no. 175*.

²⁴¹ <https://www.nps.gov/sitk/learn/historyculture/park-history.htm> [access: Feb. 22nd, 2022]

intended to present. On December 7th, 1970, Ernest J. Borgman, General Superintendent from the park sent a memorandum addressed at the National Park Service's Division of Publications. This memorandum contains a description of 1804 battle as it was presented then by the park. It reads: *This park commemorates a significant event in our past, the 1804 battle of Alaska. Not large in terms of casualties, the battle had a tremendous impact on a huge area of the world for it marked the last major native resistance to European domination of all of Alaska. Although the Tlingit Indians never surrendered to the Russians in that battle, in the eyes of the world, Alaska belonged to Russia for as long as she could hold it. She held it until 1867. America took over. Had the Tlingits succeeded in keeping the Russians from settlement in Sitka in 1804. it is very probable that Southeast and perhaps all of Alaska would have been conquered by the British*²⁴².

It is interesting to note how the battle is called there: *the battle of Alaska*. Therefore, its geographical scope seems much larger as it further explained in the excerpt. The battle bears a crucial significance for the entire Alaska and is considered a turning point in its history. The narrative presented by the park has changed throughout the last half a century. Tlingit people often emphasized that Russia controlled only a tiny bit of Alaska. Therefore, the legal ground behind the sale of 1867 was doubtful. Today, the story of the battle could be found on park's website. Its longer and more nuanced. It takes the sensitivity of indigenous peoples into consideration. The battle is not called *the battle of Alaska* anymore, but just *the battle of 1804*. One excerpt reads: *The Battle of 1804, including the blockade that followed, was a watershed moment in the history of Alaska and Russian America. While skirmishes and attacks on both sides continued, the Russians did not leave their fortified stronghold in Sitka until they ceded their interest in Alaska to the United States in 1867. The Tlingit would never again gain full control of Baranof Island from their Russian enemies. This created a unique and sometimes volatile relationship in which Russians and Tlingit lived as contentious neighbors, trading partners, and intermittent enemies*²⁴³. This shift could be interpreted as more inclusive

²⁴² Memorandum signed by E. J. Morgan, Archive of Sitka National Historical Park, Historian Secretary Maintenance Seasonals File, DRK – LEHL, p. 1.

²⁴³ <https://www.nps.gov/sitk/learn/historyculture/battle1804.htm> [access: Feb. 22nd, 2022].

towards the Tlingit perspective and generally the one intending to present more diverse and multidimensional narrative. The relationship between the two parties in the decades that followed the battle seems to become a key element of the new narrative. Although lacking written sources, the Tlingit perspective survived through oral history.

It has also influenced popular writing, far from any academic or official narrative. Vanessa Veselka²⁴⁴, a novelist collaborating with *the Atavist Magazine* published an essay based on her family's involvement in the *Kiks.ádi* clan of Tlingit. Although she was not born into a Tlingit family she became a part of it, once her father got adopted by a *Kiks.ádi* family. In her essay, Veselka presented her perspective on the Tlingit approach to sharing their stories:

In 1972, in Juneau, Alaska, my father was adopted into the Kiks.ádi clan of a native Alaskan people called the Tlingit. This made me a clan child of the Kiks.ádi, a relationship that would bewilder me for years (...). For almost 200 years, there was no published Tlingit account of what happened in Sitka. The Tlingit refused to speak publicly of the battle. Doing so ran against deeply held beliefs. First, talking about a conflict where peace now exists was considered rude and dangerous. Second, stories were considered property, tied to certain places and certain people. If it wasn't your dead, it wasn't your story. There is almost no way to describe the Tlingit concept of ownership without distorting or reducing its complexities. Clans "own" their regalia and their crests, but they also own their ancestral relationships to a place, their songs and dances, their stories and the images that came from those stories. If branding and intellectual property rights were taken to an extreme and merged with the Marxist ideal that people must not be alienated from the objects of their labor—nor from the collective identity arising from that labor—then we might approach the Tlingit sense of ownership. The word for this is at.óow, which has been translated as "a purchased thing." The Battle of Sitka was a purchased thing. It was paid for by the Kiks.ádi, and it could not be sold out²⁴⁵.

²⁴⁴ Vanessa Veselka is a popular author who won the 2021 Oregon Book Award for her novel *The Great Offshore Ground*. This book was also included in a Longlist 2020 U.S. National Book Award. See more on her personal website: <https://vanessaveselka.com/> [access: June 7th, 2022].

²⁴⁵ V. Veselka, *The Fort of Young Saplings. A writer's quest to understand her connection to a distant people and their history*, *The Atavist Magazine*, No. 43, 2014. Digital access: <https://magazine.atavist.com/the-fort-of-young-saplings/> [access: April 15th, 2022].

Even though, as Veselka argues, the access to Tlingit oral sources was limited, two interviews conducted with Alex Andrews and Sally Hopkins respectively remain a crucial source to the Tlingit perspective on the battles. Those accounts, alongside Russian and British ones were juxtaposed by Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, both representing Sealaska Heritage Foundation and turned into a report²⁴⁶. Not only do Andrews' and Hopkins' stories allow a new look at the battle but also provide an excellent example of Tlingit cultural production. Jack Goody, a Social Anthropologist from Cambridge University wrote: *all cultural knowledge in oral cultures is stored in the mind, largely because there is little alternative*²⁴⁷. There is an important reflection to be found in Dauenhauers' work. According to Tlingit oral tradition, a simple misunderstanding could be a direct cause which sparked the conflict. That obviously does not exclude nor diminish complex reasons that were gradually leading to the deterioration of mutual relations between Russians and Tlingit people. Sally Hopkins tells the following story: *One day after the [Russian] fishing party left for Redoubt, some old [Tlingit] tribesmen went over to an Aleut-Russian who was sick and played a joke on him by saying, "if we paint your face with this war paint, you will get well". The sick man did not say anything, but he consented. So they put it on him and as soon as they did he died, and they left. When the Russians returned from Redoubt, they found the old man had died and the officials saw he was painted. A council was called and they started to ask, "who painted this old man?" At first no one replied, finally an old man, a tribesman, thinking that he was going to be rewarded, said, "it was me, I painted the old man", and they put him in jail. After a while they fed him meat from the dead man's body*. (*Although it is possible that the Russians played a counter joke on the Indian by merely suggesting that it was human meat, the record of treatment of natives by the Russians favors belief in the Indian story.) The tribesman had a premonition that the meat was not good and he would not eat it, but this*

²⁴⁶ N. Marks Dauenhauer, R. Dauenhauer, "Who Painted the Face of the Little Old Man?" *The Battles of Sitka, 1802 and 1804, from the Tlingit, Russian, and British Points of View. A report on Work in Progress*, Juneau 1987, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series I_Box 78_File Unit 044.

²⁴⁷ J. Goody, *From "Memory in Oral and Literate Traditions"* [in:] *Collective Memory Reader*, ed. J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy, New York 2011, pp. 321—324.

was the last straw. They had tried to get along with the Russians until now. After this incident, a man and his son went to another village nearby for a visit and while there, they were humiliated by references to the “jail incident” – and this disgrace had to be wiped out. After a council it was decided to eliminate the Russian settlement²⁴⁸.

6. 2004 – bicentennial of the battle

Throughout the decades, the battle of Sitka remained a symbolic sign of a Russo-Tlingit conflict. It was also the source of conflicted memory due to its complex background and the lack of written primary sources representing Tlingit perspective. The Cold War played its role as well. Harsh political reality resulted in extremely limited capacity of research exchange among American and Soviet scholars. The collapse of Soviet Union brought a noticeable change in this regard. At the same time, the rapid development of postcolonial theory’s influence on western scholarship²⁴⁹ led to an increasing presence of Tlingit assessment of those historical events.

As the bicentennial anniversary of the battle was approaching, the need to address the difficulties was on a rise as well. In July 2004 a special screen was commissioned Sitka National Historical Park. It was carved by a local Tlingit artist and placed in the park’s lobby²⁵⁰. It was carved for the anniversary of the battle with an idea to serve as a sign of reconciliation and good will. Therefore, it features elements and symbols of both Russian and Tlingit culture. There is an orthodox church located in the center of the screen. Presumably St. Michael’s Cathedral. It is surrounded by two ravens. The screen is called *Yadaa.aayi x’éen*. It was a nickname given by the Tlingit to the people who lived close to the mountain in early days and could be translated as *Around the Face of Mount Edgumbe*²⁵¹.

²⁴⁸ *From the traditional story of the Kik-sadi clan as told by Mrs. Sally Hopkins, and translated by her son Peter C. Neilson. Correlated by George A. Hall of the National Park Service, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 26369 Sitka SNM Record Collection_Series IV_File Unit 089.*

²⁴⁹ See: P. K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism*, [in:] *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*, Chichester (UK) 2015, p. 122.

²⁵⁰ <https://www.nps.gov/places/yadaa-aayi-x-%C3%A9en.htm> [access: April 15th, 2022].

²⁵¹ *Ibidem*.



Courtesy of NPS Photo/ Cinnamon Dockham

In September 2004 Kiks.adi members invited all parties to participate in their traditional “crying ceremony”²⁵². This is a custom to commemorate and mourn the lost ones. Irina Afrosina, a direct descendent of Alexander Baranov was among the invited. A mutual participation of Americans, Russians and the Tlingit allowed for the reconciliation process to begin. The presence of Baranov’s lineage provided an additional meaning and significance to the event. A formal reconciliation ceremony was also a part of the bicentennial program²⁵³. This way, ancestors of all involved parties decided to bury the two century-old grief by participating in the reconciliation ritual for the first time in history. A interpretive panel, commemorating this event was also commissioned by the National Park Service and placed at the site of 1804 battle. Thus, creating an interesting memory practice overlap – a commemoration of the commemorative event.

The initial reconciliation process started shortly after the battle of 1804. Already in 1805 Baranov invited Tlingit representatives to his new Settlement in New Archangel. What’s important to note is various Tlingit clans had different attitude towards Russians. The

²⁵² <https://www.nps.gov/museum/centennial/treasures/cry.htm> [access: April 15th, 2022].

²⁵³ R. Bial, E. Edwards, *The People and Culture of the Tlingit*, New York 2016, p. 114.

battle created tensions between them as well. Kiks.adi were the ones who were willing to fight for all costs. Even if it meant that the the youngest and the oldest among them had to be killed in order not to weaken the party. The crying of the babies could attract Russians, while the mobility of the oldest was largely limited. Both the former and the latter might not survive the harsh conditions of the planned retreat²⁵⁴. Several clans, Kaagwaantaan among them, expressed anger at Kiks.adi for that²⁵⁵. They sought more friendly relations with the Russians and eventually played an important role in peace negotiations. Sergei Kan argues that according to Tlingit oral tradition a ‘high ranking Kaagwaantaan leader’ became a crucial figure in ensuring the negotiations on Tlingit part²⁵⁶. As he was married to a Kiks.adi woman he could represent both clans. Eventually, the treaty was signed in July 1805²⁵⁷. The gifts were exchanged, and traditional dances were performed. This treaty is important as it became a reference point in the reconciliation ceremony that took place two centuries later.

Even though it would be naïve to expect that this one event would bring an end to the memory conflict surrounding the battle of Sitka and more general Russo-Tlingit past it was definitely a very strong symbolic moment. It can be seen as a starting point in a difficult reconciliation process that still takes place and will still need more time.

²⁵⁴ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

²⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

²⁵⁷ A. V. Grinev, *The Tlingit...*, p. 139.



An interpretive panel at the site of the battle. Photo by K. Dziekan

Another important aspect of the 2004 ceremonies was related to the potlatch tradition. Potlatch is a *ceremonial distribution of property and gifts to affirm or reaffirm social status, as uniquely institutionalized by the American Indians of the Northwest Pacific coast* as Britannica explains²⁵⁸. The tradition of potlatch was also very common among the Tlingit. They practiced it till the beginning of the XX century. With the new age, the Tlingit were forced to abandon this custom, as it was deemed *backward* by the dominating culture. The last potlatch took place in 1904 and was held by the Kaagwaantaan clan. Although it is difficult to consider it the last with full certainty due to the limited sources, it is the last potlatch to be known²⁵⁹. Therefore, it achieved a special place in Sitka's

²⁵⁸ See the full definition at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/potlatch> [access: April 15th, 2022].

²⁵⁹ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

indigenous inhabitants' cultural memory and is often referred to as *legendary* or *famous*. Thus, not only did 2004 mark the bicentennial of the Battle of Sitka, but also marked the centennial of the last potlatch. Since the reconciliation ceremony included offerings, it turned into a very powerful commemorative practice and a ritual of reclaiming the indigenous tradition, identity, and memory. The proper celebration of centennial potlatch followed just few weeks after the reconciliation ceremony, in October 2004²⁶⁰.

In 2010, *National Park Magazine*, a newspaper issued by the National Park Service published an article covering the topic of both *Last Potlatch* centennial and Battle of Sitka bicentennial. Its author, Carolyn Servid wrote: *Park Ranger Tom Gamble's Kiks.adi ancestors fought and fell in the 1804 battle. "They were protecting their land for future generations," he says. "Now the park protects our ancestral lands and perpetuates our history indefinitely into the future, not just for our clan but for the public." Indeed, Sitkans of all ages relish walking among the totem poles along the rainforest trails or beachcombing each fall they marvel at Indian River's crooked runs of salmon coming home. And they are reminded, by a clearing where the Kiks.adi fort stood, of the park's human story. There, in the open, stands a pole commemorating Chief K'alyaan, whose blacksmith hammer is held in trust for his clan by Sitka National Historical Park*²⁶¹.

The role of Chief K'alyaan is brought to the reader's attention again. Along with the chief himself, the symbolic nature is ascribed to his hammer. This is another example showing significance of this artefact for Tlingit community in Sitka. K'alyaan's hammer (and his helmet) yet again proves to be a powerful tool of local memory practice and the meaning of the Battle of Sitka 1804 for cultural memory of the Tlingit of Sitka.

²⁶⁰ R. W. Preucel, L. F. Williams, *The Centennial Potlatch*, *Expedition Magazine*, no. 47.2 (2005): <http://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/?p=9625> [access: April 15th, 2022].

²⁶¹ C. Servid, *Battling for Sitka. Two centuries ago, Russians and Tlingit Indians fought for an Alaskan Outpost*, *National Park Conservation Association – National Park Magazine*, Fall 2010, p. 58-59.

7. Perception of Baranov among the indigenous Alaskans

Alexander Baranov remains a most significantly commemorated and remembered figure among the Russians who stayed in Alaska. His tenure as a Chief Manager of RAC and the supervisor of Russian America (1799 - 1818) was much longer than the tenures of each Chief Manager who came after him²⁶². Baranov was the one to establish rules and laws which were to follow in the new colony. Native Alaskans were also subjected to these laws apart from the laws created specifically for them. A common practice during Baranov's tenure was the corporal punishment of indigenous people, which became forbidden only after Baranov was replaced.²⁶³ At the beginning that type of punishment, especially flogging, was executed regardless of the social and tribal status of the punished individual. Therefore, even members of the elite among the Aleuts were subjected to flogging. It quickly became a source of tensions and was eventually abolished by Baranov himself²⁶⁴. In general, Baranov is said to have a negative image among the Tlingit. Thomas F. Thornton argues that Baranov was considered cold, aggressivem and stingy. The Tlingit even nicknamed him *L'ush Teix* ("Without a Heart")²⁶⁵. They accused him of exploitation of the natural resources, law payment for their work and ignoring local laws and habits. Nevertheless, when Baranov was due to leave his post as Chief Manager and leave New Archangel for good in 1818, he was receiving numerous visitors who would come to bid him farewell and show their respect. Baranov has developed amiable relationships with several Tlingit leaders, among others the Kiks.ádi Chiefs. One of them, Naawushkeitl, who was particularly close to Baranov was met with special gifts and honors²⁶⁶. He was not the only Kiks.ádi leader who came to say goodbye to Baranov though. Even Katlian, Baranov's legendary opponent visited him prior to his departure to wish him well.²⁶⁷

²⁶² J. M. Antonson, W. S. Hanable, *Alaska's Heritage. Unit 3 – Human History: 1725 – 1867, Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History, No. 133, The Alaska Historical Society, Fairbanks 1992, p. 151.*

²⁶³ L. T. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

²⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

²⁶⁵ T. F. Thornton (with the assistance of F. Hope), *Traditional Tlingit Use of Sitka National Historical Park. Final Report, Sitka 1998, p. 38.*

²⁶⁶ K. N. Owens, A. Yu. Petrov, *Empire Maker. Aleksandr Baranov and Russian Colonial Expansion into Alaska and Northern California*, Seattle, and London 2015, p. 268.

²⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 268.

8. Baranov commemorated

Elena V. Alekseeva argues in her recently published article that cultural memory focuses on exact moments in the past. As it is not possible to preserve the entire past, cultural memory tends to focus on specific, most prominent figures of such past. In the case of Russian America, Alekseeva lists three key figures: Grigoriy Shelikhov, Ivan Kuskov and Aleksander Baranov²⁶⁸. In Sitka, Baranov is definitely the most significant case. One of the key aspects of Baranov's legacy in Sitka (and Alaska in general) is his material, spatial and toponymic presence. The memory of RAK's first Chief Manager is present in local geography, infrastructure, and administration. Sitka is located on Baranof²⁶⁹ Island. One of the streets in downtown Sitka is called Baranof Street. Baranof Elementary School is located right at this street. In the very heart of the town lies The Castle Hill. Although there was never a castle there, the name stayed²⁷⁰. It is one of the most recognizable places in Sitka and one of the most strongly associated with Baranov as well. It is also known by its alternative, yet official name *Baranof Castle*. It is officially recognized for its historical and cultural legacy and considered part of Alaskan heritage. The hill was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962²⁷¹. Its full name is Baranof Castle State Historic Site and both US and Alaskan official bodies (such as National Park Service and Alaska Department of Natural Resources) call it *one of the most historically significant sites in Alaska*²⁷². There is no building at top of the hill anymore. The historic 'castle', a Chief Manager's house was destroyed in the fire in 1894 and never restored. In early 20th century the area was occupied by the United States Department of Agriculture. It had a structure built on the hill, but once it was no longer necessary it was demolished in 1955²⁷³. Since then, the hill serves the purposes of recreation, remembrance, and commemoration,

²⁶⁸ E. V. Alekseeva, Russkaya Amerika. Aktory, mesta i formy kulturnoy pamyati, [in:] Zhurnal Frontirnykh Issledovaniy, No. 2, 2020, p. 106.

²⁶⁹ Many Alaskan toponyms of Russian origin have suffixes "of" or "off" instead of "ov". Such spelling was common in the US (and in English language in general) before WW2. Eventually, the form "ov", like 'Baranov' was popularized and replaced 'of', like 'Baranof'. Still, names that already existed remained in their original spelling.

²⁷⁰ S. W. Haycox, *Alaska. An American Colony*, Seattle (Washington) 2020, p. 128.

²⁷¹ <https://www.nps.gov/places/baranof-castle-state-historic-site.htm> [access: April 26th, 2022].

²⁷² <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspunits/southeast/baranofcastle.htm> [access: April 26th 2022].

²⁷³ <https://www.nps.gov/places/baranof-castle-state-historic-site.htm> [access: April 26th 2022].

given its broad historical context. Prior to the Russian arrival this was a site of Kiks.adi settlement – Noow Tlein²⁷⁴. Once abandoned by them after the 1804 battle it was chosen for a residence by Baranov and remained such a location till the last days of Russian America. All Chief Managers who followed Baranov were living there including the last one Dmitrii Maksutov. However, in 1821, then Chief Manager Semyon Yanovsky attempted to leave the hill and New Archangel as a capital in general. He proposed to the board of RAK that the capital could be reinstated in Kodiak²⁷⁵. His proposal was rejected, and Castle Hill remained a headquarter for RAK till 1867. It was also in that very location where the official ceremony of taking Alaska over by the United States took place²⁷⁶.



Entrance on the Castle Hill. Photo by K. Dziekan

²⁷⁴ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁷⁵ J. R. Gibson, *Sitka versus Kodiak: Countering the Tlingit Threat and Situating the Colonial Capital in Russian America*, [in:] *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, February 1998, p.72.

²⁷⁶ V. Rokot, *Knyaz Russkoy Ameriki D. P. Maksutov*, Moscow 2007, pp. 233 – 237.

9. Cultural legacy in Sitka

Although most prominent, Baranov is not the only example of Russia's legacy in Alaska's memory space²⁷⁷. According to the results of the research conducted by Jordan Marijana Alexander in 2000 (and continued through the first decade of 21st century), there have been 350 sites marked on all maps of Sitka throughout its historical existence on cartography. 23% of those sites' names have or had Russian background. 51% American, 19% Tlingit and 7% other²⁷⁸. Of course, including historical maps influences such a calculation, as there could have not been any American names on Russian maps from 19th century. However, if we look only at recent (late 20th/early 21 century) American maps, the Russian percentage is only reduced to 19%. The significant reduction could be observed in Tlingit names, which represent only 7% of site names²⁷⁹. This could be explained with the tendency of naming new sites with American background by US officials throughout 20th century. Alexander studied the street names in Sitka as well. During his research 19% of streets had names associated with Russian culture and Russian heritage. Remaining 81% is divided into following groups: American 70%, Tlingit 7% and Finnish 4% accordingly²⁸⁰. The latter is particularly interesting. It cannot be considered separately from the Russian heritage as Finns commemorated in Sitka came there as RAK's employees and Russian citizens. Thus, they belonged to the same political, and in a way, cultural heritage. The case of Finnish subjects of tsarist Russia in Sitka's cultural memory will be discussed further.

Such a resemblance of Sitka's cultural heritage in sites names could however change in the near future. Following the decolonial protests and activist-led initiatives the commemorative landscape of American cities is changing constantly. Sitka is no exception here. Although both nations and local communities have been discussing the pillars of

²⁷⁷ E. Rybicka, *Przestrzeń pamięci*, [in:] *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, pp. 409-411.

²⁷⁸ J. M. Alexander, *Exploring Spiritual Landscape in Sitka Alaska to Enhance Cross-Cultural Understanding. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. School of Environment University of Auckland*, 2009, pp. 239-240.

²⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

²⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 252.

their collective identities for many decades, it is the last years, that arguably turned the so-called *culture wars* into a burning issue. In April 2022, New York Times published an op-ed of its conservative columnist David Brooks, titled *Globalization Is Over: The Global Culture Wars Have Begun*²⁸¹. Such beginning of this war has been announced several times in last years. Unlike in previous decades, nations and local communities are more and more openly reshaping its collective identity and calling for adequate reshaping of their communities' commemorative practices, memory sites and memory space. One of the most prominent and renown scholars of memory studies, Jan Assmann argued on collective identity: *Consciousness of social belonging, also called "social identity," depends on shared knowledge and shared memory; and these are both articulated by a common language or communicated by way of a common system of symbols. It is not just a matter of words, sentences, and texts here, because communication may also take place, as we have seen, through rites and dances, patterns and decorations, costumes, tattoos, food and drink, monuments, pictures, landscapes, and so on. Everything can become a symbol to denote community. It is not the medium that decides, but the structure and function of the signs. This complex of shared symbols might be called "cultural formation," and when this has been established and, above all, passed on, it corresponds to a collective identity (...)*²⁸².

10. Baranof Elementary School

The process of 'cultural formation' still takes place. In Sitka, Russian legacy is among the most vividly discussed and questioned. Baranof Elementary School has been under scrutiny in the past years. Several individuals have called for renaming the school. Finally, in January 2021 the idea was brought to the Sitka School District School Board. It decided to forward the decision-making process to the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, an official body representing local Indigenous Peoples. Since the Russian heritage, and Baranov's personal

²⁸¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/08/opinion/globalization-global-culture-war.html> [access: April 26th 2022].

²⁸² J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, New York 2011, pp. 119-120.

legacy in particular, is considered to be problematic especially for them. Tribe's Cultural Resources Committee came up with a recommendation to name the school after Charlie Joseph Sr. Awdigaan Hít, a highly respected local educator²⁸³. Surprisingly for many, the proposal was voted down by the School Board, including the votes of Tribal members. One of them, Melanie Boord argued that the decision needed to be backed by the opinion of Sitka's residents. She conducted an electronic survey, which included the responses of 700 Sitkans. The results showed how divided the community is on this aspect of their cultural memory. 50% of the respondents (354) voted for Awdigaan Hít, another 14% for Charlie Joseph Sr. Awdigaan Hít (101) and 2% for Charlie Joseph Sr. (15). That gives a number of 66% supporters of the Tribe's recommendation. However, 24% of respondents (173) voted for keeping the Baranof's name. 4% were undetermined, 5% suggested other names and 1% opted for simple Sitka Elementary School²⁸⁴. As a result, on March 2nd, 2022, the School Board decided to put the case on hold²⁸⁵ and during its meeting on April 6th, the board concluded to take down the motion to change the name until further notice²⁸⁶.

The survey conducted by Melanie Boord had no methodology behind it. Therefore, it could hardly be considered a credible source for academic research. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable insight into the current state of collective social identity of Sitkans and their cultural memory. Especially given the lack of valid academic sources.

²⁸³ L. Widmark, *Sitka Tribe of Alaska Recommendation on the Renaming of Baranof Elementary School*, dated: February 2nd, 2022. Archive of KCAW Sitka, digital access: <https://www.kcaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/STA-BES-Renaming-Recommendation-for-SSD-School-Board.pdf> [access: April 26th, 2022].

²⁸⁴ M. Boord, *Public Testimony on the Baranof School Renaming*, dated: February 23rd, 2022, Archive of KCAW Sitka, digital access: https://www.kcaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/File_-Melonie-Boord_Public-Testimony-2.23.22.pdf, [access: April 26th, 2022].

²⁸⁵ <https://www.kcaw.org/2022/03/08/with-conflicting-opinion-from-tribal-members-sitka-school-board-pauses-elementary-school-name-change/> [access: April 26th, 2022].

²⁸⁶ <https://www.kcaw.org/2022/04/08/baranof-school-name-change-fails-board-elects-new-president/> [access: April 26th, 2022].

11. Baranov statue

Although the case of Baranof Elementary School resembles the current situation in Sitka, it is the case of Baranov's statue, that is the prism through which one can observe the conflicted memory in Sitka. The monument was erected on October 15th, 1989, at the very center of Sitka in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall. Official commissioning was an important and a festive event. Sitka's 'The Honorable Mayor' Dan Keck assisted by its former mayor John E. Dapcevich accepted the statue 'for the people of Sitka'²⁸⁷. The statue was blessed by the Archpriest Eugene Bourdukofsky, St. Michael's Russian Orthodox Cathedral. Songs were performed: "America" by Bates & Wood, "America, My Homeland" by O'Keefe & Paterson, and "Alaska, Flag Song" by Drake & Dusenbury²⁸⁸. The event was a mixture of American and Alaskan patriotism with the pride of Sitka's Russian heritage. The Harrigan Centennial Hall was built in 1967 to commemorate 100 years of the Alaska Purchase and was named after it²⁸⁹. The bronze statue of Baranov was a gift to the town from local businessmen Llyod and Barbara Hames. Commissioning the statue in the midst of *perestroika* was a sign of thaw in Soviet-US relations and a result of a growing interest in Russia's colonial heritage in America. Such heritage was seen as a tool to boost Alaskan tourism. A statue commemorating the most significant creator of Russian heritage could be of particular value, which could draw attention of tourists returning to their cruises nearby²⁹⁰. Shortly after the statue's dedication, local newspaper Daily Sitka Sentinel informed about the joy and excitement, which emerged in Soviet town of Kargopol, Baranov's birthplace after the local community had heard about the statue. Kargopol citizens sent a letter to Sitka's mayor²⁹¹, expressing their feelings. The sponsors prepared a pamphlet for the commissioning of the statue. Dr. Evelyn Bonner wrote gave there a description of Baranov's qualities: *Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov was*

²⁸⁷ Booklet: *Commemorative Statue Dedication. Centennial Building. One Thirty O'Clock. Sitka, Alaska*, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series II_Box 035_File Unit 072.

²⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁸⁹ <https://www.cityofsitka.com/departments/HarriganCentennialHall> [access: April 29th, 2022].

²⁹⁰ K. N. Owens, A. Yu. Petrov, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

²⁹¹ W. Swagel, *Baranof Again Ties Sitkans to Russians*, [in:] *Daily Sitka Sentinel. Sitka Weekend*, Friday, April 21st, 1989.

*one of the outstanding personalities in the settlement of North America by Europeans (...). History does not tell us for sure whether Baranov was a violent ruler or a benevolent leader, but it tells us that he was an honest, generous, and hardworking man*²⁹². However, despite donor's intentions and the acceptance of the statue 'for the people of Sitka' not all the people of Sitka shared the view of the town's elite. The statue sparked debates and controversies from the very beginning. Before it was even dedicated. Tommy Joseph, a Tlingit woodcarver records: *the day before the statue was supposed to be unveiled, somebody cut off Baranov's nose. They had to make a new one and repair it. It was never revealed who did it*²⁹³. The backlash against the statue continued in the entire period of post-Cold War era.

Monuments are means of media production, which are intentionally created by certain group of people to commemorate a person or an event²⁹⁴. They intervene in the spatial characteristics of their location and inscribe a certain perception of a respective event or a person among the local community. Andrzej Szpociński emphasizes that monuments themselves are one of Nora's *lieux de memoir*²⁹⁵. James A. Young points out several aspects surrounding a role of monuments in cultural memory: *Indeed, in the eyes of many contemporary artists and critics, the traditional monument's essential stiffness and grandiose pretensions to permanence thus doom it to an archaic, premodern status. Even worse, by insisting that its meaning is as fixed as its place in the landscape, the monument seems oblivious to the essential mutability in all cultural artifacts, the ways the significance in all art evolves over time. In this way, monuments have long sought to provide a naturalizing locus for memory, in which a state's triumphs and martyrs, its ideals and founding myths are cast as naturally true as the landscape in which they stand. These are the monument's sustaining illusions, the principles of its seeming longevity and power. But in fact, as several generations of artists—modern and post-modern alike—have made*

²⁹² E. Bonner, *Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov. 1747 – 1819*, [in:] Booklet: *Commemorative Statue Dedication. Centennial Building. One Thirty O'Clock. Sitka, Alaska*, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series II_Box 035_File Unit 072.

²⁹³ Interview with Tommy Joseph, conducted at the Sitka National Historical Park by Kacper Dziekan on October 20th, 2021.

²⁹⁴ W. Bałus, *Pomnik*, [in:] *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, pp. 387-388.

²⁹⁵ A. Szpociński, *Miejsca pamięci (lieux de mémoire)*, [in:] *Teksty Drugie* 2008, 4, p. 12.

*scathingly clear, neither the monument nor its meaning is really everlasting. Both a monument and its significance are constructed in particular times and places, contingent on the political, historical, and aesthetic realities of the moment*²⁹⁶. The meaning of Baranov statue is certainly not everlasting. Neither is it mutually understood by Sitka's residents. Once erected, Bronze-made Baranov is a man in good shape, sitting firmly at the pedestal and looking with confidence towards the horizon. Such an image is rather contradictory to Baranov's actual characteristics to be found in the primary sources²⁹⁷. The inscription placed on the plaque read: *That we may dwell in amity and peace forever in this region*²⁹⁸. The Baranov's peaceful message is one of the mostly contested aspects of his rule in Alaska. Although Baranov is said to seek peace in his colony²⁹⁹, his attempts were not fully successful. Different relations with various Tlingit clans add to the complexity of this issue. According to Sergei Kan, Baranov managed to establish friendly relations especially with Kaagwaantaan, who respected Baranov and were even referring to him as *shaade haani* (lit. "the one at the head of us"³⁰⁰). Baranov interactions with Kiks.adi were much more complicated, which influences the modern perception of RAK's first Chief Manager among Sitka's Indigenous population. The vandalization of the statue, mentioned by Tommy Joseph prior to its dedication could be (but doesn't have to be) related to that perception. He adds: *Other [indigenous] people said 'why don't we do something to balance that, with Katlian for example, but it always got a shutdown*³⁰¹. This is an yet another example of the conflicted memory space in the city. Baranov's foe, Kiks.adi heroic leader is presented as a proposal to be commemorated as a balance to Baranov. The tensions reemerged from time to time reaching its first peak in 2017 on the eve of 150th anniversary of Alaska Purchase. Local media covered the attempts of removing the statue from the post and/or possibly placing there a statue of Katlian³⁰².

²⁹⁶ J. A. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nuenning, Berlin, and New York 2008, pp. 360-361.

²⁹⁷ K. N. Owens, A. Yu. Petrov, *op. cit.*, p. 276

²⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

²⁹⁹ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

³⁰¹ Interview with Tommy Joseph, conducted at the Sitka National Historical Park by Kacper Dziekan on October 20th, 2021.

³⁰² <https://www.kcaw.org/2017/11/27/statue-russian-leader-sparks-controversy/> [access: April 29th, 2022].

More and more vocal calls for the removal were in line with the general development of postcolonial discourse in the US and actions aimed at decolonization³⁰³ of American public sphere. Various historical colonial figures started to be evaluated through the lens of postcolonial theory, indigenous people's oral tradition or other accounts of historically forgotten people such as African Americans. One of the most significant cases was the deconstruction of one of the most prominent American heroes George Washington³⁰⁴. Although Baranov's case is different, it is also his relations with the peoples subjected to him (e.g., Aleuts) and influenced by him that served as a base for the new perception. The attempt to remove Baranov statue had a second and final peak in 2020 during the Black Life Matters protests that followed the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. The monument was vandalized again, and the petition was launched to call for the removal. The petition reached 2,886 supporters³⁰⁵ and the discussion on the removal was brought in front of the Sitka Assembly. After the public hearings and debates, on July 14th, 2020, the Assembly voted to remove the statue from the public, and to relocate it to the local history museum³⁰⁶. This news brought Sitka fame as it was no longer commented yet by local media such as the *KCAW* radio³⁰⁷, but also a wide range spanning from the state media such as a *KTOO*³⁰⁸ and *ADN*³⁰⁹ to national media such as *the Washington Post*³¹⁰. The decision received a backlash from Russian national media such as *Rossiyskaya Gazieta*³¹¹ and English-language ones, which are oriented on the foreign audience, such

³⁰³ See: P. K. Nayar, *Decolonisation*, [in:] *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*, Chichester (UK) 2015, p. 45.

³⁰⁴ B. Schwartz, *Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington*, [in:] *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (April 1991), pp. 221-236.

³⁰⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/sitka-city-council-remove-baranov-statue> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³⁰⁶ City and Borough of Sitka, *Resolution no. 2020-23, A Resolution of the City of Borough of Sitka Concerning the Relocation of the Alexander Baranov Statue to the Sitka Historical Society Museum*, A digital archive of City and Borough of Sitka Assembly: <https://sitka.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4590312&GUID=BA0B64C7-D3AB-43C3-8DBB-A7EDCED89493&Options=ID|Text|Search=baranov+statue> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³⁰⁷ <https://www.kcaw.org/2020/07/15/assembly-approves-plan-to-relocate-baranov-statue/> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³⁰⁸ <https://www.alaskanewssource.com/2020/10/06/sitkas-baranov-statue-to-be-relocated-to-local-museum/> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³⁰⁹ <https://www.adn.com/politics/2020/07/15/sitka-will-remove-controversial-russian-statue-from-prominent-downtown-spot/> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³¹⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/alaska-city-relocates-russian-colonist-statue-to-museum/2020/07/15/cd7f46d0-c6e8-11ea-a825-8722004e4150_story.html [access: April 29th, 2022].

³¹¹ <https://rg.ru/2020/07/16/pochemu-v-ssha-demontirovali-pamiatnik-praviteliu-russkoj-ameriki.html> [access: April 29th, 2022].

as *Russia Beyond*³¹². The decision was also met with an official response from the Russian Ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov, who commented: *We were deeply saddened by the fact that, amid the wave of desecration and demolition of monuments to historical figures that rose during the mass protests in the United States, it was decided to dismantle the statue of the main ruler of Russian settlements in North America installed in 1989. The resolution was adopted and included many emotional assessments (...) It is regrettable that history keeps on being politicized*³¹³. Since there is no organized group of Sitkans with Russian ethnic background no attempt to stop the removal came from the local community. However, the Russian government-sponsored cultural organization *Russian Community Council of the USA* intended to keep the statue but failed.

12. Baranov in cultural memory of the Tlingit

As was mentioned above, Tlingit historical attitude towards Baranov is complicated as it varies depending on the clan. However, given the historical losses of the Kiks.adi, and their accounts of Baranov, the modern perception is seen through the pain inflicted on the Kiks.adi and their cultural representation in the town. Such a perception strongly shapes the cultural memory of the Tlingit in Sitka. Sitka Tribe of Alaska was among the main actors contributing to the removal of Baranov statue. It is one of the main organizations representing Indigenous peoples of Sitka and speaking on their behalf. Their mission is: *To exercise sovereign rights and powers, to preserve the integrity of tribal society, and to improve the lives of individual Tribal Citizens*³¹⁴. Chuck Miller, Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Culture and Community Liaison II explains their position on Baranov statue and the perception of Baranov in general:

There is a lot of people who have mixed feelings on it. My opinion is that when people initially wanted to have that [statue] made, they wanted to remember the past. They didn't

³¹² <https://www.rbth.com/history/332452-whats-wrong-removing-russian-statue-sitka-alaska-baranov> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³¹³ <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/answers-to-media-questions-about-the-monument-to-alexander-baranov-in-alaska/> [access: April 29th, 2022].

³¹⁴ <https://www.sitkatribes.org/> [access: April 29th, 2022].

really understand the full history when they did that. They purchased that bronze statue not really thinking of how it effects everybody. They just wanted to honor a person who came here and made his mark. I understand it. But they didn't realize how bad of a person this person was to our Native people. Therefore, removing him and putting him in the museum is a good resolution. But there are a lot of Native folks who say: 'let's destroy that thing'. He wasn't a very honorable man; he didn't treat our people good. It's s slap in the face having a statue right out there where everyone can see. It's like having an oppressor right out in the public to be reminded that 'you guys were oppressed, you guys were treated poorly. We're going to put a statue to remind you of that'. You see it's not ok. It's like having a statue of Hitler. Out in front of everybody to see. 'We just need to remember this guy. He made an impact on Israel'. Of course, he did. He slaughtered millions and millions of people. Why would you want that up there? It doesn't make any sense. I think they should've got rid of this statue, personally. But you can't erase history. They put it in the museum because it's part of the history. Now it's not in the public space. I know that the Tribe has been given a small, bronze totem by one of our descendants, who lives in the Seattle area. He's a descendant of this area. His clan comes from here. He made a bronze totem that will be donated through the Tribe and hopefully put up around the Centennial Building area³¹⁵.

As of spring 2022, there is no new statue, totem or any other commemorative object placed near the Centennial Building. There is only a granite rock left, which served as a base for the Baranov statue. The question on what is going to happen to that space in the future is much more challenging than it was with the case of Baranof Elementary School. Even in the latter the community failed to find a common ground at this point. One can expect that with the former it will take time until any decision is made. Erecting a new commemorative item would directly interfere with Sitka's public space in its very center. It will be a part of a larger discussion within the community on the perception of the town's past and the role Baranov alongside the rest of the Russian Empire's representatives

³¹⁵ An interview with Chuck Miller, conducted online by Kacper Dziekan on November 5th, 2021.

played in it. After all, the decisions on commemorative practices are determined by various socio-spatial conditions and constraints³¹⁶.

13. Baranov statue in Sitka History Museum (SHM)

After the decision was made to remove the statue and put it in the museum, Baranov was added to the permanent exhibition. Generally, finding a good location where a human-size statue could fit both narrative-wise and space-wise doesn't seem an easy task. Nevertheless, the SHM staff managed to secure a place in the section dedicated to early days of Russian permanent presence in Sitka. Although outside of a public eye, Baranov statue remains controversial as it still exists in the public space, just indoors. What is more, in the museum, thus the institution being a certain custodian of the past and a memory agent itself³¹⁷. Museums are public history actors, so unlike work of scholars, they work is challenged by the public. It is even more challenging when history involves episodes of violence³¹⁸. Such is the case of Baranov's time in Alaska. Therefore, the museum curators face particular hardship creating a historical narrative that could be embraced by large groups of audience during the interaction with it. Alison Landsberg coined a term *prosthetic memory* to describe such an interaction between the individual and a historical narrative presented by a memory actor, such as museum³¹⁹. Hal Spackman, the Executive Director of SHM explains how they deal with the challenge posed by conflicted memory regarding Baranov legacy in Sitka during the times of prosthetic memory:

Every visitor [to Sitka] would come by that statue. It was a dominant piece of the landscape out there. The Alaska Native people, and other people now said: 'we have to go by that statue and look at this as a constant reminder of Russian colonialism'. Some people view that as bad, some people view as just history. Two very different viewpoints.

³¹⁶ R. Rose-Redwood, D. Alderman, M. Azaryahu, *Collective memory and the politics of urban space: an introduction*, [in:] *GeoJournal*, 2008 Vol. 73; Issue. 3, p. 161.

³¹⁷ A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Muzeum*, [in:] *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, pp. 246-250.

³¹⁸ E. T. Linenthal, *Violence and the American Landscape: The Challenge of Public History*, [in:] *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Public History (Winter, 2002), pp. 10-11.

³¹⁹ A. Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory. The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York 2004, p. 2.

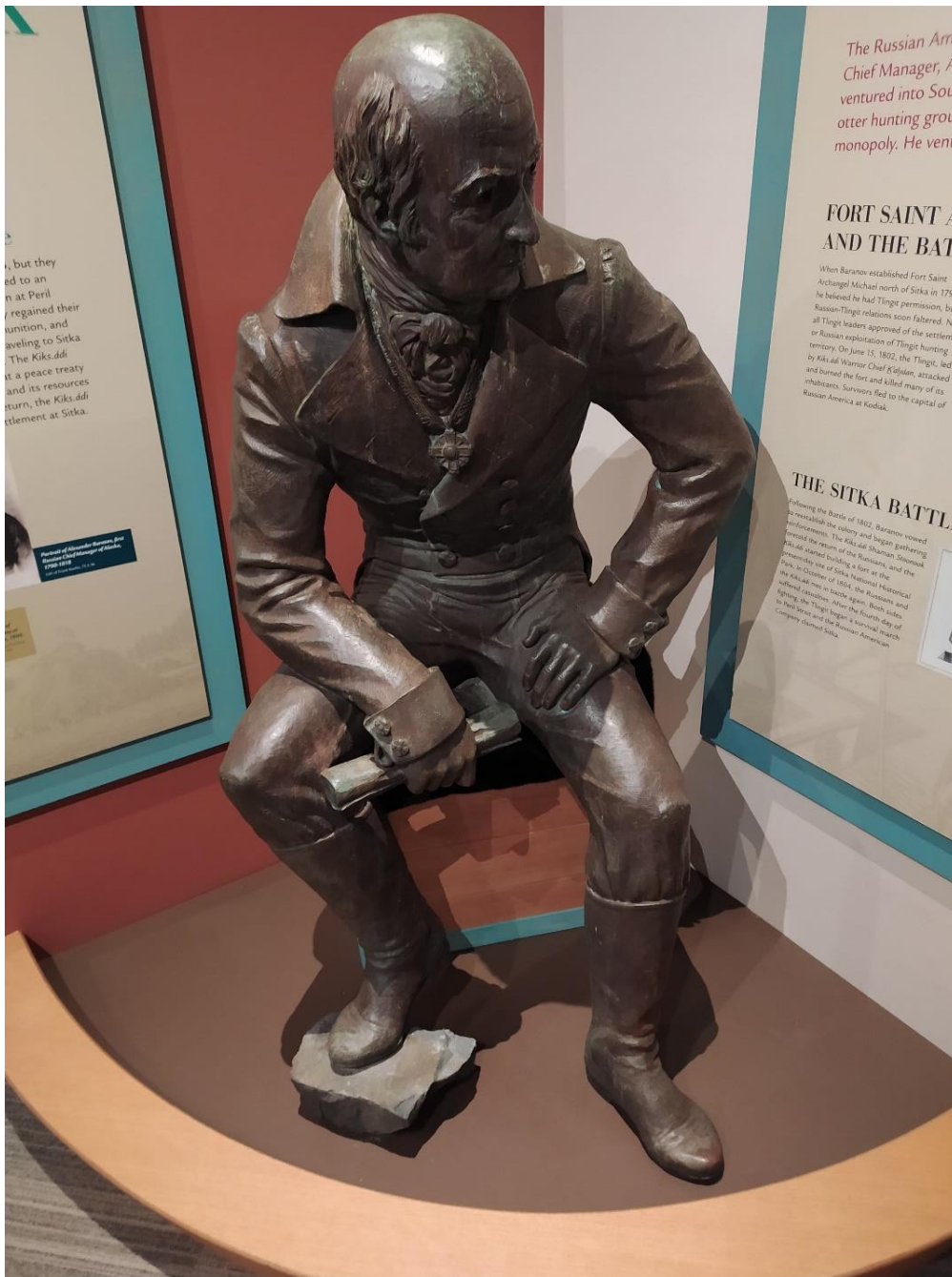
It's like: 'we should not statue or memorialize persons like Baranov, who did bad things'. Other people say: 'no, that's history. It's part of things we should talk about and remember'. It's a clash (...). Ultimately, for some people the problem comes to the money. Why would people come to Sitka? To visit it. Because our economy makes a lot of money off the tourism. A lot of people are fascinating by the Russian creations. Should that go away? No, because it is important to our cultural tourism. Should we tell the story that's more truthful and honest? Yes. Should we talk about different perspectives? Yes, but it doesn't mean it has to go away. We've taken the concept that it is part of our history. We're going to tell it in a most objective way that we can. That's our overwriting philosophy.

Nicole Fiorino, a curator at the museum adds: *That's why we decided to move it into the museum. We have the ability to give a wider understanding. To give everybody a voice*³²⁰. Since Sitka Historical Society is a non-profit, everyone is welcome to join and get involved. Although the permanent exhibition is not participatory, the curators seek consultations. The society has collaborated in recent years among others with following organizations and institutions: Museums Alaska Association, Alaska State Museums, University of Alaska SE, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Alaska Native Brotherhood / Alaska Native Sisterhood, Alaska Native Elders, Sitka Historical Preservation Commission, Alaska Day Committee and Pioneers of Alaska³²¹. Such a broad range of partners and collaborators allow the staff to at least attempt to fulfill the goals mentioned by Spackman and Fiorino – to give everybody a voice and to tell the story as objectively as possible. Such a task was famously put in front of historians by Leopold von Ranke. However, achieving it in such example of public history as narrative-based museum is rather difficult. Another aspect is the role of tourism, mentioned as well by Spackman. Although tourism is generally considered a challenge regarding the work with heritage, John Tunbridge points out that heritage tourism could actually contribute to community

³²⁰ Interview with Hal Spackman and Nicole Fiorino, conducted at the Sitka History Museum by Kacper Dziekan on October 12th, 2021.

³²¹ <https://sitkahistory.com/the-sitka-historical-society/strategic-plan/> [access: May 3rd, 2022].

building process and sustainable development goals if addressed properly³²². Such is the task Sitka History Museum needs to address.



Statue of Baranov inside Sitka History Museum. Photo by K. Dziekan

³²² J. Tunbridge, *Zmiana warty. Dziedzictwo na przełomie XX i XXI w.*, trans. by A. Kamińska, Krakow 2018, pp. 171-184.

14. Sitka History Museum as a memory agent

Sitka History Museum is located inside the Harrigan Centennial Hall since the creation of the latter in 1967. It is managed by Sitka Historical Society, a non-profit founded in 1957. Its mission is to *tell the human history of Sitka and the surrounding area*³²³. Initially, it was known as *Isabel Miller*, who was a local resident, very actively involved in preserving Sitka's historical heritage. Till today, numerous Sitkans refer to the site as *Isabel Miller's Museum*. The museum's collection covers the period of human presence in that area. Its permanent exhibition presents a narrative on the development of the land from Tlingit settlements to Russian capital to the American town. Therefore, the narrative could be divided into 3 parts: Tlingit, Russian and American as main stakeholders. Tlingit history doesn't disappear after the introduction of colonial powers: Russians and Americans. Their stories are intertwined and presented with a focus on their mutual relations. The initial emphasis is made on the acknowledgment of Tlingit rights to this territory. This is a visible sign of the critical approach towards the past. That includes the critical reflection on both Russian and American influence on the indigenous people. Hal Spackman explains:

The way one has to look how Sitka views Russian colonialism now is that there are different viewpoints and perspectives about that. If you are an Alaska Native person your viewpoint and perspective is very different than that of the average tourist that comes here. Because the tourist will come here with this idea of romanticism of Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone kind of Frontier. Whereas these people who are living here suffered from it. The Americans were no better than the Russians when they first took over because they exploited this area too. There is this whole idea of all these resources and people have essentially exploited these resources, which we continue to do today (...). When you talk about Russian influence on this period it has many layers to different people. The Russian people in my estimation grew in how they perceived the Alaska Native people. Once church came in, they started accepting Alaska Natives, they started to have children with Alaska

³²³ <https://sitkahistory.com/museum-2/museum/> [access : May 2nd, 2022].

Native people. They were educating them. Things have somewhat changed by the time the Russians turned it over to the Americans, then Americans came in and said 'no, the only good way to deal with an Indian person is to Americanize them'. You had this growth and understanding and appreciation with the Russian people, which just was chopped off once the Americans came in. Now that has changed into Americans saying: "we shouldn't have done it. We need to repay you". That's when Alaska Native Claimed Settlement Act³²⁴ happened in Alaska. Alaska Native people own the great portion of Alaska as a result of that. It was a way the America started to repay Native people.³²⁵

The narrative on the exhibition also resembles the Tlingit perspective on particular aspects of the Sitka's and Alaskan history. Several exhibition panels present their interpretation of the Alaska Sale and the transfer ceremony. A separate panel covers the challenge of reclaiming cultural heritage. Such a representation is a result of cooperation with local organizations, in particular Sitka Tribe of Alaska. This participatory approach allows more voices to be visible and presented. However, creating an exhibition that would satisfy all memory agents is hardly possible. When reflecting on the Russian-Tlingit relations in the past A.P. Johnson, a Tlingit storyteller notes: *The Russians were a people who had no respect for anybody, especially the native people*³²⁶. As presented in previous sections, even within the Indigenous community the perception differs from one another. Michael Schudson argues: *The full freedom to reconstruct the past according to one's own present interest is limited by three factors: the structure of available pasts, the structure of individual choices, and the conflicts about the past among a multitude of mutually aware individuals or groups*³²⁷. All these three factors are present in Sitka and in Sitka History Museum's attempt to reconstruct the past by creating the narrative exhibition. There is an ongoing conflict on the perception of the past. Battles of Sitka and Alaska Purchase with

³²⁴ It was a settlement act signed by US president Richard Nixon in 1971. It was a foundation for land claims of 12 Alaska Native regional corporations and over 200 local village corporations. See more at: <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title43/chapter33&edition=prelim> [access: May 2nd, 2022].

³²⁵ Interview with Hal Spackman and Nicole Fiorino, conducted at the Sitka History Museum by Kacper Dziekan on October 12th, 2021.

³²⁶ A. P. Johnson, *The Account of the Russian and Kiksadi Battle in Sitka*, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series V_Box 078_File Unit 046.

³²⁷ M. Schudson, *From 'The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past*, [in:] *Collective Memory Reader*, ed. J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy, New York 2011, p. 287.

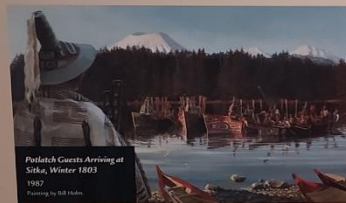
its ceremony are only examples of broader phenomena full of complexity and contextualization. The entire period of Russian and later American presence in Alaska remains problematic for many. What is more, numerous individual choices are made upon certain vision of the past and what Maurice Halbwachs called *social frameworks of memory*³²⁸. Their perception of the past depends on the social context they find themselves in. People who surround them and the certain group they belong to (ethnic, national, cultural, religious) determines to certain extent their interpretation of specific past events or the interpretation of the broader episode from the past in general. The structure of available past is also an uneasy topic. For many decades scholars mostly depended on Russian (with few other European) primary, written and archeological, sources. It was only the end of 20th century when Tlingit oral sources became more broadly employed in the research. Given the recent growth of interest in local history among activists and other non-professionals, the structure of available past becomes a challenge itself.

³²⁸ M. Halbwachs, *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, [in:] M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. L. A. Coser, Chicago and London 1992, pp. 35-189.

THE LAND OF THE TLINGIT

TLINGIT AANI

For thousands of years the Tlingit have called Southeast Alaska home; their numerous villages stretching from Dixon Entrance to Yakutat Bay.



Potlatch Guests Arriving at Sitka, Winter 1803
1987
Painting by J.H. Fisher

Tlingit Social Structure

The Tlingit of Sitka are part of the *Sheet'ka wáan*. In traditional Tlingit country, tribes (known as *kwáans*) control territories and the resources they contain. The clans that live within each *kwáan* organize into two moieties, or descent groups: Raven and Wolf/Eagle. Clans are made up of kinship-based clan houses. The Tlingit inherit their moiety and clan identity through their mother, and traditionally choose a spouse from the other moiety.



Three men of the Káigwáan Clan in ceremonial regalia, 1904 potlatch in Sitka. Photograph by Harold W. Moore-Gill of Sam Hays. 2011/11/7

Tlingit Cultural Identity

Tlingits preserve their way of knowing and pass it to the next generation through oral history. The Tlingit communicate their history with *at.óow*, or clan-owned sacred cultural property.

At.óow can include stories, songs, dances, clan crests, carvings, clothing, places, and even constellations like the Big Dipper. Clans communicate and validate their cultural identity through the performance and display of their *at.óow* during customary ritual gatherings, such as the memorial ceremony called a potlatch, or *koo.éex'*.



View of an Indian Village in Nisqually (Sitka) Sound, no. 25 (40)
1793, Supplemental Engravings, Drawings and Sketches Made at Voyage Around the World, 1791-1795
Illustration by Johann Adam Reissner, 1796/1797

Traditional Tlingit Country Map, Circa Late Nineteenth Century
2015
Courtesy of Tlingit Museum, Inc.

An exhibition panel in Sitka History Museum - photo by K. Dziekan

NOVO ARKHANGELSK

The new Russian settlement at Sitka, named Novo Arkhangelsk, or New Archangel, became the administrative headquarters for all of Russian America, a position it held for nearly sixty years.



*Russian Double-headed Eagle Crest
Gifted to Kiks.ádi clan leaders by
the Russians as a peace offering
following the Sitka Battle of 1804.
Courtesy of Alaska State Museum, Photograph*

Sitka: The Headquarters of Russian America

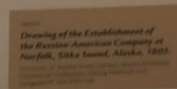
Following the Battle of 1804, the Russian American Company (RAC) began constructing a settlement at Sitka. The RAC fortified their colony with armed blockhouses and a stockade that divided Tlingit territory from the Russian town. Alexander Baranov moved the company's headquarters from Kodiak to New Archangel in 1808. From Sitka, the RAC administered their colonies and outposts, which stretched along Alaska's coast, up major Alaskan rivers, and as far south as Fort Ross, California.

Precarious Peace

The *Kiks.ádi* lost the Battle of 1804, but they did not lose the war. They relocated to an abandoned fort near Point Craven at Peril Strait called *Chaatk'a Noow*. They regained their strength, replenished their ammunition, and began blocking traders from traveling to Sitka with supplies for the Russians. The *Kiks.ádi* rejected Baranov's attempts at a peace treaty until he agreed that the land and its resources belonged to the Tlingit. In return, the *Kiks.ádi* allowed the RAC a small settlement at Sitka.



*Portrait of Alexander Baranov, first
Russian Chief Manager of Alaska,
1790-1818*



*Drawing of the Establishment of
the Russian American Company at
New Archangel, Sitka Sound, Alaska, 1804.*

THE TRANSFER CEREMONY

On October 18, 1867, Americans, Russians, other RAC staff, and Alaska Natives gathered in Sitka to witness the formal transfer of Russia's claims on Alaska to the United States.

A CHANGE IS COMING TO SITKA

In the days leading up to the Transfer Ceremony, ships sailed into Sitka Sound carrying diplomats and the Ninth U.S. Infantry. The first military commander of Alaska, Major General Jefferson C. Davis, waited for the U.S.S. *Ossipee*. The ship carried U.S. Army Major General Lovell H. Rousseau and Russian Imperial Navy Captain Alexis Pestchouroff, the chosen commissioners of the Transfer. The *Ossipee* arrived on October 18th, a bright, beautiful day.



Lowering Russian Colors and Raising Old Glory at Sitka.
During the ceremony, the Russian flag stuck fast. After numerous attempts to free the flag, a man was hoisted up the flag staff. He freed and dropped the flag, the crowd gasping as it snagged on Russian soldiers' bayonets below. Drawing by Joy Harbottle.
From: *Alaska*, Journal-American, October 18, 1942, 2011-451.



Old Glory Rises Over Alaska
Oil painting by Austin Briggs.
From: *Central Moments in American History* by Humboldt Oil & Refining Co., 1964.
Courtesy of ExxonMobil.

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

At 3:30PM, Russian and American troops marched up to the Chief Manager's residence, joining dignitaries and civilian spectators. Double gun salutes were fired alternately from the U.S.S. *Ossipee* and the Russian battery, the sounds echoing off the mountains as the Russian flag was lowered and the United States flag was raised. Pestchouroff declared, "By authority from his Majesty the Emperor of Russia, I transfer to the United States the Territory of Alaska." Rousseau accepted the transfer, and the Americans gave three cheers.

An exhibition panel in Sitka History Museum - photo by K. Dziekan



THE TLINGIT PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRANSFER

We, the Tlingit [Low Tide Activity People] of *Sheet'ka* [Sitka], have acted as stewards of this land since time immemorial. When the *Anóoshi* [Russians] came, we maintained our sovereignty, but formed a peace agreement that granted them a small colony at *Noow Tlein* [Castle Hill]. In 1867, Russia ceded its possessions in Alaska to the United States. Russia had colonized less than 1% of Baranof Island, but the United States claimed it all. These countries bought and sold land they did not own and excluded us from the negotiations. The Treaty of Cession called us uncivilized, denied us land rights, and refused us citizenship, but it could never extinguish our connection to our homeland, *Sheet'ka*.



Family Tree
2016. Raven represents air, Bear represents the land, and Salmon the sea. The figures in the trunk provide capillary action, bringing life-giving water to the family tree from the roots, the ancestors.
Painting by Robert Clark-Hallstrom/ClarkHall.com

An exhibition panel in Sitka History Museum - photo by K. Dziekan

RECLAIMING CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Religious Crimes Code of 1883 once prohibited Native traditional ceremonies, including the Tlingit potlatch or *koo.éex'*, but today, the Tlingit work to revive their customary cultural practices.

Federal legislation has contributed to the revitalization of Tlingit culture. The 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act overturned bans on traditional cultural practices and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 supports the return of *at.óow* (sacred clan property) held by museums and federally-funded agencies.



Naa Kahidi Dancers
2017
Courtesy of Naa Kahidi Dancers

Tlingit dance paddles
2017
Courtesy of Sheen'ká Kwáan Naa Kahidi Community House



An exhibition panel in Sitka History Museum - photo by K. Dziekan

15. Sitka National Historical Park (SNHP)

When it comes to the Russian colonization of America the Sitka National Historical Park is arguably the most important memory agent among the official institutions. The organization operates within the structure of National Park Service. As was mentioned before, Sitka National Historical Park was originally designated as Sitka Park by President Benjamin Harrison on June 21, 1890. It is thus the oldest federally designated park in Alaska³²⁹. Its name has changed several times and for a long time it was known and referred to as Sitka National Monument. Its initial *raison d'être* was to preserve and present the Tlingit culture. Particularly covering the issues related to the Battle of 1804. The park was designated on the very location where the battle took place. This factor played a crucial role in park's activities and its perception by the local community. The park became a form of representation of memory politics and memorialization processes in Sitka in general. Since many people died in that battle, it bears a high significance in the Tlingit cultural memory. Death, in such a violent incident puts a focus of the memorialization process and commemorative activities on mourning and contemplation. Whereas the heroic deeds of their ancestors shift the memorial representation on the aspects of pride and tribute. In the late 1990s Thomas F. Thornton, an Anthropologist from the University of Alaska Southeast prepared a substantial report on the meaning, significance the traditional use of the park and the whole memorial landscape by the Tlingit. He wrote there: *I also wish to stress that the memorials, commemorations, and interpretations of the Battle of 1804, some of which continue to this day, themselves constitute traditional, though largely symbolic uses of the park*³³⁰. The changes came in 1960s with the opening of the new visitor center in 1965. It was followed by the final name change in 1972 under the new Federal Legislation Act³³¹. Ever since, the site is known as Sitka National Historical Park. Interestingly, the new legislation was signed (and

³²⁹ <https://www.nps.gov/sitk/learn/historyculture/park-history.htm> [access: May 26th, 2022]

³³⁰ T. F. Thornton, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

³³¹ *Public Law 92-501. 92nd Congress, S. 1497. October 18, 1972. An Act. To authorize certain additions to Sitka National Monument in the State of Alaska, and for other purposes.* Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series V_Box 95_File Unit 256_Folder 1.

thus came to life) in a very symbolic day, contributing to the memorialization of the park. The legislation was signed on October 18th, which is celebrated in Sitka as Alaska Day. On October 18th, 1867, the Transfer Ceremony took place and Alaska was both officially and symbolically transferred by Russia to the United States. Choosing this date for the new Legislation Act showed an increase in the significance of Russian period in Sitka's history. Shortly before the new legislation, in 1972 the National Park Service in its National Register of Historic Places informed that then Sitka National Monument *was created to protect a collection of Alaska Indian totem poles and to preserve the history of Indian, Russian, and American occupation of the area. Within the area are 18 totem poles which were part of the Alaska Exhibit at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. Also included are the graves of seven Russians killed during the Battle of Sitka in 1804 and the site of the Indian stockade where the Kit-Siti [probably the Kiks.adi] tribe made its last stand against the Russian settlers (...)*³³². Another important element of the memory representation in the 1970s in SNHP is the establishment of the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center, which was opened in 1969³³³. It created a new space for the presentation and preservation of Tlingit culture. At the same time, the Russian episode of Sitka's history received its spatial and tangible representation. The main example of tangible Russian heritage in Sitka is the building known as Russian Bishop's House. It was initially built in 1842 by the bishop Innokentii and served as his residence. Although 1842 is considered as a construction date for the building it was not compiled until the end of 1843 when the bishop could finally move in³³⁴. After the Alaska Purchase, the Russian Orthodox Church kept the ownership over the building and in time such additional functions as school, seminar and an orphanage were added. Eventually the building was closed and abandoned by Church in 1969³³⁵. After the closure, the ideas to purchase it from the church started to emerge among the Sitka residents. On August 12th, 1971, the then Sitka's Mayor Les Shepard wrote a letter to George B. Hertzog Jr., a director of National Park

³³² National Park Service, *The National Register of Historic Places. 1972*, p. 13, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series V_Box 95_File Unit 256_Folder 1.

³³³ T. F. Thornton, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

³³⁴ K. L. Arndt, R. A. Pierce, *Sitka National Historical Park. Historical Context Study. A construction History of Sitka, Alaska as Documented in the Records of the Russian-American Company*, Fairbanks 2003, p. 99.

³³⁵ R. Woolsey, *The Russian Bishop's House. Sitka, Alaska. Legacy of an Empire. 1842*, Anchorage 1992, p. 6.

Service. In this letter, the mayor listed several priorities related to the tangible heritage of Sitka, that could be purchased by the park service. Mayor Shepard placed a Russian Bishop's House (which he called *the Russian Mission*) as the *first priority*. He pointed out that this is the oldest documented building in Alaska (1842) and declared: *we urge and support the immediate acquisition of this historic landmark and its placement into the National Park system for its continued preservation*³³⁶. In 1972 US Congress purchased the building known as the Russian Bishop's House³³⁷ from the Russian Orthodox Church and transferred it to the National Park Service. Thus, SNHP became an owner of the facility. While covering the story of the building acquisition and the redesignation of the park and editor with Anchorage Daily Times noted: *Full protection of what is left of Russian Alaska is a concern not only of Alaskans, but of the rest of the nation*³³⁸. The major renovation project was initiated and by the end of 1980s the building became available for visitors on regular basis. An exhibition dedicated to the Russian America was created as well. Currently, the building's interior was redecorated to resemble the period shortly after it was built - 1853³³⁹. Its upper floor consists of bishop's residence and a chapel, while the lower floor presents an exhibition on Russian America. SNHP decided to create a new permanent exhibition in the Russian Bishop's House which is due to be open to the public in mid 2020s. The team of curators from SNHP is currently involved in the development of this exhibition.

Thus, the SNHP as a custodian of Sitka's history presents it through two axes: one dedicated to Russian America – in the Russian Bishop's House and the other dedicated to the Tlingit culture – in the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center, which is located inside the SNHP Visitor Center.

³³⁶ L. Shepard, *Letter to George B. Hartzog Jr.*, August 12th, 1971, Archives of Sitka National Historical Park, SITK 25380 Sitka NHP Record Collection_Series V_Box 95_File Unit 256_Folder 1.

³³⁷ J. M. Antonson, W. S. Hanable, *Sitka National Historical Park. An administrative History*, Anchorage 1987, p. 148.

³³⁸ Unknown Author, *Legislation Names Sitka National Historic Park*, [in:] *Anchorage Daily Times*, Nov. 4th, 1972.

³³⁹ R. Woolsey, *op. cit.*, p. 7.



A panel in front of the entrance to the Russian Bishop's House - photo by K. Dziekan



An exhibition panel at Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center / Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Centre - photo by K. Dziekan

Mary A. Miller, Superintendent at the Sitka National Historical Park explains its current mission and the importance of the changes taking place in early 1970s: *This park was set up to commemorate the Battle of 1804 (...). It is of national significance and it's a part of our mission to tell that story. They [the founders] added that this is a convenient public place to bring back the totems that originally were not from here. But now we're kind of known for it. The second part of our National Park Service could be an instrument to help preserve the Russian Bishop House not only for its own historic content but the broader mission of the telling the story of Russian America (...). What was really important to the local community was that if we were able to get this [ownership over the Russian Bishop House via Enabling Legislation], we wanted to make sure that we didn't do anything to take away from telling the Tlingit story of the battle. If we add this Russian piece to our*

park, we don't want it to overshadow or deflect (...). I think there is certainly an undertone that deserves recognition: the community leaders at that time who didn't want to trump or overshadow the 1804 Battle with a Russian American theme. They wanted to make sure that we get a good balance. It's certainly not well-recognized today. It is amazing how thoughtful the community members were about what I think is a very contemporary issue³⁴⁰.

16. Alaska Day celebrations

Today, one of the most controversial aspects of the Russian colonial legacy in Sitka is the event known as Alaska Day. It commemorates the Alaska Purchase and takes place annually on October 18th. The day-long events consist of various cultural programs: concerts, dances, theatrical performances, etc. However, the key elements of the program are: a big parade, an evening ball and a reenactment of the 1867 transfer ceremony. Although the latter fuels the largest controversies, a parade and a ball are being discussed among the local community members as well. Various Indigenous Sitkans boycott both the parade and the ball. Mary A. Miller recalls situations, where the descendants of Tlingit aristocracy were attending the ball wearing their clan's regalia³⁴¹. Therefore, they emphasized their own subjectivity (and the subjectivity of the Tlingit people in general) within those historical frameworks. This was also a form of manifestation regarding the existing format of such a commemorative event.

The full name of this event is: Alaska Day Festival. Ülkü Inceköse argues that festival *being a repetitive and collective event implies social devices of collective memory of a city or social group*³⁴². Alaska Day Festival fits into that description. However, as was already explained, the cultural memory represented in various memory agents in Sitka differs from one another. This is a source of lack of common attitude towards the celebration among the town residents.

³⁴⁰ Interview with Mary A. Miller, conducted at the Sitka National Historical Park by Kacper Dziekan on October 11th, 2021.

³⁴¹ Ibidem.

³⁴² Ü. Inceköse, *The Sustainability of an Urban Ritual in the Collective Memory: Bergama Kermesi*, MDPI 2019, p. 1.

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska along with a loose group of various activists advocate for the renaming of the holiday. They suggest the name: Reconciliation Day³⁴³. Such a name would shift the principal dimension of this celebration. The emphasis would no longer be on the territory transfer but rather on the uneasy relations between different groups (whom we can consider as memory agents) and finding solutions to improve them. A similar idea emerged around the Columbus Day. It is arguably the most widely recognized case of controversies surrounding a commemorative practice in the US that relate to its colonial past. Columbus Day is observed on October 11th as a federal holiday. Various activists advocated to change the form of a celebration and to rename the holiday. It is considered that the idea to rename it into an Indigenous Peoples Day (IPD) dates to 1977, when it was presented at the International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the America which took place in Geneva, Switzerland as a part of a United Nations Conference³⁴⁴. It was met with a backlash from many people often identifying with traditionalist views but was become more and more broadly discussed and accepted. Throughout the second decade of 21st century the renaming started to take place officially on the level of municipalities and states. Alaska officially renamed the holiday in 2016³⁴⁵. In 2021, the White House provided a solution, which it considers a compromise. IPD became officially a federal holiday. President Joe Biden signed a Proclamation on Indigenous Peoples Day on October 8th, 3 days before the holiday. At the same time, Columbus Day remained a federal holiday observed at the same day, receiving a new presidential proclamation as well³⁴⁶. IPD emphasizes the role of Native American culture and their struggle throughout the last few centuries with colonialism and its legacy until today. The idea of Reconciliation Day shares this vision. Additionally, it stresses the intercultural relations of the Tlingit, Russians, and Americans throughout history. The

³⁴³ <https://www.ktoo.org/2021/10/21/reconciliation-day-celebration-in-place-of-alaska-day-in-sitka/> [Access: May 27th, 2022].

³⁴⁴ T. Kubal, *Cultural Movements and Collective Memory. Christopher Columbus and the Rewriting of the National Origin Myth*, New York 2008, p. 67.

³⁴⁵ <https://www.adn.com/afn-coverage/article/berkowitz-renames-columbus-day-anchorage/2015/10/12/> [access: May 27th, 2022].

³⁴⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/10/08/a-proclamation-on-columbus-day-2021/> [access: May 27th, 2022].

most burning issue is the Transfer Ceremony reenactment. Chuck Miller from Sitka Tribe of Alaska explains:

I think they should get rid of the reenactment. Back in the day when it happened one of the families' grandmothers was in the canoe in the channel and they were wondering (please forgive me): "what are all the white folks doing up there?" They didn't even know what was going on. Nobody was told. They were seeing a flag going down and a flag coming up. They had no idea what going on. Were the Tlingit people acknowledged? Were they given any type of opportunity to speak? No. They weren't given anything. They weren't consulted at all. Even in the 1930s the US District Court said that this whole Sale of Alaska was a sham. They said it on the record. The Russians only had occupied inside the blockade. That's all they had control over. The reason why they had a blockade is because they still feared our people. They had cannons pointed at our village. That's all they had control over. It always blew my mind when they talk about the Sale of Alaska and Seward's Folly being a tiny sum: how much was it – a 7 cents per acre? Yes, he had a 'tiny sum' for it because he only got what was inside the blockade. How can you sell something if you didn't have control over it? They didn't have control over borough, over Fairbanks or Anchorage or any of those villages. They had no occupation at any of this. So how did they sell all of it to the United States?³⁴⁷ Basically, the US said: "hey, thank you for the sale. Now we're just going to occupy the whole territory". That's how that happened. So it's a sham. They need to get rid of that reenactment thing. It's always like a slap in the face. Like: "hey Natives, guess what? We bought your land. You had no says on it". That's what I think on it. (...) I'm not opposed to keeping the name "Alaska Day". I get the word "Reconciliation Day". I think it can go the either way³⁴⁸.

The reenactment has been a visible indicator of conflicted memory in town for many years. Even though the entire celebration is problematic for many, it is the reenactment that brings most of the controversy. Firstly, as explained by Chuck Miller, Indigenous population was not a part of the deal and sees that as a transfer between one colonial

³⁴⁷ To learn about the actual Russian territorial possessions in Alaska see: A. Postnikov, M. Falk, *Exploring and Mapping Alaska. The Russian America Era, 1741-1867*, Fairbanks 2015.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Chuck Miller, conducted online by Kacper Dziekan on November 5th, 2021.

empire and the other. Secondly, it is their traditional land that was sold without their involvement. Therefore, October 18th is not a day to celebrate for the Tlingit. It is a day that symbolizes something quite opposite. A loss of their land. For that reason, a group of activists surrounding a Kiks.adi community leader Dionne Brady-Howard started a separate event in 2017. That year marked a sesquicentennial anniversary of the Alaska Purchase. The official celebrations were exclusively rich and the debate around whole historical Russian America, Russian colonization, and the sale itself more visibly present than usual. Brady-Howard-led party organized a traditional Tlingit celebration at the foot of the Castle Hill / Noow Tlein that began right after the official ceremony³⁴⁹. The group consisting of both Tlingit and other residents of Sitka gathered to perform dances and sign mourning songs. The Alaska Day Committee, an official organizer of the event invited the Tlingit representatives to take part in the official celebration³⁵⁰. However, the latter didn't find the format proposed by the former suitable and thus they organized their own event. The mourning celebrations continued throughout the next years, although conflicted parties sought to reach a common ground. The Alaska Day Committee was adjusting the official celebration in order to give as much credit as possible to the Tlingit. But, as of the last anniversary in 2021, no Tlingit representative was among the speakers during the event. In 2021, mourning celebration took place one day before the official reenactment. This way, the activists intended not to interfere with the joyful commemoration taking place on the hill. The future of Alaska Day and its form of celebration is unclear.

³⁴⁹ <https://www.kcaw.org/2017/11/24/indigenous-voices-call-new-kind-alaska-day/> [access: May 31st, 2022].

³⁵⁰ <https://www.kcaw.org/2017/10/17/150-years-making-kiks-adi-gather-commemorate-loss-land/> [access: May 31st, 2022].



An interpretive panel at Castle Hill in Sitka during Alaska Day celebrations in 2022 with a piece of paper stuck to it. "Gunalcheesh" means "Thank you" in Tlingit language. Photo by K. Dziekan

17. Russian Orthodox Church

When looking beyond the tangible heritage of Russian America, the Orthodox Church is by far its most recognizable exemplification. Orthodoxy in Alaska represents both tangible and intangible heritage. The former is visible through numerous churches still existing in various locations across the former Russian territory. In Sitka, it is St Michael's Cathedral³⁵¹. The latter is the very Church itself. Although Russian Empire sold Alaska in 1867 and even though Russian Orthodox Church stopped financing its American Diocese

³⁵¹ Ch. F. Dery, *Russian Remains in Sitka, Alaska*, [in:] *Bulletin of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (September 15, 1948), pp. 26-28.

after the October Revolution in 1917³⁵², the Orthodoxy continued to exist in Alaska. The vast majority of New Archangel's settlers left for mainland Russia after the sale, including the entire non-Alaskan clergy³⁵³. However, by that time, Orthodoxy already became a popular denomination among the Alaska Natives and Creoles. Even until 1917, when the tsarist empire still helped funding the American branch of Orthodoxy, its influence on the former colony was diminishing with each decade. Father Michael Andreades was priest serving in North America in the beginning of 20th century. According to his account, at that time, the Russian Orthodox Church was Russian only in name, when it comes to the North America³⁵⁴. In the mainland US the parishioners consisted to large extend of the immigrants from the orthodox communities (e.g., Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians). In Alaska, the parishioners represented local indigenous population. In Sitka, it was the Tlingit. Since US has purchased Alaska, the growing number of protestant missionaries and other church representatives started to move to Alaska, Sitka included. Their involvement was not limited to spiritual activities but included also educational ones. Schools founded by protestants were primarily oriented on indigenous population and intended to eradicate their native culture, which was then considered inferior to the European or dominating white American culture. The philosophy behind this practice became famous by the slogan: *Kill the Indian in him and save the man*. Those words were used by captain R. H. Pratt in his speech entitled: "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites". He delivered it during the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in Denver in 1892³⁵⁵. This philosophy paved the way of the entire national policy of stripping whole indigenous population of their languages, culture, and identity. Today, many consider it cultural genocide. On the other hand, Orthodox Church since the times of bishop Innocent did not intend to eliminate native culture. Books

³⁵² S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

³⁵³ J. D. Murray, *Together and Apart: The Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Empire, and Orthodox Missionaries in Alaska, 1794–1917*, [in:] *Russian History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, *Centers and Peripheries in Eastern Christianity: Selected Papers from the Second Biennial Conference of the Association for the Study of Eastern Christian History and Culture: Part 1* (2013), p. 105.

³⁵⁴ B. Farley, *Russian Orthodoxy in the Pacific Northwest: The Diary of Father Michael Andreades, 1905-1906*, [in:] *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Summer, 2001), p. 134.

³⁵⁵ R. H. Pratt, *The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites*, [in:] *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections at the Nineteenth Annual Session Held in Denver, Col., June 23-29, 1892*, ed. I. C. Barrows, Boston 1892, p. 46.

of prayers were translated into local languages (Tlingit among others) and the parishioners were allowed to practice their religion in their own language³⁵⁶. It was critical for the missionaries to deliver the service to the people in an accessible way³⁵⁷. Also, today the Diocese of Alaska of Orthodox Church in America presents the liturgical texts on their website in Alutiq, Tlingit and Yup'ik languages³⁵⁸. Therefore, several representatives of indigenous people developed negative attitude towards protestant churches, preferring the Orthodoxy. Some even considered the latter “the only true Indian church”³⁵⁹. The key moment for the Orthodoxy in Sitka took place in 1966 when the St. Michael Cathedral burned down in a fire that destroyed a significant part of the town. Although tragic as it was, the event mobilized the entire community (Tlingit, non-Tlingit, orthodox, non-orthodox) to join forces and rebuild the site in a collective effort³⁶⁰. The dates surrounding the tragedy enhanced a symbolic (even providential for some, after all spiritual people) meaning of the cathedral. The fire took place on the eve of the Alaska Sale centennial, while the reconstruction coincided with the transfer of Russian Bishop's House to the Sitka National Historical Park. Orthodox Church became even more connected to Sitka. Sergei Kan, a renown scholar on Tlingit Orthodoxy adds another dimension to this connection. He gives credit to several bishops who oversaw the diocese through 1970s into 1990s. In order to ‘indigenize’ the Alaskan Orthodoxy and to strengthen the historical continuity, they canonized several Russian and Indigenous residents of Russian America³⁶¹.

³⁵⁶ Consider: S. Fedorova, *Russkoe nasledie v sud'bakh korennykh naseleniya Alyaski* [in:] *Traditsionnye Kul'tury Severnoy Sibiri i Severnoy Ameriki*, Moscow 1981, pp. 244-266.

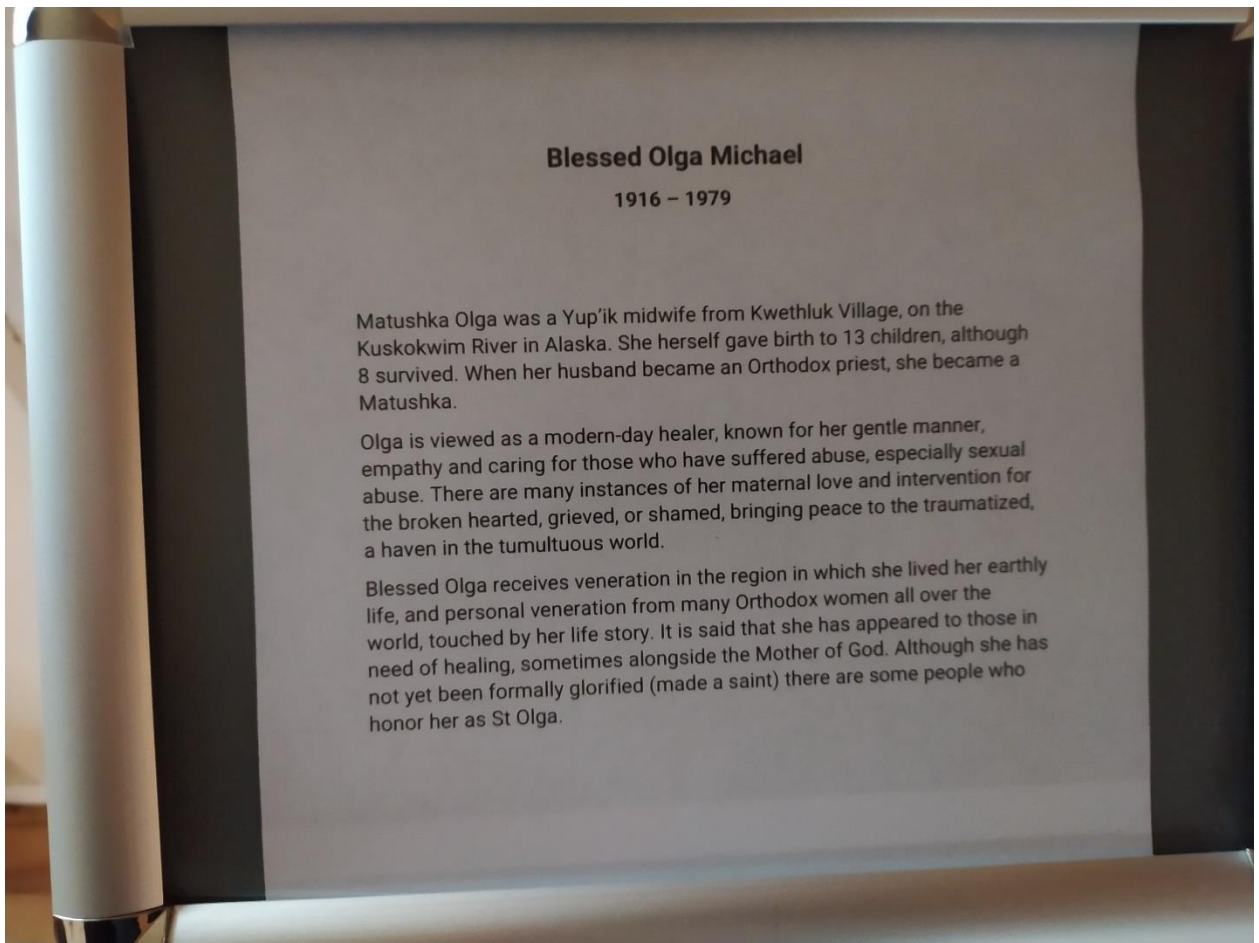
³⁵⁷ R. R. Rathburn, *The Russian Orthodox Church as a Native Institution among the Koniag Eskimo of Kodiak Island, Alaska*, [in:] *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1981), p. 16.

³⁵⁸ <https://www.doaoca.org/alaskatexts> [access: June 6th, 2022].

³⁵⁹ S. Kan, *op. cit.*, p. 527.

³⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 527.

³⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 530.



An interpretive panel inside St. Michael's Cathedral - photo by K. Dziekan

Although not related to Russia in any direct political or cultural way, the Orthodox Church remains an important element of Sitka's cultural landscape and remains also important for Tlingit identity in that area. The church bears a big significance also for those very few inhabitants who are not originally from Alaska and they are of Orthodox background. Ana Dittmar serves as a curator at St. Michael's Cathedral. She grew up in the Orthodox family and moved to Sitka initially to work with the National Park Service:

When I was growing up in 1950s and 1960s in Philadelphia it was very much like other large cities in the US that had immigrant populations. There were many Russian Orthodox Churches in Philadelphia. It was probably towards the end of this cultural period where there were enough people who could speak Russian and had Russian culture. They had those churches all over. They had Russian school on Saturdays, they had services were in Church-Slavonic, the children could speak Russian. It was the golden era. As I got older,

*the Orthodox Church changed to English. It just seemed to fall apart slowly (...). When I came to Sitka, after a couple of weeks I came to St. Michael's. I walked in here and I just felt like I came home. Into my grandmother's house. It was very old-fashioned, the way they did things. All the women were here, and all the men were there. It brought up a lot of personal enrichment for me*³⁶². Such a personal recollection is often seen among people who rediscover a certain form of their identity. St. Michael's Cathedral could have a very powerful impact given its historical significance as one of the few examples of historical presence of Russian Orthodox Church in America. Perhaps the feelings gets stronger because of the fact how few such people like Ana are in Sitka – a non-indigenous American with an Orthodox upbringing. As she comments herself: *The parish here in St. Michael's Cathedral is mostly Indigenous Alaskan. Most of those families were living here when the Russians came and they're still here*³⁶³.

18. The Finnish connection

The story of Russian America is full of unexpected elements and far from obvious stories. Arguably, the story of Finnish chapter of Alaskan Russian history fits into both categories. As was mentioned previously, the Russian party in Alaska was very heterogenous ethnic-wise. The pool of settlers represented the cultural diversity of the entire empire. However, certain ethnic groups could be considered overrepresented. Particularly: Baltic Germans and Finns. Not only did regular employees of Russian American Company were of German or Finnish origin but even numerous Chief Managers. Out of 14 Chief Managers in total, 3 were German (Ludwig von Hegemeister, Ferdinand von Wrangel, and Nikolay Rosenberg), while 2 were Finnish (Arvid Adolf Etholen, and Johan Hampus Furuholm)³⁶⁴. Every third Chief Manager belonged to one of these two ethnic groups. Such a phenomenon could be explained by different causes. However, the main explanation is related to the Russian Navy. After Baranov's departure it was the Navy that

³⁶² Interview with Ana Dittmar, conducted at the St. Michael's Cathedral by Kacper Dziekan on October 11th, 2021.

³⁶³ *Ibidem*.

³⁶⁴ A. O'Grady-Raeder, *The Baltic Connection in Russian America*, [in:] *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge*, Bd. 42, H. 3 (1994), p. 336.

took control over Russian America and the newcomers from mainland Russian were predominantly recruited from the Navy officers and its other employees. Such a vocation was a typical career path for Baltic Germans and Finns³⁶⁵. Germans were also very common among the medical personnel. Out of 15 doctors who served in the colony since 1810, 8 were of German origin³⁶⁶. Distinguishing specific and separate ethnicities is generally a very challenging, difficult, and troublesome task. The case of Russian America or Russian colonization as such is no exception. Some people were of mixed origin, some has changed or russianized their name³⁶⁷. On top of that, the very concept of ethnic identity poses numerous challenges when defined. Nevertheless, certain features were very common among the Baltic Germans and Finns. They were both predominantly Lutheran³⁶⁸. They former also communicated in German as their first and main language. The situation with Finns is a bit more complicated as they were coming from different parts of Grand Duchy of Finland and thus spoke non only Finnish but also Swedish and Russian³⁶⁹. The involvement of Finns in the colony became particularly apparent and in the mid-19th century they became a second most populous ethnic group after the Russians. Although difficult to be very specific, it is estimated that the number of Finnish settlers throughout 1820s to 1860s was 430³⁷⁰. This number is quite impressive given that the general *Russian* population in the colony was between 500-1000 people. Even including big fluctuations among the inhabitants, the total number increasing 400 says a lot. Even though two Finns rose to high in ranks to hold the position of Chief Manager, most of them performed duties of ordinary workers³⁷¹. They kept coming to New Archangel till the very end of the Russian occupation. One of them, T. Ahllund came there in the end of

³⁶⁵ A. V. Grinev, *Germans in the History of Russian America*, [in:] *Journal of the West*, Spring 2008, Vol. 47, No. 2, p. 33.

³⁶⁶ A. V. Grinev, *Russian and Foreign Medical Personnel in Alaska (1784 - 1867)*, [in:] *Journal of Northwest Anthropology*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Spring 2012, p. 97.

³⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³⁶⁸ A. Golubev, I. Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado. Finnish Immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s*, Michigan 2014, p. 6.

³⁶⁹ A. V. Grinev, *The Specific Character of Professional Statuses of Finns in Russian America*, [in:] *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (Spring 2016), p. 20.

³⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

³⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

July 1867 and bared witness to the final days of Russian America. He wrote his memoirs in Finnish and published them in 1873.

In 1867, when I was working in St. Petersburg, I heard it said in the evening at my living quarters, that at such and such place they were hiring colonists for the island of Sitka, which was located in America, but which was still ruled over by our Emperor. The wages were high, it was said, and land there was among the best on earth. Therefore, I went to this place, too, without saying a word to anyone, and let them hire me. It was not so much the wages that attracted me, but I thought to myself "Why shouldn't I go and try that too, even if only once." When I returned to my quarters and proclaimed the matter, my acquaintances began to try to scare me, and told me to go and break the contract. But I answered to them in a most resolute way: "Whatever I have once decided upon, no one has ever been able to divert me from, and I have always been able to fulfill my plans!" Thus I departed, after all, on the sea voyage around half of the world, during which we did not see much apart from water and sky. After 12 weeks, on July 30, the mate finally said: "If we continue to have this kind of wind, we shall see land at around noon tomorrow." And he was quite correct: at twelve noon we began to see land which appeared to shine in black and white. "There you have your land of Canaan that you have been looking for!" That is how those who had been there before made fun of us rookies. And we stood there silent, watching this distressful sight with our sad eyes, for the white spots were-snow-at this time in the middle of summer. The following morning we arrived on the island of Sitka, at the New Archangel harbor. After we had fired a cannon, a pilot came to meet us in a skin boat, which had a fully covered top, except for three holes, [one] for the pilot and [two for his] paddlers. As we came to the shore, there were many people to meet us, among them also many Finns, who surprised us by telling us that it was already Sunday, whereas we had been still on Saturday on the boat?³⁷²

The Ahllund story sheds light on the life of an ordinary Finnish servant of the tsar. He chose to move to Russian America as he found this trip attractive money and adventure-wise. Straight after getting off the ship, he acknowledged the presence of large Finnish

³⁷² T. Ahllund, *From the Memoirs of a Finnish Workman*, tr. P. Hallamaa, ed. R. Pierce, [in:] *Alaska History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Fall 2006, p. 3.

population in New Archangel. This is yet another indicator proving how important and self-aware this community was.

Today, their legacy in Sitka is not enormous, nonetheless noticeable. As was discussed in the section on material culture in Sitka, 4% of the town's streets are named after people of Finnish origin. The involvement of Finns is acknowledged by the Sitka National Historical Park and the background information on the subject matter received a separate section on their website³⁷³. Although it's not confirmed yet, one can assume that this topic will be covered by the next exhibition in the Russian Bishop's House. Arguably, the most long-lasting legacy of Finns in Sitka is the Lutheran Church. Just like the Orthodox Church outlived its Russian founders so did the Lutheran. The main difference was that the Lutheran Church has never attracted the Tlingit population, so it was mostly frequented by the Finns, Germans and some individual cases of Danes, Swedes, Latvians, or Estonians³⁷⁴. The parish was established in 1840 by the Finnish pastor Uno Cygnaeus, who came to Sitka with Arvid Adolf Etholén³⁷⁵. The latter commissioned the building of the Lutheran Church, and the former oversaw the construction. It was completed in 1843 and serves the Lutheran congregation in Sitka until today. Although, it is the third construction (1967) on this site since 1843, it keeps the continuity through the original elements of the first church that were preserved and are presented to the visitors. Those include the altar painting by Finnish artist Berndt Godenhjelm³⁷⁶. The church also features organs that were brought by Finns as well and are considered the oldest in the West Coast. The church lost its meaning when most of the Lutheran population abandoned Sitka after the Alaska sale. The town was soon repopulated with Americans of Lutheran background who brought the church back to life. Throughout the decades that followed, the organs broke down. It was not until 1990s that they were restored to be used again³⁷⁷. Today, the

³⁷³ <https://www.nps.gov/sitk/learn/historyculture/the-finnish-connection.htm> [access: June 7th, 2022].

³⁷⁴ M. Jarlsdotter Enckell, *In Search of a People Lost: The Finns in Russian America and Their Descendants*, [in:] *Over the Near Horizon. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, ed. J. Dusty Kidd, Sitka 2013, p. 48.

³⁷⁵ A. R. Alanen, *Sitka's "Only Place of Amusement": Russian, Finnish, and Other European Interactions with the Indian River Landscape*, in:] *Over the Near Horizon. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Russian America*, ed. J. Dusty Kidd, Sitka 2013, p. 130.

³⁷⁶ M. Jarlsdotter Enckell, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³⁷⁷ D. Dahl, *Alaska's Oldest Organ Plays Again After a Century*, [in:] *The Tracker. Organ Historical Society*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1996.

Lutheran Church in Sitka proudly presents itself as first Lutheran Church to be found on the West Coast of North America³⁷⁸.

While presenting it, they emphasize the role of the Finns in bringing Lutheranism to North America.

19. Conclusions

Russian America resonates in Sitka's cultural memory in numerous aspects. The cultural landscape of the city is filled with reminiscent of over 60 years of Russian colonial presence there. Anouk Bélanger argues that *Markers of memory are everywhere in the city: they are buried in the language and dialect, found on commemorative plaques, on buildings and battlefields; etched into automobile plates and woven through the city's visual and literary culture*³⁷⁹. Although her argument concerned Montreal, this set of examples shows the universality of various memory practices. Numbers of those examples could concern Sitka and the memory of Russian America. The wide pool of memory carriers and memory agents in Sitka provides this town with uneasy heritage to deal with. However, there are positive examples. In 2016, the archeologists discovered the evidence which allowed them to identify a grave of a Russian noble who had sunk on the famous (or infamous – depending on the perspective) *Neva* warship. The very one that had a crucial role at 1804 Battle of Sitka. Despite the differences regarding the perception of the battle, representatives of various groups gathered to pay respect to the fallen sailor. Scholars from both Russia and the US as well as representatives of Russian Orthodox Church and Sitka Tribe of Alaska. The ceremony had an ecumenic character with Orthodox blessing performed by deacon Herman Madsen and traditional Tlingit drum performance by Chuck Miller of Sitka Tribe of Alaska³⁸⁰. All those memory agents united for once.

³⁷⁸ Unknown author, *Sitka Lutheran Church. The Finnish Connection. A publication of Sitka Lutheran Church's Historical Committee, vol. 1, no. 12, 2007/2008 edition.*

³⁷⁹ A. Belanger, *Urban Space and Collective Memory: Analysing the Various Dimensions of the Production of Memory*, [in:] *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Vol. 11, No. 1, *Space, Place and the Culture of Cities: Special Issue* (Summer 2002), p. 70.

³⁸⁰ D. Weiss, *Marooned in Russian America*, [in:] *Archaeology*, November/December 2017, Vol. 70, No. 6 (November/December 2017), pp. 44-50.

Chapter IV Metini / Fort Ross

1. Russians in California – beginnings

Russian presence in California emerged in early 19th century. First voyage of Russian *promyshlenniki* (a general term for Russian trappers and fur traders of Siberia and Alaska) Timofey Tarakanov and Afanasyi Shvetsov, led by American sailor, merchant, and ship contractor Joseph O’Cain, reached California in December 1803³⁸¹. Russian empire has already established its permanent settlements in North America by then. In 1799, headquarters were founded in the site named Fort Saint Michael (Russian: форт Архангела Михаила), which in 1804 became a capital of new province named Russian America. Fort Saint Michael was at the same time renamed to New Archangel (or Novo-Arkhangelsk, in Russian: Ново-Архангельск). 1799 marked another very important achievement in the development of Russian colonization eastwards. Emperor Paul I eventually signed an *Ukase of 1799* (Указ о создании Российско-американской компании), which had officially brought a Russian American Company (RAC) to life³⁸². RAC received a monopoly on trade on Russian territories in the North Pacific. However, due to harsh conditions of life in Alaska and difficulties with agriculture, the first Chief Manager of Russian America, Alexander Andreyevich Baranov alongside with his colleagues from RAC made a decision to explore territories southwards from Russian settlements. In mainland Russia in 1803, new emperor, Alexander I, was finally convinced by nobles Nikolay Rumyantsev and Adam Johann von Krusenstern to give his permission for First Russian circumnavigation³⁸³. It set sail in August 1803, sponsored by Rumyantsev and led by Krusenstern alongside with Yuri Lisyanski. Exploring the shores of the Pacific was among the goals of circumnavigation. One of the key members of the

³⁸¹ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, ed., *Istoriia Russkoi Ameriki, 1732 – 1867*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1997–99), p. 354.

³⁸² *Letter of Emperor Paul I concerning the establishment of the Russian-American Company, the protection over the Company and the granting of privileges to it for the period of 20 years*, Archive of Museum of Russian Culture, San Francisco: List of Documents of the Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire on the Russian Presence in California and the history of the Ross Fortified Settlement (1806-1843), December 27, 1799.

³⁸³ A. V. Grinev, *Russia's Emperors and Russian America (for the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty)*, [in:] *Russian Studies in History*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2015, p. 18.

expedition was Nikolay Rezanov, a son-in-law of RAC founders, Grigory and Natalia Shelikhov, and one of its key figures. Rezanov didn't come back to St. Petersburg, but stayed in New Archangel, where he himself experienced extreme difficulties of life in Alaska. According to his own words, the settlers nearly faced starvation³⁸⁴. In winter 1806, he was appointed a commander-in-chief of another voyage, which was sent by Baranov to explore lands located in the north of Spanish territories of the Viceroyalty of New Spain in what is today North California. He set sail on February 25 with a main purpose of finding supplies for the northern colony. Nikolay Rezanov arrived at Presidio of San Francisco in March 1806 with a goal to trade with local Spanish post and negotiate possible establishment of a new Russian colony northwards of the Spanish colony³⁸⁵.

At Presidio, Rezanov met local commandant, José Darío Argüello and was received with peace and help. He also met Argüello's daughter, Concepción, with whom he fell in love³⁸⁶.

Rezanov was hoping to establish permanent trading relations with Spain and sign a contract. Spain did not express hostility to Russia once the latter emerged in the America in the late 18th century³⁸⁷, which served as a base for hope. This goal was not fulfilled as Spanish colonists were forbidden to trade with foreign settlers under still valid His Catholic Majesty's Laws of the Indies. Rezanov planned to use his relationship with Concepción in order to gain favor of local authorities³⁸⁸. He succeeded with Argüello family but didn't manage to win over the governor of Alta California, José Joaquín de Arrillaga. Although several Spanish colonists were in favor of trading with Russians their party didn't prevail³⁸⁹. He did manage to secure necessary supplies of grains and other foods, traded certain number of goods as well and returned to New Archangel.

³⁸⁴ *Imperial Chamberlain Nikolay Rezanov, A report to Minister of Commerce Nikolay Rumyantsev about a voyage to Alta California in the Yunona, New Archangel, 17 June 1806*, [in:] *California through Russian eyes 1806-1848*, ed. J. R. Gibson, *Early California Commentaries*, vol. II, Norman (Oklahoma) 2013, p. 26.

³⁸⁵ L. B. Zaverukha, N. Bogdan, *Images of America. Russian San Francisco*, Charleston, South Carolina 2010, p. 9.

³⁸⁶ The couple's love story became a ground for a plot of one of the first Rock Operas in Soviet Union – Juno and Avos, written and 1979 by Andrey Voznesensky and composed by Alexei Rybnikov and was one of the very few examples of Russian America's commemoration in Soviet period

³⁸⁷ M. S. Alperowich, *Rossiya i Novyy Svet. Poslednyaya Tret' 18 veka*, Moscow 1993, p. 202.

³⁸⁸ C. A. Manning, *Russian Influence on Early America*, New York 1953, pp. 53-54.

³⁸⁹ K. G. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants. The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers*, Oakland 2005, p. 126.

In 1807 Rezanov took a trip back to mainland Russia to deliver his reports in person to tsar Alexander I.

However, he died during the trip and his great plans for colonial development were no longer to be implemented.

Baranov, facing continuously supplies shortages, was desperate to find a new source of obtaining them. While plans for permanent trade with Spain became a fiasco, he finally decided to establish a permanent settlement in Californian territories explored by Rezanov. In 1808 he sent one of his men, Ivan Kuskov, with a mission to secure a suitable location for a new settlement. Kuskov had conducted several voyages in years 1808-1812 and finally established a stronghold which he named *Ross*. During that time, he also claimed a small port, which he named Port of Rumyantsev (порт Румянцева, port Rummyantseva) and the Rumyantsev Bay (залив Румянцева, Zaliv Rummyantseva) in honor of the Russian Minister of Commerce Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantzev. This place is known today as Bodega Bay³⁹⁰. Kuskov named a river nearby – the Slav (Славянка, Slavyanka). Today it's known as Russian River. The new settlement was founded 19 nautical miles north of Bodega Bay, close to the ocean, but at the same time far enough to be secured from the risk of Spanish attack. Kuskov started building the stronghold in March 1812 and finished it in August. On August 30th (Old Julian calendar), which happened to be a name day of tsar Alexander I, a special religious ceremony was held in order to consecrate the new establishment. The Russian flag was raised³⁹¹. First settlement consisted of Kuskov, 25 Russian settlers and 80 Aleuts. It's important to note, that such terms as *Russians* or *Aleuts* were used in very broad understanding, regardless of an actual ethnic background. The same way, representatives of RAK would usually refer to all American sailors as *Bostonians*.

³⁹⁰ *Raport I. A. Kuskova A. A. Baranovu o prebyvanii promyslovoy partii v zalive Bodega, 5 oktryabrya 1809 g.*, [in:] *Rossiysko-Amerikanskaya Kompaniya i izuchenie Tikhookeanskogo Severa 1799-1815. Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, T.C. Fedorova, Moscow 1994, pp. 201-203.

³⁹¹ A. A. Istomin, *Kaliforniyskie ekspeditsii I. A. Kuskova*, ed. N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow 1999, p. 147.

2. Controversies surrounding the name *Fort Ross*

The name itself has been disputed by the scholars. Since Russians didn't use the Russian equivalent for the words *fort* or *stronghold* to describe the whole settlement, some researchers³⁹² argued that the name *Fort Ross* is not an appropriate one. Russian colonists would usually refer to the new settlement as *Колония Росс* (*Koloniia Ross* – Colony Ross) or *Селение Росс* (*Seleniie Ross* – Settlement Ross), whereas Spanish settlers would use the name *Presidio the Ross*, according to their own terminology. Although the fortified part of the settlement had been referred to as *крепость / fortress* (James R. Gibson 1976, E. Breck Parkman 1992), but only as a specific entity within the broader colony of Ross. Therefore, the Russian name *КрѢпость Россѣ* (*Krepost' Ross*), which welcomes visitors at the entrance of the fort today should be considered as a modern interpretation of already existing English term *Fort Ross/Fortress Ross* (as on the entrance). The name *Fort Ross* became popular in 1840s. Due to the presence of the Americans, who came there after the sale of the settlement to John Sutter. The name remained commonly used ever since. In 1909 the Fort Ross State Historic Park was established. E. B. Parkman argues that the decision to name it exactly this way came from an *incorrect or incomplete perspective of Russian California by Americans*. As a result (...) *visitors to the park are given the wrong impression of the former Russian settlement, and thus a false sense of history*³⁹³. The military connotations of the name have also brought discontent among some Russian American clergy. Reverend Vladimir Derugin, of the Russian Orthodox Church stated in 1991: *it has now become clear to all who care to see, that Fort Ross was never a "fort."* *Yet on the spot interpretation and presentation continues to promote this fairy tale so close to our John Wayne, Rin Tin Tin, Rambo fascination. It would be justified to conjecture that cannons at Ross had indeed been fired, but only as salutes to incoming ships, to the raising of the flag or maybe to honor the deceased. Such firing would be perfectly appropriate as long as their proper, peaceful historical nature was clearly depicted. It is almost as if Fort*

³⁹² E. B. Parkman, *A fort by any other name: interpretation and semantics at Colony Ross*. A paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Alaska Anthropological Association, March 1992, Fairbanks (Alaska).

³⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

*Ross would cease to be interesting and marketable to tourists if it's true, peaceful past was presented and stressed, almost as if peace, human success, and progress, and the common good are too boring. Yet that is exactly what Ft. Ross was all about: agricultural work, scientific research and expeditions, merchant shipbuilding, and most of all social cooperation governed by values such as freedom and non-violence.*³⁹⁴



A panel at the entrance of the Fort Ross proper – photo by K. Dziekan

3. Life in the colony of Ross

Activities conducted by the settlers were of various types. From ship building to cattle raising to agriculture³⁹⁵. Russians were the first to build a windmill in California. Historic mill was reconstructed and placed in on the historic site in 2012, following the various projects and activities related to bicentennial of Fort Ross³⁹⁶. Russians were also first to use redwood on a larger scale as lumber to build houses and storages. Redwood was believed to be the most fire-resistant wood. However, in ship building inhabitants of Ross,

³⁹⁴ V. Derugin, *Ross Colony Settlement's Cemetery Restoration Project*, on file at California

Department of Parks and Recreation, Northern Region Headquarters, Santa Rosa, California 1991, p. 1.

³⁹⁵ J. A. Harkison, *Fort Ross-Russian Settlement in America*, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/111/fort-rossrussian-settlement-in-america.pdf> [access: June 9th, 2022].

³⁹⁶ <https://www.fortross.org/fort-ross-festival-2012> [access: June 9th, 2022].

led by Vasily Grudinin, a craftsman from Irkutsk, used mostly oak and pine. Grudinin supervised construction of 4 ships between 1816 – 1824: the Rumyantsev, the Buldakov, the Volga, and the Kyakhtha. All of them turned out to be non-durable and the ship building was eventually abandoned in 1820³⁹⁷.

Agricultural work was based mainly on cereal. Russians planted wheat, rye, barley, but also maize, beans, flax, poppy, potatoes, beets, cabbage, radishes, turnips, peas, pumpkins, garlic, watermelons, etc. Since main Alaskan settlements of the empire were facing starvation, those products were not only supposed to feed local residents, but also those in New Archangel, Kodiak islands and elsewhere. One of the things Russians missed the most was buckwheat. Therefore, buckwheat was too among cereal planted in Ross colony. However, due to high humidity and close vicinity of the ocean, the crops turned out to be far from anticipated, so farming couldn't have become a source of profit either. Some of men in charge were advocating to the management of RAK or even tsar himself to expand the colony towards the land. They wanted to take advantage of the weakness of Spain and Mexico respectively. Among those men were Ivan Kuskov, first commander of the fort and Dmitry Zavalishin, a merchant, adventurer and later Decembrist. The latter visited Ross in 1823-24 and developed a strong idea to annex entire California to Russia. As a result of his involvement in the Decembrist movement in 1825, he was sent to Siberia. During his exile, he wrote the accounts of his travels in North Pacific. *Because of the purchases of wheat, we had to travel throughout the northern part of California, at first at horseback to purchase it and then by water to transport it; thus, did I visit all of the paces that later became famous with the discovery of gold. I visited the missions of San Rafael and San Francisco Solano [Sonoma], the only ones built on the northern side of San Francisco Bay, the latter with the very aim of impeding the expansion of the Russian colony of Ross, which I visited on this occasion, too. I was also at San Pablo [Bay] and on the banks of the Sacramento River, where I proposed that a new Russian colony be established (it was here that gold was first found) – wrote Zavalishin – (...) But the superior climate, rich soil, and capital location on the Great Ocean, with one of the best*

³⁹⁷ E. T. H. Bunje, H. Penn, F. J. Schmitz, *Russian California 1805-1841*, San Francisco 1970 (first published: Berkeley 1937), p. 15.

ports in the world, constitute the unalterable and inalienable advantages of California, and from this [fact] naturally sprang the desire to expand our colony of Ross at least as far as the northern shore of San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento River, and to that extent it was then still possible. For that reason – keeping in mind such an expansion of our colony – I took advantage of my official travels throughout California in order to make every possible inquiry and to collect the necessary information for reaching the said goal (...) ³⁹⁸. Neither Zavalishin's nor anyone else's persuasions resulted in any further territorial development of Russian settlement. On a contrary, the scope of activities was smaller and smaller.

Hunting sea-otters, sea-lions and seals was another type of activity that was supposed to guarantee profit ³⁹⁹. The pelts of otters were of very high value. Even though otters made up only 5% of all pelts acquired by Russian hunters, they were mostly desirable. Especially on Chinese markets. Russian merchants would most commonly trade in Kyakhta. Since the trade with Spanish proved itself still unsuccessful, Chinese market became a main source of profit. According to James Clifford a single pelt of sea-otter in 1820 was worth \$100 on a Cantonese market. The same amount of money would be made within a full year of agricultural work by a farmer from Pennsylvania ⁴⁰⁰. Nevertheless, hunting also eventually was abandoned. As the population of otters was declining from early 1830s, so did the hunting. New hunting parties emerged, and new weapons (guns in particular) were introduced. In early 1840s the animals started disappearing and the hunting stopped being profitable as more and more resources had to be provided ⁴⁰¹. Sea-otters are now considered as an extinct species in the area around Ross. They didn't manage to repopulate throughout almost 200 years.

Hunting was most commonly conducted by the natives that came with Russians from Alaska. They are usually referred to as *Aleuts* in Russian primary sources, but actually they comprised of all indigenous tribes from Alaskan coast and Kodiak islands. Some of

³⁹⁸ D. Zavalishin, *An excerpt from a Journal of a visit to Alta California during the round-the-world voyage of the frigate "Kreiser"*, [in:] *California through Russian eyes 1806 – 1848*, ed. J. R. Gibson, *Early California Commentaries*, vol. II, Norman (Oklahoma) 2013, pp. 236-238.

³⁹⁹ A. Ogden, *A California Sea Otter Trade. 1784 – 1848*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1941, p. 58-60.

⁴⁰⁰ J. Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press 1997, p. 321.

⁴⁰¹ A. Ogden, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

them were of mixed, Russian/Native origins, who were called *Creole* by the Russians. In general, the Russian Californian community constructed of people of various ethnic origin. Among those usually known as *Russian*, were actually also Finns, Germans, Poles, Ukrainians and others. There were also Buryats and other indigenous peoples of Siberia. All of them: Russians (of various ethnicities), Aleuts (and other Indian tribes) and Creoles would commonly engage in mixed marriages with local natives, Kashaya and Pomo most frequently. Therefore, the little Russian colony in California was very multicultural which finds its legacy today. The census of 1820, conducted by Ivan Kuskov, shown following national structure at the colony: Among 260 inhabitants, 14.6% were Russians, 6.5% creoles, 51.2% *Eskimos* (126 Koniags, 7 Chugach) and 21.5% Californian Natives (from Kashaya, Pomo and Miwok tribes). Census also included: 3 Aleuts, 5 Yakuts, 4 “Sandwichians” (Hawaiians), 2 Tlingits, 1 Tanaina Indian and 1 unidentified⁴⁰².

4. The sale

Russians eventually decided to leave Fort Ross in April 15, 1839⁴⁰³. All of the endeavors mentioned above proved themselves unsuccessful. Although last commander, Alexander Rotchev, was advising against selling the property, the management of RAK decided to do so. Rotchev has been stationing for only a year and still believed in success of his mission⁴⁰⁴. Reluctantly, he had to seek for buyers. The Russians were approaching various potential purchasers. From British Hundson Bay Company to the French to the Mexican government. None of them seemed to be interested. Eventually, they found an interested party. A Swiss-German businessmen, holding US citizenship named John Sutter⁴⁰⁵. Although Sutter acted as a private investor, he was under the supervision of the Mexicans. He wasn't much interested in the land and in continuing the activities of the fort. Sutter

⁴⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 303.

⁴⁰³ J. DuFour, E. O. Essig, A. Ogden, *The Russians in California*, [in:] *Quarterly of the California Historical Society*, vol. XII, no.3, San Francisco 1933, p. 11.

⁴⁰⁴ V. Bezyazychny, *Alexander Rotchev; The Last Commandant of Fort Ross*, [in:] Santa Rosa Press Democrat, July 30th, 1967, p. 4-5.

⁴⁰⁵ N. Saul, *California-Alaska Trade, 1851–1867: The American Russian Commercial Company and the Russian America Company and the Sale/Purchase of Alaska*, [in:] *Journal of Russian American Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (2018), p. 2.

recently opened his own ranch, which he named *New Helvetia*, and needed to equip it with various accessories, weapons, materials, etc. He also needed timber and other building supplies. John Sutter bought the Fort Ross from Alexander Rotchev for 42.857 rubles and 14 kopeks (equivalent of \$30.000)⁴⁰⁶. The sale took place in December 1841 and this date is considered as an official end of Russian rule over Fort Ross. Since it wasn't until January 1842 when Russians finally left the fort, sometimes a year 1842 is considered the last year of Russian period at Ross. Thus, Russian permanent presence in California would constitute of exact number of 30 years. Paying the Russians off took Sutter a lot of time, he was redeeming his debt in installments and the entire sum never actually reached imperial treasure in Sankt Petersburg. John Sutter's New Helvetia was eventually transformed into Sacramento and the restored fort is now known as Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

5. Fate of the Settlement Ross after the sale

John Sutter appointed a manager in charge of the fort remnants. Throughout 1840s the management as well as ownership changed and finally it ended up belonging to Wilhelm Otto Benitz and Ernest Rufus. Rufus soon left and thus, since early 1850s, Benitz became a sole owner of a property, which was known as Muniz Ranch⁴⁰⁷. Those events give birth to the next period of Ross' history – Ranch era⁴⁰⁸. Benitz owned the ranch until 1867 when he sold it to two entrepreneurs James Dixon and Charles Fairfax. Fairfax died suddenly in 1869. Another sale was an aftermath of his death, which took place in 1873. Fort Ross became a property of one George Washington Call. Buildings inside the fort served George W. Call for various purposes. The house of the last commander, Alexander Rotchev, became a hotel. The previous owners used it as their homes, just like the last commander. George Call on the other hand, wanted to capitalize on the growing interest in the area among the visitors. The general development of tourism influenced Sonoma

⁴⁰⁶ J. DuFour, E. O. Essig, A. Ogden, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴⁰⁷ G. Farris, *How the Muniz Rancho Got Its Name*, California Department of Parks and Recreation, June 6, 1996.

⁴⁰⁸ See more: F. Kaye Tomlin, *the Ranch Era*, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/101/the-ranch-era.pdf> [access: June 9th, 2022].

County (where the fort is located) as well. Although mostly for its beautiful landscapes and other natural advantages, some interest towards historical value of the land emerged in 1880s and 1890s. Some activists showed their interest even earlier. In 1875, first organization dealing with Californian historical and cultural heritage was formed. It was named *the Native Sons of the Golden West* (NSGW). They were later followed by the *Native Daughters of the Golden West* (NDGW). In the future both these organizations contributed significantly to the development of the restoration of the fort. George Call perceived his new property in very practical terms. The chapel was turned into a stable, which in future will have received some concerns among the Russian Americans, who will have considered such a decision to have been a reason for desacralization of the chapel (see accounts of bishop Nikolai). The Call family owned the land around Ross until 1972, when it was sold to the State of California. The former Russian settlement itself was being sold out to the state piece by piece starting from 1903, when its interior was sold to California Historical Landmark Committee, which had been founded just a year earlier and consisted of representatives of 16 different organizations, among others NSGW and NDGW. 3 years later, the fort was deeded over to State Park System. It happened only 20 days before the big earthquake of 1906, that has damaged both the fort and the land significantly. Although, partially destroyed, Fort Ross became California's 5th State Park in 1909⁴⁰⁹. The reconstruction didn't start until 1916. Certain repairs were made throughout the next decade, but changes started with the creation of the California State Parks system in 1928. The system consisted of 5 sites and Fort Ross became one them. The financial aspect of this decision was the most important one. The creators of the system initially allocated \$6 million to be spend for the parks. Although, the Great Depression caused the budgetary limitations, stable state funding allowed the necessary work to be done. Further state-organized development was interrupted by the WW2, when Fort Ross served as s station for U.S. Coast Guard. After the war the restoration continued. 1952 brought first archeological excavations, managed by the John McKenzie, a Fort Ross curator appointed by the State Parks after the war. A year later, another archeological

⁴⁰⁹ M. D. Ilyin, *the history of Fort Ross*, Fort Ross Conservancy Library 1975, p. 26, digital content courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org; author maintains copyright of his or her written material.

research was organized, but this time, under professional academic guidance. Archeological research allowed the restoration to receive valid historical ground. The excavations were conducted by Adan E. Treganza, an archeologist from University of California. Treganza was hired by California State Department of Natural Resources, Division of Beaches and Parks and concluded his work with a report giving a full picture of current state of affairs at the fort⁴¹⁰. The process of restoration continued throughout following decades with more intensity in 1970s, when another largely planned archeological excavations were conducted.

Again, just like in early 20th century, an important heritage-related milestone preceded the tragedy. Fort Ross itself received a designation of a National Historic Landmark in 1961. In 1969, the chapel joined with the same landmark. *Architecturally significant as a rare U.S. example of a log church constructed on a Russian quadrilateral plan* – a justification stated⁴¹¹. Next year, a sudden, accidental fire burned the chapel leaving it destroyed. Newly received landmark was taken away in 1971. Restoration was being undertaken for 3 years and finally chapel was brought back to life in 1974⁴¹². The landmark was restored in 1980. The Commander's House (the new one, built by Alexander Rotchev) became a final location to be designated with a landmark in 1970. Followed by the archeological research, the sale of remaining lands by Call family to the State of California and an establishment of Citizens Advisory Committee (1972) to assist the management, Fort Ross State Historic Park became, in general terms, what it is until today.

⁴¹⁰ A. E. Treganza, *Fort Ross, a study in Historical Archeology*, Fort Ross Conservancy Library 1953, digital content courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org; author maintains copyright of his or her written material.

⁴¹¹ National Historic Landmarks – Fort Ross Chapel. Online source: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/fort-ross-chapel.htm> [access: January 15th, 2020].

⁴¹² See more on the chapel: D. Spencer-Hancock, W. Pritchard, *The Chapel at Fort Ross: Its History and Reconstruction*, [in:] *California History. The Magazine of the California Historical Society*, San Francisco 1982.



A plaque at the Commander's House - photo: K. Dziekan

6. Meaning of Fort Ross to Russian Americans

6. 1. Beginnings

All Russians (regardless of actual ethnic background, except from Native Californians) left Fort Ross in 1842. Therefore, neither was there any continuity of Russian American personal heritage in California, nor any other direct connection among people. Nevertheless, material heritage remained and became more and more important to the newcomers. Russian immigration to the United States through the Pacific Ocean's Engel Island increased significantly after the October Revolution in 1917. The immigration years of late 1910s and early 1920s created a considerable and visible Russian minority in California⁴¹³. Most of those people decided to settle in in San Francisco Bay Area. Most of them were of upper and middle class status, usually educated. Although they represented various political agendas, they shared a discontent towards the new state emerging on the remains of Russian Empire – the Soviet Union. New Californian citizens

⁴¹³ L. B. Zaverukha, N. Bogdan, *op. cit.*, Charleston 2010, p. 23.

longed for their lost homeland and its symbols: Orthodox Church, Russian language, traditions and customs. Not until they established a Russian Center of San Francisco in 1939, did they have a one common gathering place. The San Francisco parish of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia was only founded in 1927. Russian Orthodox Church had been active in North California earlier though. Representatives of the clergy who were residing in Alaska (both once it belonged to Russia and after the sale in 1867) never forgot about its former colony in California. A starting point for all future endeavors goes back to 1836. This is when Alaskan bishop, Ioann Veniaminov visited Fort Ross, delivered a service in the chapel and baptized numerous natives. Father Vienaminov, known also as Saint Innocent of Alaska is a crucial character in the whole history of Russian Colonization of America and absolutely key figure in the development of Orthodoxy in the new land. Thus, his visit received the status of one of the most important events during the whole Californian colony's existence. Father Vieniaminov's followers would later reconnect to this visit and take advantage of its memory as an argument to continue the religious mission in California.

Until Russian statehood existed in North America the contacts were easier. However, despite the sale, Russian Orthodox Church's interest in America remained. Since certain number of converts existed, they required the priest. Therefore, Diocese of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska was established in 1870 and in 1872 it opened its first post outside the defined boundaries of the diocese. In San Francisco. Nonetheless, it wasn't until 1890s, when the bishop headquartered in San Francisco, Vladimir Sokolovsky-Avtonomov, took actual interest in the Fort Ross. *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* noted that: *[bishop] wrote to the Czar, suggesting that the property be bought by the Russian Government, and that the buildings be as far as possible preserved or restored*⁴¹⁴. The tzar remained uninterested to the discontent of the bishop. Sokolovsky-Avtonomov didn't manage to achieve any of his goals related to Ross. He was succeeded by Nikolai Ziorov, who started another attempt with restoring the former Russian settlement. Bishop Nikolai visited it in March 1897. He was hosted by the Call family and later published his accounts of this visit. He

⁴¹⁴ *Relics of Russians*, [in:] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, November 3, 1893, online source: https://www.holy-trinity.org/history/1893/11.03.Bulletin_Ft.Ross.html.

was devastated with the condition of the fort, despaired with the desecralization of the chapel and disappointed with George W Call's lack of interest in giving the "holy place" away to the Russian Orthodox Church. He wrote: *to my question why he allowed such desecration of the church he only muttered something that none of us could understand. When I asked him if he could leave me part of the fort, namely the church, the house with the garden, and the cemetery, and I would put everything in order and live there during the summer, he answered mysteriously, "we can talk about this tomorrow morning." But next day when I met him on the pier he didn't go back to the conversation. It would have been very nice for us to be able to save this sacred Russian place from the hands of this Yankee and make it look as it should.*⁴¹⁵ Unfortunately for him, the sacred place was not saved. Fortunately for him and others interested in the preservation of the fort, the restoration process has begun with early 20th century.

6. 2. New century

In 1905 the headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church in North America was moved from San Francisco to New York City, which caused the decline of interest from the clergy⁴¹⁶. The next 20 years featured increasing interest among various groups of California's citizens as well as growing number of Russians (of all kinds of ethnicities), who started coming after the revolution. Growing Russian community needed a visible symbol of their motherland. The knowledge about Russian colonization of California wasn't common among the immigrants. They weren't aware of the fact how many sites around them had held actual historical reference to Russia (Bodega Bay/Port Rumyantsev; Farallon Islands; Russian Gulch; Russian River; Mount St. Helena). The only location fairly known to local people was Fort Ross. Once Russians found out about it, they started to organize themselves around getting to know the fate of the fort better. Seeing the fort

⁴¹⁵ Nikolai, Bishop of Aleutian Islands and Alaska, *Poezdka v Fort Ross [Trip to Fort Ross]*, [in:] *Amerikanskii Pravoslavnii Vestnik*, vol I, no. 17, 1897, as reprinted in *Russkaya Zhizn' (Russian Life)*, January 27 and 28, 1982, pp. 6-7; translated by Oleg Terichow.

⁴¹⁶ M. K. Meniailenko, *Dieyatelnost' Russkoi Emigratsii po sokhranieniyu istoriko-kulturnovo naslediya (po materialam Muzeia russkoi kultury v San Francisco)*, Moscow 2008, p. 22.

still significantly damaged in 1920s came as a painful feeling. Some of the most active representatives of the community began thinking of contributing to the rebuilding, as well as establishing an anchor point of their hybrid identity. Among the first leaders of Russian community was Vladimir Sakovich, the Orthodox priest, a Rector Father of the Russian Orthodox Church at Green and Van Ness [Holy Trinity Cathedral]⁴¹⁷.

In 1925 he was approached by Sebastopol member of the NSGW William S. Borba, who was an organizer of the annual festivities taking place at the Fort Ross on 4th of July. Members of NSGW would celebrate Independent Day of the USA as well as work on restoration of the fort, especially the chapel. Being aware of the atmosphere among the Russian immigrants in San Francisco, he came up with an idea of inviting them to join the 4th of July celebrations. This way the symbolic place would show a certain reunification of the Russians with their old homeland, while symbolic date would demonstrate their attachment to the new homeland at the same time. Since the NSGW members dealt with the chapel anyway, Borba thought that church representatives might be interested. Thus, he approached Father Sakovich and proposed to him to perform a service in the chapel during the celebration. Therefore, the chapel would become resecralized, which significance cannot be overestimated. Even though various bishops and clergymen have visited Fort Ross throughout the years after the sale, none of them have ever conducted a church service there. The service of 1925 took place for the first time since 1841 and gave birth to the tradition that exists among the Russian Americans of California (and not only) until today. Maria Sakovich, a granddaughter of Father Vladimir Sakovich recollects: *if for the Americans Fort Ross was an exotic place, for the newly arrived Russians (as well as their predecessors and successors) Fort Ross was a sacred place. The Russian place 'outside' of Russia had special meaning. Bishop Nikolai in 1897 noted, when he signed the guest register at the Fort Ross hotel, "I visited this place holy for every Russian". For refugees whose country had been radically altered, the meaning of Fort Ross was especially significant. In the discovery of a Russian past in California, some found connection to an irretrievable previous life. The America to which these educated,*

⁴¹⁷ Sakovich, Vladimir, [in:] *Kto est' kto v istorii Russkovo San Francisco. Bibliograficheskiy slovar'*, ed. A.A. Khisamutdinov, Vladivostok 2015, p. 68.

*and often cultured immigrants came felt alien. Fort Ross represented something familiar, at least symbolically*⁴¹⁸. Alexei A. Istomin, Russian anthropologist, and historian adds: *The solitary Russian fortress was for the immigrants both a part and a symbol of their lost homeland*⁴¹⁹.

6. 3. Towards regaining the lost heritage

The knowledge about the Fort Ross was growing among the Russian immigrants. With state funding contributing to the development of the fort since late 1920s, they were able to see more and more of the settlements restored. However, their expectations began growing considerably. They no longer wanted the mere restoration of the architecture – they wanted to reestablish their Russian heritage in a more vivid way. Therefore, in early 1930s Fort Ross became full *lieu de memoire*⁴²⁰ for Russian diaspora in San Francisco. In 1932 a memorial plaque was installed at the fort. In 1936 they formed an organization called *Initiative Group for the Memorialization of Fort Ross*. Among their goals were: building a new memorial chapel in stone and creating a museum of Fort Ross. Maria Sakovich: *from existing correspondence and minutes it is clear that the members of the Initiative Group and Historical Society saw their activities not only as efforts to preserve what remained of Fort Ross but also to preserve what remained of “Mother Russia now crucified and torn apart.” They envisioned their museum as a repository of Russian culture, historic and contemporary, for Russians and Americans. Fort Ross also offered the opportunity for Russians to find their place in American history and, perhaps just as important, to call attention to Russian contributions to American history. These Russian patriots making their new home in America wanted recognition for their compatriots’ role in American history*⁴²¹. Thus Russian colonization of America becomes both the history of Russia and the history of the United States for them. Fort Ross as *a lieu de memoire*

⁴¹⁸ M. Sakovich, *Our Shared Heritage: Highlights from the History of Fort Ross State Historic Park*, p. 9, unpublished.

⁴¹⁹ A. A. Istomin, *A Variant of the Ross Colony: Russian America and the Process of Diasporization*, [in:] *Diasporas*, Moscow 1993, p. 29.

⁴²⁰ P. Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire*, [in:] *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: *Memory, and Counter-Memory*, Spring 1989, pp. 7-24.

⁴²¹ M. Sakovich, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

which offers a dualistic self-identification opportunity. Although those two goals (chapel in stone, museum) were never achieved, certain exhibitions are nowadays present at few sites within the State Historic Park. Apart from that, the group focused on self-education in the topic and general research. Their knowledge was based on material available thanks to publications from California Historical Society, which had taken interest in Ross earlier. The Initiative Group published several articles in San Francisco's newspapers as well as the booklet (edited by Alexandr Pavlovich Farafontov) *Fort Ross: Outpost of the Former Glory of Russia in America, 1812-1937*⁴²². This booklet, published in 1937 in Shanghai (another crucial place for Russian *white* diaspora), was the first example of a historical material written on Fort Ross in Russian by a representative of Russian diaspora in USA. A. P. Farafontov was one of the most active members of the diaspora. The other was Vladimir Petrovich Anichkov. In 1923 he founded a first Russian bookstore in San Francisco, called *Russkaya Kniga/Russian Book*⁴²³. V. P. Anichkov wrote himself several pieces on the fort and recited his poem during the installation of the plaque in 1932. In 1937 the Initiative Group was transformed into *the Russian Historical Society in America*. It started an active cooperation with California Historical Society. The rapid development of Russian Americans' activity was interrupted by the outburst of WW2. The war prioritized various activities as well as funding opportunities. The site of Fort Ross was affected by the war. U.S. Coast Guard turned it into its station in 1942 and stayed there until 1945. Nevertheless, Russian Historical Society in America maintained its course on restoring their heritage and bringing back its lost memory. They set a new goal: to locate the lost bell of the chapel. The quest for a bell lasted almost as long as the war itself. Members of the society were looking for it all over California, writing letters, publishing announcements, and driving around various locations. Eventually, the bell was found in Petaluma, Sonoma County. Victor Petrov, a member of the society was sent to Petaluma to identify the bell. He wrote in 1979: *I had to save gasoline coupons for several weeks to be able to make a trip in my car to Petaluma. Finally, enough gas was purchased, and we*

⁴²² A. P. Farafontov, *Fort Ross, avanpost byloi slavy Rossii v Amerike: istoricheskiy al'bom, 1812-1937*, Shanghai 1937.

⁴²³ A.A. Khisamutdinov, *Fort Ross: dokumenty i fotografii russkikh emigrantov*, nauchnoye elektronnoye izdaniye, Vladivostok 2016, p. 6.

went. We were met in Petaluma by a member of the local parlor [chapter] of the NSGW, who showed us an old shed, inside which we found the old Fort Ross bell. . . . It was in perfect condition, with clear images of Virgin Mary and Savior on it. There were religious inscriptions in old Church Slavonic . . . and another inscription in Russian stated that the bell was cast in St. Petersburg at the foundry of Master Merchant Michael Makarov Stukolkin. There was no doubt in our mind that this was the original Fort Ross bell⁴²⁴. However, research conducted by Mark D. Galperin years later, in 2012, proved that in fact it wasn't an original Fort Ross bell⁴²⁵. At the time though, common understanding was that the bell was actually original. A special ceremony was conducted at Fort Ross on Labor Day, September 2nd, 1945. Among the participants were representatives of Russian Historical Society, NSGW and the State Park Commission. The bell was presented to the State of California together with "an exact replica of the flag of the Russian American Company"⁴²⁶.

⁴²⁴ V. P. Petrov, *Letter to the Advisory Committee member George Lebedev, April 2, 1979*, Archive of Maria Sakovich.

⁴²⁵ M. D. Galperin, *Fort Ross Russian Bells*, Fort Ross Conservancy Library 2016, digital content courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org; author maintains copyright of his or her written material.

⁴²⁶ M. Sakovich, *op. cit.*, p. 11.



The bell at Fort Ross' Chapel - photo: K. Dziekan

6. 4. New world order, new complications

End of the war definitely brought a rapid development on many aspects of life. However, to Russian Americans in California, it also brought new limitations. Even though vast majority of them expressed hostility towards Soviet Union, it was the Iron Curtain and Cold War that actually closed all the doors to the homeland. Figuratively and literally. Soviet archives and libraries became closed at large to American scholars and enthusiasts of Russian history and vice versa. This situation created a gap that lasted for almost half

a century and resulted in extremely limited exchange of knowledge, materials, research, and information on *Russian America*. What is more, the first central archive of the Russian Emigration (created in 1923 in Prague as *the Russian Historical Archive Abroad*) was sent to Soviet Union by new Czechoslovak communist authorities. The other Russian Émigré archives (Belgrade, Paris, Beijing) were also destroyed or perished to large extent⁴²⁷. Russian diaspora in California, although in despair due to those loses, decided to take advantage of their fairly good organization and established a new archive. Under the auspicious of the Russian Center in San Francisco, a Museum of Russian Culture was registered in 1948⁴²⁸. Apart from the museum part, it became the second central archive of the Russian Emigration⁴²⁹. Since the first one was gone, in fact the archive in San Francisco turned out to be the main and by far the largest repository of Russian historical collections outside of Russia/Soviet Union. History of Fort Ross found its place on the exhibition created in the museum, accompanied by certain artefacts brought from the fort itself. Although Russian Historical society didn't manage to create a museum at the fort, they did manage to preserve its memory in their own museum in San Francisco. Although officially registered in 1948, the staff has been also celebrating its existence considering 1939 as the origin date. In 2009 the 70th anniversary was celebrated⁴³⁰.

Since Soviet archives and libraries were closed to Americans, people in charge of Fort Ross' restoration process had to look for data elsewhere. Russian diaspora in California became one of the main sources of information on the topic. Certain attempts of American-Soviet cooperation were being considered, especially after the fire that destroyed the chapel in 1970. Several Soviet journalists were suggesting some financial contribution from their state. Mayor of San Francisco, Joseph L. Alioto expressed initially an interest towards this idea. However, it was met with protests and discontent among the Russian émigrés. For them such an idea was unthinkable. Fort Ross was their *sacred* place, legacy of romanticized motherland, wiped off the surface by the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, it was the chapel that obtained a central spot within a sacred place. An altar within a church. The

⁴²⁷M. K. Meniailenko, *op. cit.*, Moscow 2008, p. 66.

⁴²⁸*Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁴²⁹<http://www.mrcsf.org/home/19/> [access: June 9th, 2022].

⁴³⁰M. K. Meniailenko, *Russkomu Tsentru – 70 let*, [in:] *Russkaia Zhizn'*, October 10th, 2009, pp. 8-9.

continuity of Russian legacy seen by annual celebration on July 4th contributed to the stronger sacralization of the chapel. They also secured its special place in the memory of Russian Americans. The debate and protests followed by it resonated in public life around Bay Area. On October 19th, 1970, a journalist from *San Francisco Examiner*, Harry Johannesen covered the story, mentioning protest telegram sent by bishop Dimitry of the Russian Orthodox Church in San Francisco to the Governor Ronald Reagan as well as comments from Ariadna Deliamich, political editor of *the Russian Life Daily/Russkaya Zhizn'*, a newspaper of Russian diaspora. Deliamich posted a very clear and firm declaration: *The chapel was a sacred shrine to the Russian Orthodox Church community. We resent very much any thought of Communist participation in its restoration. Not a single Communist nail can go into the rebuilding project if California citizens of the Orthodox Christian faith are going to participate as contributors to the restoration fund*⁴³¹. In order not to antagonize Russian diaspora, the authorities decided not to seek financial aid in Soviet Union. Chapel was restored with American public and private funds.

6. 5. Breakthrough

1970s brought a significant change in the management of Fort Ross State Historic Park. William Penn Mott, Jr. a director of State Parks and Recreation wanted to include more bottom-up type of management and open up for emerging grass-roots initiatives. In 1972 he established a new body, *Fort Ross Citizens Advisory Committee*. Various activists were invited to help manage the fort on a voluntary basis. Mott's idea was to turn the commemorative agenda of the fort into full historical timeline, a certain flow in which all periods of the land's history would be equally represented. Besides, such were the expectations from local communities of Sonoma County that surround the state part. Apart from natural history, he divided them into three periods: Native era, Russian era and Ranch era. Therefore, he invited representatives from all these three groups to form the advisory

⁴³¹ H. Johannesen, *State to rebuild Fort Ross Chapel at \$75,000 cost*, [in:] *San Francisco Examiner*, No. 112, October 19th, 1970, p. 13.

committee. Not all of Russian Americans were happy with this shift of commemorative policy. Some considered the fort as *their* and believed the Russian period should remain as a main emphasis. After all, the material culture had been left by Russians, they argued. Maria Sakovich: *the partnership between State Parks (and the Legislature) and these grassroots committees was not always smooth sailing. The bureaucracy of State Parks and the Legislature tried members' patience. Tensions existed over the "flow of history" concept for interpretation. Strong personalities were not always easy to work with. Russian American members not trained as historians argued for a celebratory version of history. (Ethnic history was just coming of age at this time.)*⁴³²

Finally, the holistic approach to the policy of remembrance prevailed. Representatives of three different groups had to learn to get along at the advisory committee. Since during first months of their activity they were mostly preoccupied with the chapel reconstruction, the common goal united them. The ceremony of opening the new chapel was an essential event for Russian Americans. It took place on June 8th, 1974. The ceremony consisted of, among others, firing a cannon, raising the Russian American Company flag, singing a hymn, and blessing the chapel before the opening⁴³³. Victor Porfirievich Petrov, a Russian American historian (who in early 1990s initiated opening of the Ivan Kuskov's Museum in Kuskov's hometown of Totma, Russia) recollected on the experience: *for all Russians this was a day of joy and pride not only because of the restoration of the historic Russian structures but also from the realization that our efforts as Russian people in America are recognized and appreciated. We felt an uninterrupted connection with the people of a long time ago who had built this fort and a deep gratitude to the country which gave us shelter and allowed us to preserve our Russian heritage on American soil*⁴³⁴.

It wasn't just the restoration of historic material culture. The ability to influence the decision-making process and to contribute to the work being carried out strengthened the personal connections of these people with the Fort Ross. It also strengthened its position in the collective memory of the entire community. The event was also covered by the main

⁴³² M. Sakovich, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴³³ *Rededication Program. Fort Ross State Historic Park. Sonoma County, California. Saturday, June 8th, 1974, 11:0 a.m.*, A brochure from the Archive of the Museum of Russian Culture, San Francisco.

⁴³⁴ V. P. Petrov, *Russkie v Istorii Amerikii*, New Jersey 1988, p. 78.

newspaper of Russian Americans in Bay Area - *Russkaia Zhizn'*, a journal published by the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco. June 8th, 1974 was the day never to be forgotten⁴³⁵.

With 1970s came first contacts with Soviet scholars. One of the advisory committee members, Nicholas Rokitiatsky, reached out to Svetlana Fedorova, one of the most renown researchers on Russian America. Despite the reluctance towards Soviet academics among members of his community, Rokitiatsky met with Fedorova during his trip to Soviet Union in 1972. Their meeting resulted in blossom of American-Soviet exchange on a topic, which resulted in first international academic conference on Russian America, held in Sitka, Alaska on August 21-25th 1979. Fedorova came to Fort Ross shortly after the conference. Her research and publications, along with the work of other fellow scholars contributed to professionalization of memory practice at the state park as well as the one advocated by local Russian American community. *Perestroika* and general changes happening in Soviet Union since 1985 brought further cooperation between two countries and thus extended academic and educational exchange on Russian America and Fort Ross. Fort Ross Interpretive Association, a non-profit organization established in 1975 by the members of advisory committee developed an educational and event program. The outreach of the educational program focused on school students from around North California. Children of Russian roots expressed particular interest in the program, which included overnight stays at the fort, wearing historicized cloths and reenactments acts. News about those programs went all the way to Wisconsin (and other places, the article appeared in various media outlets – see next page), receiving a press coverage from *Kenosha News* in December 1987. The daily quoted Bohdan Hladky, 11-year-old boy from Bolinas, Marin County who was among the first 30 elementary school students to have participated in this program. *It's especially exciting for me because I am of Russian descent*, declared Hladky to the reporter⁴³⁶. As a aftermath of the collapse of Soviet Union, more and more Russians began to visit USA. More and more Americans gained interest in that aspect of their history and Fort Ross became more popular as a tourist site. Among

⁴³⁵ A. Delianich, *Den' Radostnykh Nadezhd i Vospominaniy*, [in:] *Russkaia Zhizn'*, No. 7990, June 13th, 1974.

⁴³⁶ Ch. Hillinger, *Russian colony life in America relived at site*, [in:] *Kenosha News*, December 10th, 1987, p. 50.

the benefactors of those liberties were people, whose visits to Ross were highly expected by local Russians. In June 1989, Hiermonk Innokenti Veniaminov, great grandson of Father Ioann Veniaminov came. In September 1993, Aleksei II, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, followed. He conducted a special service at the chapel, which symbolically ended the feeling of religious exile among the Russian Orthodox community in California. End of communism and further development of US-Russian relations throughout the 1990s and later put an end to the notion of *sacred* place, resembling the motherland hijacked by the Bolsheviks. New generations of Russian Americans, as well as new migrants driven by fast-developing business sector in California were also less affected by religion, loosening the significance of the Orthodox factor around Fort Ross. Nevertheless, the site remained to be an important *lieu de memoire* for them. The pilgrimages on July 4th remain to be an uninterrupted tradition, children from all around California participate in educational programs organized in the fort, Russian newcomers frequently visit the state park and local citizens of Russian origin become engaged with the work either as state park rangers or within Fort Ross Conservancy (a non-profit organization, continuity of advisory board).

7. Meaning of the Fort Ross to local non-Russian Americans

Fort Ross doesn't play an important role to vast majority of Americans or even Californians. Information about Russian outpost in California isn't present in history textbooks, there was neither a bestselling book, nor any top song. No popular tv show or film on that topic was created in the USA either. There was one feature film of Russian production though, *Fort Ross. In search of adventure / Fort Ros. V poiskakh priklyucheniy*⁴³⁷. Released in 2014, didn't appear in American movie theaters, therefore remains unknown to the American audience. The news related to the fort don't receive coverage in national media, hardly ever does it appear in any big state Californian ones. As a result, an average American is not even aware of the fact that such an episode in

⁴³⁷ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3727780/releaseinfo?ref =t dt dt#akas> [access: June 15th, 2022].

Californian history ever existed. Throughout the 20th and 21st century, various news on the situation at Fort Ross has appeared frequently in local Californian newspapers such as: *Independent Coast Observer*, *Sonoma West Times and News*, *The Press Democrat*, *Santa Rosa Republican*, *Oakland Tribune*, *The Napa Valley Register*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, *Cloverdale Reveille*. Surprisingly enough, since the topic is a niche, news about Fort Ross appeared in enormous number of local media outlets throughout the States. Just to name few: mentioned earlier *Kenosha News* (Wisconsin) and also *Messenger-Inquirer* (Kentucky), *The Salt Lake Tribune* (Utah), *The Pantograph* (Illinois), *Albuquerque Journal* (New Mexico), *Asbury Park Press* (New Jersey), *Citizens Voice* (Pennsylvania), *Victoria Advocate* (Texas). Explanation to that phenomenon comes with the name of the author of vast majority of non-California articles, which happens to be the same person, Charles Hillinger, originally affiliated with *Los Angeles Times*, but occasionally also with *Washington Post News Service*. Hillinger, no doubts an enthusiast of the topic, has been publishing his articles in colossal number of newspapers. Very often, the same article would be published in various media outlets with different titles. An article on educational program outreach by Fort Ross Interpretive Association was published by Hillinger in *Messenger-Inquirer* (Kentucky) as *Russian years recalled at fort*⁴³⁸; *Salt Lake Tribune* (Utah) as *Fort in California preserves the memories of when Russia had a West Coast colony*⁴³⁹; *Asbury Park Press* (New Jersey) as *Fort Ross once part of Russia*⁴⁴⁰; *Albuquerque Journal* (New Mexico) as *Russia still alive in California*⁴⁴¹; *Austin American-Statesman* (Texas) as *America's Russian Colonists. Soviet fort turns back clock for California schoolchildren*⁴⁴² and several others. The latter provides a reader with an interesting description as the fort is called *Soviet* there. This rather peculiar epithet could be only explained with a simplified narrative in a newspaper.

⁴³⁸ Ch. Hillinger, *Russian years recalled at fort*, [in:] *Messenger-Inquirer*, vol. 113, no. 347, December 13th 1987, 3D.

⁴³⁹ Ch. Hillinger, *Fort in California preserves the memories of when Russia had a West Coast colony*, [in:] *The Salt Lake Tribune*, vol. 235, No. 60, December 13th 1987, A3.

⁴⁴⁰ Ch. Hillinger, *Fort Ross once part of Russia*, [in:] *Asbury Park Press*, December 18th 1987 B16.

⁴⁴¹ Ch. Hillinger, *Russia still alive in California*, [in:] *Albuquerque Journal*, no. 347, December 13th 1987, G4.

⁴⁴² Ch. Hillinger, *America's Russian colonists. Soviet fort turns back clock for California schoolchildren*, [in:] *Austin American-Statesman*, December 13th 1987, D12.

Local news coverage in California resembled an interest in the topic among the residents of state park's surroundings, mostly Sonoma County, as well as certain academic interest among scholars from Bay Area universities, James Clifford among others. He posed questions related precisely to the fact that there was a Russian historical presence on Californian coast. *I'm looking for history at Fort Ross. I want to understand my location among others in time and space. Where have we been and where are we going? But instead of a clear direction or process, I find different overlapping temporalities, all in different ways 'historical'*⁴⁴³. Clifford also touches upon an issue concerning American cultural memory regarding the colonization process. The general perception of an East towards West direction of this process. *This westward-looking dream topography had its origin along the Asiatic and African edges of Europe, over centuries of violent and creative contacts. The dream-productive, expansive, violent-had a destination: the Pacific. Here the "West" culminated. Beyond the final ocean lay the East. At Fort Ross, even "Western" history arrives from the wrong direction. And it comes contaminated, an extension of Russia's great Asian encounter: the Siberian frontier (...). It is strange to stand on a California coast and imagine yourself at the farthest extension of an eastward-expanding empire centered in St. Petersburg*⁴⁴⁴. His argument could serve as one of the potential explanations for the lack of popularity and knowledge about this episode among the Americans. Since the story of Fort Ross doesn't fit into a general narrative on the America's beginning, it's easier to omit it. Russians in Alaska are easily explainable and don't interfere with a narrative. Alaska is an external territory, far away from the mainland USA, so it could've been colonized somehow differently. However, that doesn't apply to California.

Nevertheless, visible material remains of local history encouraged local residents to get more interested and involved. Those people took an active role in the process of restoration and joined the Citizens Advisory Committee. Once the Fort Ross Interpretive Association (transformed in 2012 into Fort Ross Conservancy), a non-profit organization, was established in 1975, the activists became members as well. The association alongside the

⁴⁴³ J. Clifford, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 303.

State Park shaped the narrative presented at the Ross towards visitors. Those two parties established a following division of tasks: State Park continued to be responsible for the maintenance of the park, whereas association received the tasks to run educational and public programs, conduct guided tours, support research and promote the history of the place. Such division remains to this day.

8. Fort Ross Interpretive Association (FRIA) / Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC)

Among the key challenges that both State Park employees and FRIA had to face was to create a visitor center, which would be able to accommodate a growing number of visitors. Eventually, a completely new building was built and the center opened in 1985. It's wooden, historically stylized and located at the parking lot, on a way to the fort itself. Two parties worked together on preparation technical part of the center as well as a visual narrative of the story behind a fort. This narrative is presented till today as an exhibition located within the visitor center, which apart from it, consists of a bookstore, a library (with a small archive) and an office space. The visitor center is managed by the FRC. The narrative on the exhibition reflects the general narrative on the topic adopted already by the Citizens Advisory Committee. Presented story covers 3 historical periods: Native Californian Era, Russian Era and Ranch Era. Although the strongest focus is on the Russian Era, representatives of Cal family and Kashaya Pomo made sure to have their stories present on the exhibition as well. The exhibition emphasizes the peaceful character of Russian intensions and activities at the colony.



An exhibition panel at the Fort Ross Visitor Centre – photo by K. Dziekan



GOOD NEIGHBORS

Although the Spanish and Mexican governments felt threatened by having Russians as neighbors at Fort Ross, Californios began trading with the Russian-American Company for needed manufactured goods as early as 1813. Officially such activity was banned, but the Californians were as eager to sell grain as the Russians were to buy, and in 1817 arranged regular trade.

In exchange for grain and salted beef, the Californios, long neglected by Spain and Mexico, took such things as cloth, tools, pots, gunpowder, thread, needles, coffee, tea, sugar, and tobacco. Fort Ross also provided repair services and sold its own goods — boats, iron products, and leather. In 1833, Mariano G. Vallejo of Sonoma purchased boots, saddles, guns, clothing, and cutlasses for California's soldiers.

An exhibition panel at the Fort Ross Visitor Centre – photo by K. Dziekan

The mission of FRC is to promote for the benefit of the public the interpretive and educational activities of the Russian River Sector of California State Parks at Fort Ross State Historic Park and Salt Point State Park⁴⁴⁵. They emphasize the importance of discovering the past, cooperating with local communities (including Russian Americans and Native Kashia) and continuing the restoration of the facilities. Throughout its educational program, FRC seeks to outreach Californian youngsters. The educational offer is not limited to the historical aspects. It also covers the natural qualities of the land. Two main programs are: Environmental Living Program (ELP) and Marine Ecology Program (MEP). The former provides student groups with an opportunity to *travel back in time* and live at the fort like its inhabitants did in first half of 19th century. The role-playing game is based on taking roles of actual historical characters. This program concentrates around the Russian Era, but characters to be played are of various origin, including the Native Californians. The latter takes upon Ross history from a different angle. Focused on environmental history, it seeks to sensitize children towards the climate challenges and importance of protecting the environment. Recent years brought a bigger emphasis on environmental history and the indigenous people's long-lasting presence at that area. The current brochure promoting the park reads: *In 1812, Russian and Alaskan explorers and traders established Fort Ross at Metini, a centuries-old Kashaya Pomo coastal village*⁴⁴⁶. Such an emphasis lies in compliance with the current trends in popular history and memory practices that tend to share stories that remained untold and fill such *white spots*⁴⁴⁷ with content. This is particularly related with vernacular groups, indigenous peoples, and other regional perspectives within the framework of ethnohistory⁴⁴⁸.

Hank Birnbaum, a bilingual guide (English/Russian) and a ELP instructor explains this new approach of FRC:

I've been working with visitors and tourists who are often surprised about the Russian story on our coast, and also know very little about the native story in America. And so as

⁴⁴⁵ <https://www.fortross.org/about> [access: June 9th, 2022].

⁴⁴⁶ <https://cdn.fortross.org/uploads/2021/09/FortRossSHPFinalWebLayout113018.pdf> [access: June 9th, 2022].

⁴⁴⁷ V. Julkowska, *Białe plamy*, [in:] *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, pp. 59-61.

⁴⁴⁸ W. S. Simmons, *Culture Theory in Contemporary Ethnohistory*, [in:] *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter, 1988), pp. 1-14.

*a guide, I'm trying to open eyes and understandings to those stories and not to mention just the natural history - the biggest history of all at our site. There is of course the intimate, inner connection between. There is no real separation to the natural, cultural worlds and those stories. We have ecological consequences of that, the avarice of that fur trade and all. It's even changed the ecology with the disappearance of the keystone species such as the sea otter. We're trying to understand that now. And the consequences with global warming and so forth. What is the legacy of those past habits and how that's impacting our nature and what we could do about it. I'm involved all those things in different ways.*⁴⁴⁹

The events organized by FRC are of different types. They range from cultural festivals to reenactments to environment protection activities. The cultural events usually feature Russian and Native performances, cuisines, songs, dances, etc. 2019 featured among others: *Kolyadki* (traditional Central-Eastern European Christmas songs) singing, *Verbnoye Voskresenie* (Palm Sunday), Alaska Native Day, Metini Day, California Coastal Cleanup Day and Harvest Festival. FRC organizes also an annual *Fort Ross Festival* taking place in July. Throughout those events they organizers intend to *promote public awareness and understanding of the natural and cultural history of Fort Ross State Historic Park and Salt Point State Park*, as states one of its goals⁴⁵⁰.

Apart from that, Fort Ross Conservancy understands its Russian heritage as an extra value, with a potential for bridge-building. They advocate for international and intercultural cooperation, particularly in American-Russian relations. The main tool serving that end has been the annual Fort Ross Dialogue (FRD) conference⁴⁵¹. The first edition of the FRD took place in 2012 for bicentennial of the fort's foundation. The organizers had high hopes for the FRD becoming a developing platform for fostering improvement of American-Russian relations on social, cultural, and political level. That included discussing the mutual historical heritage in California and elsewhere in the US. The conference was jointly funded by the American and Russian business partners: Chevron, Transneft, and

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Hank Birnbaum, conducted in Berkeley, CA by Kacper Dziekan on October 24th, 2021.

⁴⁵⁰ <https://www.fortross.org/about> [access: June 9th, 2022].

⁴⁵¹ <https://www.fortross.org/frd> [access: June 9th, 2022].

Sovcomflot. FRC received a permanent sponsorship from the Renoma Fort Ross Foundation, a non-profit established by a Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg. Despite the deterioration of the US-Russian relations, the FRC staff remained committed to look for a dialogue and kept organizing FRD with the Russian partners. First important change took place in 2018, when Vekselberg was added to the US sanctions list⁴⁵². Renoma Fort Ross Foundations seized its operations in the US and FRC stopped receiving direct funding from Russia for its regular activities. Nevertheless, the cooperation with Transneft and Sovcomflot continued and until 2021 they remained as partners of FRD. Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov was among the speakers opening the conference in 2021. The situation shifted entirely on February 24th, 2022, when Russia initiated a full-scale invasion in Ukraine. FRC has closed its cooperation with any Russian official entities and businesses. They also released a statement: *FRC has no association or other formal or informal collaboration with the Russian Federation. FRC has received funding from Russian individuals, businesses and others to help fund existing initiatives, but supports and is fully compliant with U. S. government sanctions*⁴⁵³. The board has also decided to cancel the 2022 edition of Fort Ross Festival due to the international situation.

9. Meaning of Fort Ross for Indigenous Californians

When Russian arrived in California, they encountered the indigenous population. That land was inhabited by a tribe who is now officially, federally recognized as Kashia (also spelled Kashaya) Band of Pomo Indians. The Pomo Indians has been living on in North and Central California for centuries⁴⁵⁴. As they inform on their website, the Kashia were the first to inhabit the territories of what constitutes Sonoma County today. Although Fort Ross lies within the perimeter of the county, given its significance, the tribe emphasizes their occupation of that particular area as well.⁴⁵⁵ The Pomo group is internally diverse. One of the factors differentiating respective groups is language. The Kashia Pomo have

⁴⁵² <https://www.fortross.org/renova> [access: June 9th, 2022].

⁴⁵³ <https://www.fortross.org/frd> [access: June 9th, 2022].

⁴⁵⁴ M. J. Kennedy, *Culture Contact and the Acculturation of the Southwestern Pomo*, Stanford 1956, p. 4.

⁴⁵⁵ <https://www.stewartspoint.org/wp2/> [access: June 8th, 2022].

their own language which serves as a base for self-identification⁴⁵⁶. The Kashia used the term *Metini* for the area they occupied⁴⁵⁷. Once Russians arrived, their primary challenge was to keep the land despite the objection from the Spaniards. The latter claimed the entire territory surrounding their system of missions and *presidios*. Russian argued that the land they had chosen to occupy belongs to no one but the indigenous people. For that end, they secured a contract in 1817. It is known as a Treaty of Hegemeister – a representative of RAC, and a future Chief Manager, who signed it on behalf of the Russian Empire. Chiefs Chu-gu-an, Amat-tim, Hen-le-le, and others signed it on behalf of Kashia Band⁴⁵⁸. This treaty served as a legal base for their mutual relations and an argument against Spain. Otto von Kotzuebe, who commanded several voyages in 1820s and 1830s visited Ross and emphasized the agreement between Kuskov and the Kashia:

*The settlement of Ross, situated on the seashore, in latitude 38° 33', and on an insignificant stream, was founded in the year 1812, with the free consent of the natives, who were very useful in furnishing materials for the buildings and even in their erection*⁴⁵⁹.

The Kashia confirmed that they agree for a peaceful cohabitation with the Russians. Several tribal members joined the colony. According to the census conducted by the commander Ivan Kuskov for the years 1820 and 1821, there were 56 “Californian Indians” at the colony⁴⁶⁰. The Kashia referred to the Russians as *undersea people* which could be explained with the fact that when they had arrived at Bodega Bay in baidarkas, it looked as if they came literally from under the ocean⁴⁶¹. Probably the most remarkable thing in Kashia-Russian relations is that the peaceful cohabitation mentioned in the treaty to large extend actually existed. Various sources, both Russian written ones (like the observations

⁴⁵⁶ J. Nieze, *Ethnicity, Prestige and the Kashaya Language, Working Paper No. 6. Kashaya Pomo Language in Culture Project*, Department of Anthropology, California State College, Sonoma 1974, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ See the joint study prepared by one of the most devoted researchers of Fort Ross Kent G. Lightfoot (together with Sara L. Gonzalez), *Kashia Band of Pomo Indians and Fort Ross State Historic Park: K. G. Lightfoot, S. L. Gonzalez, Metini Village. An Archeological Study of Sustained Colonialism in Northern California*, Berkeley 2018

⁴⁵⁸ J. Nieze, *The Purchase of Kashaya Reservation, Working Paper No. 7. Kashaya Pomo Language in Culture Project*, Department of Anthropology, California State College, Sonoma 1974, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁹ O. von Kotzuebe, *California and Russian Settlement of Ross, [in:] A New Voyage Round the World in the Years 1823, 24, 35 and 26 (Vol. II). Originally published in 1830. Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, London. (Excerpts from the 1967 publication, Da Capo Press, New York, pp.119-128.*

⁴⁶⁰ A. A. Istomin, *The Indians at the Ross Settlement. According to the Censuses by Kuskov, 1820-1821*, Fort Ross, California 1992, p. 9.

⁴⁶¹ G. Farris, *Life at Fort Ross as the Indians Saw It Stories from the Kashaya*, Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Alaska Anthropological Association, Fairbanks, Alaska, March 28, 1992, p. 7.

from Pyotr Stepanovich Kostromitinov – one of the commanders at Ross, published originally in 1839⁴⁶²) and Kashia oral agree that both parties managed to exercise amicable relationships⁴⁶³, even considered exemplary.⁴⁶⁴ Even though Native Californians were considered to occupy the bottom of the social hierarchy at the colony. Such a phenomenon is most commonly explained with the fact that Russians wanted to “win over” the Kashia in order to have an ally against the Spanish hostility. The indigenous people were well-paid and well treated. There are examples where Russians genuinely intended to care for the health of all their settlers, including the Native Californians. Once smallpox became a serious challenge, the vaccines were provided to everyone⁴⁶⁵ Kaylee Pinola, a member of the Kashia Band, an anthropologist and a Park Interpretive Specialist at California State Parks confirms this perception from the point of view of her tribe:

I should probably preface it and say that, you know, I don't think the Russians being there was the worst thing that could have happened to us by any means. That's mainly because when you look at the trajectory of what was going on with say the Spaniards that were just a little further south of where we were. The mission system and all the atrocities that happened with that. The Russian people being there definitely wasn't bad in comparison. They didn't force us to convert to anything. They didn't tell us we couldn't practice our culture. I think there's a lot to be said for that. Well, it's not like everything was kumbaya, either. We weren't necessarily happy that the Russian people were there and that they were building forts, etc. I know the Alaska Native people have their own perspective with that as well. Considering their history with the Russian people, we were fortunate in that we don't have that same history with them.

⁴⁶² P. Kostromitinov, *Notes on the Indians in Upper California*, Source: *Fort Ross Conservancy Library*, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/120/notes-on-the-indians-in-upper-california.pdf> [access: June 8th, 2022].

⁴⁶³ See more: D. J. Theodoratus, *Cultural and Social Change Among the Coast Central Pomo*, [in:] *Journal of California Anthropology*, vol. 1, No. 2, 1974, pp. 206-219; M. J. Kennedy, *op. cit.*; E. Hirschmann, *The Kashaya Pomo and Their Relations with the RAC at Fort Ross*, 1992, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/138/the-kashaya-pomo-and-their-relations-with-the-rac-at-fort-ross.pdf>, [access: June 8th, 2022].

⁴⁶⁴ S. Kenton Osborn, *Death in the Daily Life of the Ross Colony: Mortuary Behavior in Frontier Russian America*, Milwaukee (Wisconsin) 1997, p. 175.

⁴⁶⁵ J. C. McKenzie, *Early Attempts to Control Smallpox Epidemics in California*, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/90/early-attempts-to-control-smallpox-epidemics-in-california.pdf>, [access: June 8th, 2022].

So, our perspective is a little different, but at the same time that's still our land. That's still our home. We leased that land to the Russian people. And then the Russian people went, and they sold it to the people that came after them. Therefore, we don't really have claims in a legal sense to that [the land] anymore because our lease wouldn't be respected in the traditional court systems that we have now⁴⁶⁶.

This Kashia perspective is taken into account more and more common in the area. Fort Ross State Historic Park has added the Kashia name (although spelled a bit differently: *May-tee-nee*) to the panel in front of the visitor center. Fort Ross Conservancy has implemented indigenous narratives into their programs and the role of the Kashia is emphasized on the new FRC website. On the main page it reads: *Russians settled on the ancestral Kashia Pomo lands called Metini and the Kashia are still very much a part of the community today⁴⁶⁷*. The tribe representatives are among the board members and the community is consulted with various activities conducted by the FRC.



A panel in front of the Fort Ross SHP Visitor Center - photo by K. Dziekan

Cultural practices and spatial dimension are not the only examples of Fort Ross heritage in the cultural memory of Kashia Band. Although relatively short, the Russian presence in California has influenced the linguistic changes. Several Russian words were adopted

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with Kaylee Pinola, conducted online by Kacper Dziekan on December 2nd, 2022.

⁴⁶⁷ <https://www.fortross.org/> [access: June 8th, 2022].

to the Kashia language, e.g., the word *moloko* for milk, *caynik* for a teakettle, *semiya* for a seed, *šulú:na* for salted/pickled, *loška* for spoon or *nošicca* for scissors⁴⁶⁸. It's interesting to note the character of those loanwords. They are either related to items that must have been brought by the Russians (scissors, teakettle, spoon) or food products and habits that were not common among the Kashia. Russians introduced agriculture (hence the seed) and such culinary customs as pickling vegetables. Some words could have been adopted to Kashia from Russian indirectly, through languages spoken by Alaska Natives who accompanied Russians in California.

10. Fort Ross in popular culture

Although Fort Ross doesn't exist in a collective memory of American citizens, there are several examples of its existence in certain products of popular culture. In the end of 19th century, a popular writer Gertrude Atherton published a number of romantic stories set in pre-gold rush California. While collecting materials and inspirations for her stories, Atherton got interested in Fort Ross. She traveled to the site and stayed in the hotel located in the house of the former commander, Alexander Rotchev. During her stay, Atherton made inquiries on the topic and discussed it with some people. Among them was Lukaria Yorgen Myers, a Kashaya Indian, who had lived at the fort during the Russian rule, remembered it and had stories to share. The material gathered during her stay served Atherton as a background for her fictional story *Natalie Ivanhoff*, published in 1902⁴⁶⁹. Another example of Fort Ross' appearance in popular culture can be seen in early 1950s. Due to the Cold War, the representation of a Russian colonists was far less romantic than in the early 20th century. The tensions between Soviet Union and the USA have found its reflection in a comic book *Casey Ruggles. A Saga of the West*. This was a series of comic strips created by a young, 23-year-old cartoonist Warren Tufts. It was out on November 20th 1950 and run till February 17th 1951. The storyline was 100-year-old and located in

⁴⁶⁸ R. L. Oswalt, *A Kashaya Vocabulary*, 1975, digital source: <https://www.fortross.org/lib/72/a-kashaya-vocabulary-1975.pdf> [access: June 8th, 2022].

⁴⁶⁹ G. J. Farris, *the Enduring Romance of Fort Ross*, [in:] *So Far From Home. Russians in Early California*, Fort Ross Conservancy 2019, pp. 311-312.

the *Wild West*. The protagonist, Casey Ruggles was an American soldier, wandering around the frontier in the 1850s. At one point, he travels to the Fort Ross, asked by John Sutter (whom Russians had sold the fort) to collect certain goods to be moved to the new fort he had built (New Helvetia, today Sutter's Fort in Sacramento). At the same time, a fictional Russian commander, named Ivan, approaches the fort as well. The commander left it some 10 years earlier, got lost and finally made somehow his way back home. Not knowing about the sale of the fort to John Sutter, he doesn't understand what's happening at gets angry with Casey Ruggles, trying to stop him. Outnumbered, he has to let go. Later, Ivan meets a Native named Valenila, whom he bribes with vodka to help him attack the Presidio of San Francisco. In the epic finale, Casey Ruggles heroically defends the Presidio, defeats Russo-Indian alliance and sends Ivan back to Mother Russia. Evil Empire lies defeated once again⁴⁷⁰. The portrayal of Ivan fits perfectly into a stereotype of Russians in the America in 1950s. He is a primitive, aggressive drunkard. The portrayal of Native American Valenila could be seen in a similar stereotype-driven, orientalist manner.

12. Conclusions

Fort Ross seems to play an important role only to certain groups within US society. Specifically to Russian Americans of California and the local residents of areas surrounding the park, mostly within Sonoma County. The reason behind the lack of popular knowledge about Fort Ross among majority of US citizens could be explained with its fairly small impact on general development of the country; an unusual and contradictory development of the Russian colonization of California (see Clifford) as well as Cold War atmosphere of hostility and suspiciousness between Americans and Russians, which didn't make a good ground to popularize this aspect of common history. The story of Fort Ross has never really fit into general concepts of American cultural memory.

⁴⁷⁰ G. J. Farris, *Fort Ross in the Cold War. 1950-1951*, [in:] *So Far From Home. Russians in Early California*, Fort Ross Conservancy 2019, pp. 321-323.

However, in cultural memory of Russian Americans, Fort Ross has kept the special place for a very long time. I argue that its full recognition as a *lieu de memoire* is to be seen in 1930s with the increased interest in the topic, and most importantly, the formation of *Initiative Group for the Memorialization of Fort Ross*. Fort Ross remained to be a *sacred* place until the collapse of Soviet Union, and for some it remains until today.

Fort Ross plays also an important role in cultural memory of local non-Russian Americans. Its character is different though. Something unique, unusual, peculiar, even exotic. A source of local pride, with an emphasis of the hold flow of time and different aspects of local history.

Chapter V

Russia's Hawaiian adventure or rather Hawai'i's Russian adventure?

Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ula'ula o Hipo

The historical episode that serves as a base for this chapter did not last long. Russian envoys stayed on the island of Kaua'i just for two years: 1816-1817. Despite the periodical shortage, this event had long-lasting implications for the following decades of local history, identity, and memory. Although influential as it was, the Russian episode and its legacy is just one element of the rich mosaic that constitutes history and culture of Kaua'i. For that reason, the amount of direct *Russian* factor analyzed in this chapter is substantially smaller than in the other. However, since so many social phenomena are interconnected, the analysis of various aspects of local cultural memory on Kaua'i can also be seen through the lens of Russian involvement in their history. Currently, Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ula'ula o Hipo, although an empty space to large extent, plays a significant role in local memory practices carried out by various memory agents that are related one way or another to the island. In the background, there is also identity politics and its repercussions, which can be observed on various levels: local in Kaua'i, state in Hawaii, national in the US, and global⁴⁷¹. Especially, taking into consideration the ongoing and increasing influence of postcolonial theory and decolonial practices⁴⁷².

1. Unification of Hawaii and the conquest of Kaua'i

Hawaiian Islands are rich with their history, culture, and local heritage. The existence of independent Hawaiian Kingdom and Republic are particularly emphasized⁴⁷³. The kingdom's creator, Kamehameha I the Great is most commemorated with monuments,

⁴⁷¹ See: J. Friedman, *The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity*, [in:] *American Anthropologist New Series*, Vol. 94, No. 4 (December 1992), pp. 837-859.

⁴⁷² See: D. A. Chang, *Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, and South Chinese in Indigenous, Global, and National Spaces*, [in:] *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (September 2011), pp. 384-403.

⁴⁷³ Consider: P. D'Arcy, *Transforming Hawai'i: Balancing Coercion and Consent in Eighteenth-Century Kānaka Maoli Statecraft*, Canberra 2018. In particular the chapter 6: *Creating a Kingdom: Hawai'i from 1796 to 1819*, pp. 181-220.

streets and various buildings named after him⁴⁷⁴. His official bio at the website of National Park System considers him *one of the most striking figures in Hawaiian history*⁴⁷⁵. He is also known as *The Unifier*, a ruler who brought all the islands together, founding a strong, united statehood⁴⁷⁶. A state that survived numerous hardships and upheavals, until finally it had to yield to its powerful neighbor – United States of America⁴⁷⁷. In 1898 the US Congress officially approved annexation of Hawai‘i⁴⁷⁸. However, such a narrative is not fully shared among the residents of all islands in the archipelago. There is a different perspective presented on Kaua‘i Island. Centuries-long independence is considered to be a core of local memory practices as well as the main source of pride. Becoming a part of Kamehameha’s kingdom is seen as a forced incorporation, which came not without a fight. Therefore, the most commemorated historical figure is not Kamehameha, but his local counterpart – King Kaumuali‘i⁴⁷⁹. Even the geographical distance from other islands plays its role in the different perception of local history among the residents of Kaua‘i⁴⁸⁰. Kamehameha was originally from Hawai‘i Island (also known today as The Big Island) and his conquest started from there. He assumed power in 1782, spent few years on consolidating it and developing his island⁴⁸¹. Next, he began to conquer neighboring islands Maui and Molaka‘i. With upcoming years half of the archipelago was subjected to Kamehameha and he was ready to attempt control over O‘ahu and Kaua‘i⁴⁸². The former was conquered in 1795 after the major victory of Kamehameha at the battle of Nu‘uanu⁴⁸³. The latter remained independent until 1810 when its ruler - King Kaumuali‘i realized he

⁴⁷⁴ Such a narrative has a long-lasting tradition. Kamehameha has been praised and commemorated on a national level for decades. Consider a century-old paper: H. H. Gowen, *The Centenary of Kamehameha the Great*, [in:] *The Washington Historical Quarterly*, April 1919, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 88-92.

⁴⁷⁵ <https://home.nps.gov/puhe/learn/historyculture/kamehameha.htm> [access: June 14th, 2022].

⁴⁷⁶ Albrecht Classen made an interesting comparison between the Kamehameha and Charlemagne as figures in nation building processes and the national myths built around such figures: See: A. Classen, *Royal Figures as Nation Builders - King Kamehameha and Charlemagne: Myth Formation in the European Early Middle Ages and in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Polynesian Hawai‘i*, [in:] *Journal of East – West Thought*, Vol. 6 No. 4 (2016): Winter 2016, pp. 85-91.

⁴⁷⁷ See the chapter: *The United States Becomes a Colonial Empire* in: K. van Dijk, *Pacific Strife. The Great Powers and their Political and Economic Rivalries in Asia and the Western Pacific, 1870 – 1914*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 381-400.

⁴⁷⁸ M. Kazin, *The Concise Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*, Princeton 2011, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁹ L. B. Croft, *Kaumuali‘i and the Last of Hawai‘i’s God Kings*, Sphinx Publications 2017.

⁴⁸⁰ See the core publication on Kauai’s perspective on local history: E. Joesting, *Kauai. The Separate Kingdom*, Lihue 1984.

⁴⁸¹ S. M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai‘i*, Honolulu 1992 (revised edition), p. 117.

⁴⁸² P. D’Arcy, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

⁴⁸³ S. M. Kamakau, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

was no longer able to resist Kamehameha and accepted surrender⁴⁸⁴. The Kingdom of Hawaii was created. Nevertheless, Kaumuali'i didn't entirely give up and struggled to preserve the autonomy of his island from Kamehameha. "The Russian adventure" played its part in this struggle. The main character behind this story is Georg Anton Schaeffer⁴⁸⁵. This crucial figure was a German physician and adventurer who offered his services to the Russian American Company. Schaeffer came to Kaua'i in 1816 to recollect goods from the ship *Bering* that wrecked at the shores of this island a year before⁴⁸⁶. This is what he was instructed to do by the Russian America's governor Alexander Baranov. However, Schaeffer's much bigger ambitions were soon revealed. He spotted an opportunity for a development of Russian colonies in the Pacific as well as his own profit. Waters around Kaua'i were full of sea otters and other animals whose pelts were the main reason for Russian presence in the America⁴⁸⁷. Warm climate year-round could also provide supplies which were critical for survival of a young colony. Therefore, Georg Schaeffer engaged in the negotiations with Kaumuali'i regarding more extended collaboration. Hence the popular perception of Kaua'i potentially becoming a new Russian colony. Nevertheless, local narrative in Kaua'i emphasizes a different aspect of this story. It is Kaumuali'i, not Schaeffer who is the central figure of the story. The latter could be even seen as a tool in the local struggle for power among the Hawaiian rulers. Kaumuali'i considered Russia a great European empire. He believed its power could bring significant change in Hawaiian political and military landscape. Alliance with Russia could be a huge leverage in his dispute with Kamehameha⁴⁸⁸. Kaumuali'i was convinced by Schaeffer that the latter was acting entirely on behalf of the tsar Alexander I. A quarrel between these two gentlemen was created when Kaumuali'i found out that Schaeffer's declarations were empty. As a

⁴⁸⁴ N. W. Potter, L. M. Casdon, A. Rayson, *History of the Hawaiian Kingdom*, Honolulu 2003, p. 20.

⁴⁸⁵ See: R. A. Pierce, *Georg Anton Schäffer, Russia's Man in Hawaii, 1815-1817*, [in:] *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (November 1963), pp. 397-405.

⁴⁸⁶ E. Joesting, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁴⁸⁷ K. G. Lightfoot, *Russian Colonization: The Implications of Mercantile Colonial Practices in the North Pacific*, [in:] *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2003), p. 14.

⁴⁸⁸ P. R. Mills, *Hawai'i's Russian Adventure. A New Look at Old History*, Honolulu 2018, p. 112.

result, Russians were forced to leave Kaua'i in 1817⁴⁸⁹. They left three forts behind and a legacy that will remain challenging for many years that were to come.

2. Hawaiian Identity

Kamehameha I eventually managed to subordinate the Kingdom of Kaua'i and unify all the islands⁴⁹⁰. His descendants ruled over the united kingdom till it was turned into a republic by local revolutionaries in 1893⁴⁹¹. 5 years later the Republic was annexed by the US and became an American territory. Over half a century later, the formal status of Hawaii changed. It was turned into a state alongside Alaska in 1959⁴⁹². However, both Alaska and Hawaii play a specific, somewhat external role in the US history and the country's self-perception. Due to their geographical location, historical differences and even climate Alaska and Hawaii fail to be included into the broad category of the *American West*⁴⁹³. Thus, the uniqueness of Hawaii seems obvious.

The social and cultural landscape of Hawaii has been changing a lot throughout decades. More and more immigrants were coming to the islands from all over the world. The largest migrations took place from China, Japan, Portugal, and Puerto Rico⁴⁹⁴. The residents of the islands were transformed into a very multicultural society. What is more, the big number of immigrants changed the social system as well. The vast majority of them joined the huge army of plantation workers and other manual laborers. Thus, the local community was divided into a small group of rich plantation owners (white Americans) and a big multicultural group of workers leaving not much space for a middle class⁴⁹⁵. Finally, the increasing significance was given to the indigenous inhabitants of those islands. Whether or not are they constitute the separate nation within the United States is a very complex

⁴⁸⁹ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *The adventures of Doctor Schaffer in Hawaii, 1815-1819*, [in:] *Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 7, 1973, pp. 61-63.

⁴⁹⁰ P. D'Arcy, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.

⁴⁹¹ J. M. van Dyke, *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawaii*, Honolulu 2008, p. 172.

⁴⁹² M. Kazin, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁹³ See the analysis: J. Whitehead, *Hawaii: The First and Last Far West?*, [in:] *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 23, No. 2 (May 1992), pp. 153-177.

⁴⁹⁴ See the chapter: *Hawai'i* in: G. Y. Okihiro, *American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders*, Oakland 2015, pp. 117-149.

⁴⁹⁵ R. Bell, *Last Among Equals. Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics*, Honolulu 1984, pp. 5-6.

question⁴⁹⁶. Since late 18th century the question of nations and nationalism was discussed thoroughly. The question of nation in general is an extremely difficult, challenging, and complex issue which cannot be properly discussed here. It can be closed here with a thought of one of the most renowned scholars on nationalisms Ernest Gellner, who argued: *In fact, nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity. Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances*⁴⁹⁷. Assuming contingency and lack of *eternal* existence of nations this term doesn't have to be employed in research touching upon this group among others. Therefore, the collective identity of Native Hawaiians can be discussed regardless of how this collectivity will be called⁴⁹⁸.

Native Hawaiians started to protect their culture. They have also noticed the similarities between them and other indigenous peoples in the US⁴⁹⁹. Protection of various heritage sites was one of the key elements of this broader culture protection attempts. Given the complexity of its history, in the case of some sites the local heritage was intertwined with colonial one. Such is the case of Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ūla'ūla.

3. Historical background of the fort

The forts constructed as part of Kauai-Russian alliance were named after prominent figures in Russian elite. Fort Alexander – named after the tsar Alexander I himself; Fort Elizabeth – named after his wife,

abeth Alexeevna, born princess Louis of Baden. The last one, Fort Barclay was named after general Michael/Mikhail Andreas Barclay de Tolly⁵⁰⁰. Whereas Fort Alexander and Fort Barclay were built primarily by the hands of Russian American Company employees,

⁴⁹⁶ Consider: J. K. Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of The Hawaiian Nation To 1887*, Honolulu 2002 and its critical review: P. Lyons, "They Will Eat Us up": Remembering Hawai'i, [in:] *American Literary History*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 543-557.

⁴⁹⁷ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983, p. 6.

⁴⁹⁸ See more on the processes of assimilation, acculturation, integration, and identity shaping in Hawai'i in: I. M. Miyares, *Expressing "Local Culture" in Hawai'i*, [in:] *Geographical Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4, October 2008, pp. 513-531.

⁴⁹⁹ D. A. Chang, "We Will Be Comparable to the Indian Peoples": Recognizing Likeness between Native Hawaiians and American Indians, 1834-1923, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 3, Special Issue: Pacific Currents (September 2015), pp. 859-886.

⁵⁰⁰ P. R. Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

Fort Elizabeth had a bit different story of construction. Its foundation was a joint initiative of Kaumuali'i and Schaeffer. Some 300 Native Hawaiians participated in the construction works and the fort was not completed by 1817. Those facts, as argued by Peter R. Mills indicated that this site was not exactly just a *Russian* fort, but rather a result of a mutual work with a strong input on Kaumuali'i's side⁵⁰¹. This factor has a tremendous meaning for a local perception of this historical period and this site as well. Half-finished fort was completed by the Hawaiians upon Shaeffer's party retreat. It witnessed a yet another historical event in 1824 when Kaumuali'i's son Humehume tried to rebel against the new king Liholiho, who ruled under the name Kamehameha II. He led an attack against royal forces stationing in the fort but lost and was eventually captured and sent to an exile in Honolulu⁵⁰². Over 100 people died because of this skirmish. It was the largest fatality toll in Hawaii until the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Since then, Fort Elizabeth was upkept by the Hawaiian government soldiers until it was dismantled in 1864.



A sign inside the park - photo by K. Dziekan

⁵⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

⁵⁰² E. Joesting, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

4. First reconstruction attempts

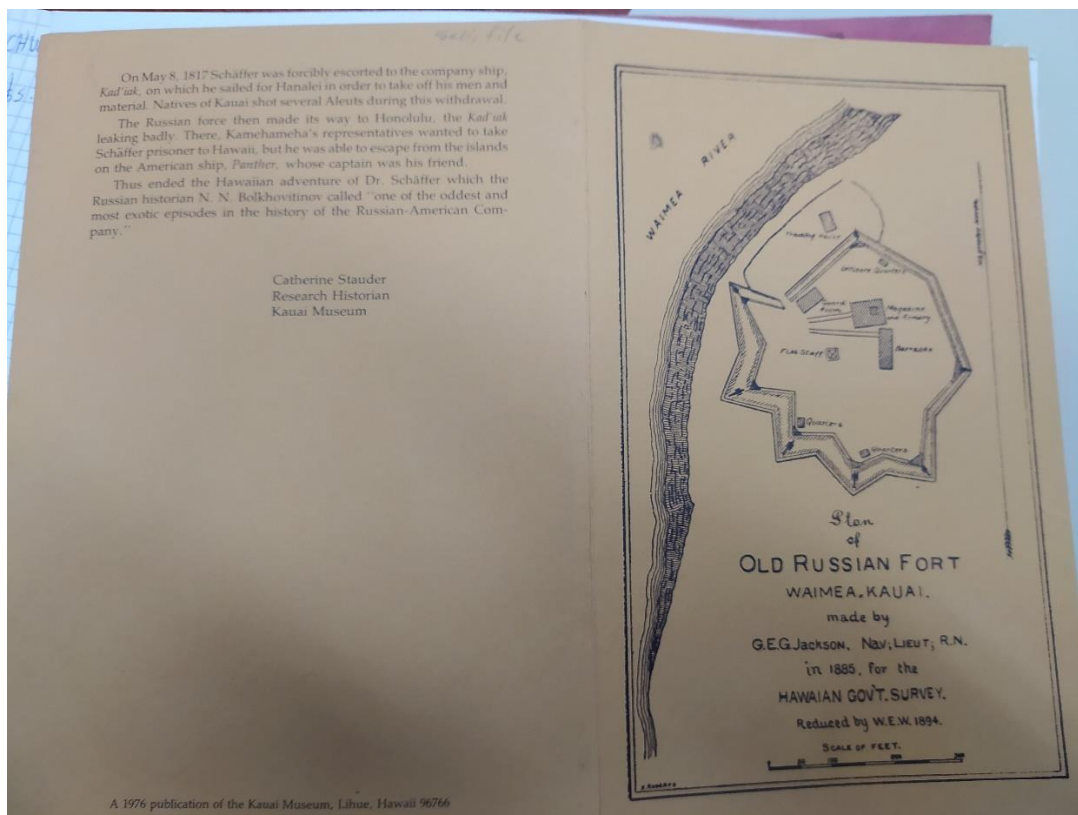
A former fort was deteriorating for years and turning more and more into a ruin. The first superficial examination of this terrain was made in 1885, when Kingdom of Hawaii still existed. However, its ties with United States were already very strong. US government was assisting the kingdom with various tasks among others related to infrastructure and development. In 1882 US Department of the Interior hired a former British Navy officer Captain George Edward Jackson who was experienced in hydrographical surveying⁵⁰³. He visited Russian Fort Elizabeth and prepared a survey, which remained to be the only one until 1970s. It's worth noticing that the name used by Jackson is "Old Russian Fort". Even though he probably did not intend to ascribe any particular, cultural meaning to this name, nevertheless his choice of name has influenced the later name of the site, as it is known today – *Russian Fort Elizabeth*. The survey attracted a minor attention from the media and the topic was covered by the Honolulu Advertiser. An author repeated the name used by Jackson, titling his or her article *Russian Fort. A Strong Fortification on the Island of Kauai*⁵⁰⁴ and the name perpetuated in the public perception. Peter R. Mills argues that this led to the stripping the place of its Hawaiian legacy⁵⁰⁵. It is possible that captain Jackson, as a representative of his times and cultural background did not take into account the local narrative and the meaning of the site for Native Hawaiians. In late 19th century the perspective of native inhabitants of the US territories was not considered valuable. The Russian reference could have seemed the only tangible one. It took over a century for indigenous people of Hawaii to be allowed to provide their substantial impact on archeology⁵⁰⁶.

⁵⁰³ Hawaii State Archives, Manuscripts Collections, M-349, George Edward Gresley Jackson.

⁵⁰⁴ Unknown author, *Russian Fort. A Strong Fortification on the Island of Kauai*, *The Honolulu Advertiser*, May 18th, 1885

⁵⁰⁵ Peter R. Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁵⁰⁶ Consider: K. Kawelu, *In Their Own Voices: Contemporary Native Hawaiian and Archaeological Narratives about Hawaiian Archaeology*, [in:] *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 26, No. 1 (2014), pp. 31-62.



The survey made by G.E.G. Jackson - photo courtesy of Kauai Historical Society

Fort's potential was slowly being discovered in the pre-War War II era, and it became a place of interest among residents. The site itself, as well as the history behind it attracted an interest from local press in 1930s. In 1936 "Honolulu Star Bulletin" covered a topic on the "Old Hawaii"⁵⁰⁷.

After the war, an interest came also from the official part. It overlapped with the period of more proper examination of heritage sites in various place in the US. In 1966 'Russian Fort Elizabeth' received a status of a National Historic Landmark given by the US Department of the Interior. The new formal status increased an interest into the site. The local officials concluded that any discussion regarding the fate of the place needs to be preceded by the archeological research. This must serve as a base for any further development. The site was left unoccupied for over a hundred of years and its condition, as well as equipment was never examined. First and main archeological excavations were

⁵⁰⁷ J. F. G. Stokes, *Kailua on Kona Coast site of many temples of Old Hawaii*, [in:] *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, July 25th, 1936, p. 1, 7.

conducted on the field in 1972 for Division of State Parks, Department of Land and Natural Resources, State of Hawaii⁵⁰⁸. Since there were no experts on site, the state park was looking for specialists elsewhere. Assistance came from the capital island Oahu. A museum has been operating there already since 1889. Before the annexation and even before the revolution which turned the kingdom into the republic. Thus, they possess one of the most valuable archive collections on Hawaiian history and culture⁵⁰⁹. They created the largest collection of artefacts in the state and their specialists conducted numerous excavations. The Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum designated the Hawai‘i State Museum of Natural and Cultural History was and still is the biggest actor working in the fields of history, cultural heritage, and archeology. The curators also need to deal with various challenges that are inevitable in such a field of work⁵¹⁰. Agreement between Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources and Bernice P. Bishop Museum was made on June 19th – July 7th, 1972. The plans, reports and other materials created by the archeologists allowed the state park to initiate planning on what could be done with remnants of the fort.

5. A breakthrough moment – 1970s

Various ideas followed through 1970s to establish a commemorative site there. A concrete proposal was created in 1975 to construct visitor facilities that would allow around 200-250 visitors to come at the same time⁵¹¹. An increasingly important role was played by the Kauai Historical Society to preserve the heritage of the fort. KHS was founded in 1914 to work on preservation of Kaua‘i County history⁵¹². One of the initiatives taken by its

⁵⁰⁸ Patrick C. McCoy, *Archeological Research at Fort Elizabeth, Waimea, Kauai, Hawaiian Islands, Phase I*, Honolulu 1972.

⁵⁰⁹ De Soto Brown, *Bishop Museum Archives*, [in:] *Pacific Arts*, No. 6 (July 1992), pp. 9-12.

⁵¹⁰ L. King, *Competition, Complicity, and (Potential) Alliance: Native Hawaiian and Asian Immigrant Narratives at the Bishop Museum*, [in:] *College Literature*, Vol. 41, No. 1, *Special Issue: Native/Asian Encounters* (Winter 2014), pp. 43-65.

⁵¹¹ Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of State Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Historic Sites, *Appendix A. Russian Fort. Conceptual Interim Plan for Visitors*, [in:] *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Russian Fort State Park to prepare archeological research plans, clear the site and construct visitor facilities*, Archives of Kauai Historical Society, Honolulu 1975, p. A-2.

⁵¹² <https://kauaihistoricalsociety.org/history-of-khs/> [access: January 21st, 2022].

members was to do something with the ruins of Fort Elizabeth. They cooperated with Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). On March 11th, 1975, Robert Lear, the president of KHS received a letter from J. M. Souza Jr., a State Park Administrator of DLNR. Souza wrote *I am happy to inform you that we have retained the Archeological Research Center Hawaii, on Kauai, to initiate the first phase investigation work for the Russian fort project*⁵¹³. Yet, the project didn't move forward. Another attempt combined with a survey came in 1984. Given the popular interest in the topic, DLNR started also developing a community-based preparations to reconstruction process. This time, local students from Kauai Community College were also invited to join the group⁵¹⁴. As previously, KHS was kept informed. In an undated letter to the new KHS director Eric Moir, the Chairperson and State Historic Preservation Officer Susumu Ono recollected the results of their first meeting on the topic and described the ideas for the second meeting to be held on April 11th, 1984. Ono wrote *at our first meeting, it was pointed out that State Park is requesting community input into our proposed plans for the management and development of the park. Our primary topic of discussion at this meeting will be the interim interpretative plan, including signs and brochures, a scheduling of summer clean-up and research, and the presentation and discussion of several proposals by groups and individuals for the management of the park. The meeting agenda is attached to the letter. Point II reads Discussion of the draft format for an orientation shelter, sign, brochure, and trail system proposed for Russian Fort by State Parks*⁵¹⁵.

Despite those broad plans, only few ideas were eventually implemented. The people involved managed to manufacture a brochure and to put up signs. A small visitor shelter was also installed in the center of the ruins. The remaining plans were unfulfilled and remain unfulfilled until today. There is no trail system, neither the proper visitor facilities. Nor are there interpretative activities developed. However, those attempts fueled further interest into Fort Elizabeth. Apart from the heritage meaning another factor came into play. Media that took yet another interest into it pointed out that this place could also have a

⁵¹³ A letter from J. M. Souza Jr to Robert Lear, March 11th, 1975, Archive of Kauai Historical Society.

⁵¹⁴ A letter from David Kawate a Dean of Instructions from Kauai Community College to Bonnie Honma, Bud Carter and Bill Kikuchi, February 3rd, 1984, Archive of Kauai Historical Society.

⁵¹⁵ A letter from Susumu Ono to Eric Moir, undated, Archive of Kauai Historical Society.

potential to attract tourists that come to Hawaii. In March 1984 William LeGro from *The Garden Island* newspaper poses the question in a very familiar manner: *What's to become of Ft. Liz?* He emphasizes the negative impact of ruined fort onto Kaua'i's visitors: "*What fort?*" tourists ask as they stumble through the weeds, and rubble in the 17-year-old ruins...⁵¹⁶.

The survey prepared in 1984 by an experienced archeologist from the State Parks Martha Yent provides with the first complex description of the site. Park overview: *The 17.3 acre parcel encompassing Russian Fort Elizabeth was acquired by the State of Hawaii in 1972 for the development of a historical park. The site is located on the outskirts of Waimea town along Kaumualii Highway on the eastern side of the mouth of the Waimea River. The site was acquired for its scientific, interpretative, cultural and historical values which were also recognized in 1966 when Russian Fort Elizabeth was designed a National Historic Landmark. The ruins of Russian Fort Elizabeth illustrate a period of history when international rivalry for influence in Hawaii affected the island's political system. There were three Russian forts partially built on Kauai in the short time period of 1815-1817 still visible and intact. Park facilities include a parking and a comfort station which were built in 1976 and interpretation is currently limited to one signboard at the fort entry*⁵¹⁷.

It's worth to note the narrative which is presented in this overview. Although it is mentioned that the forts were *partially built* there is no information about the contribution of Hawaiian people. This description focuses primarily on Russian character of the site, which was a general narrative in the 20th century⁵¹⁸. However, this will change with time. Among 3 park goals listed by Martha Yent there is one directly related to the commemorative practices and memory politics in general. It reads *Presentation of the historic site to the park visitor in such a manner that the significance and history of the site are understood and appreciated. To accomplish this goal requires research and the*

⁵¹⁶ W. LeGro, *What's to become of Ft. Liz?*, *The Garden Island*, v. 7-A, March 12th, 1984, p.

⁵¹⁷ M. Yent, *Management and development plans. Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park. Waimea, Kauai, Hawaii*, prepared for: *Department of Land and Natural Resources. Division of State Parks. Outdoor Recreation, and Historic Sites*, 1984, p. 1.

⁵¹⁸ For the general debate on the shifting perception of heritage see: G. J. Ashworth, B. J. Graham and J. E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies*, London 2007; J. E. Tunbridge, *Whose heritage to conserve? Cross-cultural reflections on political dominance and urban heritage conservation*, [in:] *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien*, vol. 28, 2008, pp. 171 – 180.

*development of an effective interpretive program*⁵¹⁹. Therefore, since 1984 Russian Fort Elizabeth has been part of the official commemorative agenda and was given an importance as such a place of memory. The *significance* and *history* of the place was emphasized.

6. The decolonial turn

Hawaii is a state very rich with history, and thus the cultural heritage. Quite unique one in the context of entire United States. Hawaii is the only state with the past including a pre-US statehood that was not connected to any European, colonial power⁵²⁰. On a contrary, it was a local, indigenous leader, Kamehameha, who founded a stable kingdom, which was transformed into a republic by local actors as well. Hawaii is a place with the only royal palace in the US – Iolani Palace in Honolulu, built in 1882 for king Kalakaua. It is worth mentioning that other kingdoms predated Kamehameha's conquest, making Hawaii a place with a long tradition of pre-American and non-European statehood⁵²¹. This fact plays a significant role in cultural memory of Hawaiian people, although for decades scholarly-wise it was mostly covered by dominant white academics⁵²². Such a past is not shared with any other state of the union and thus allows a certain doze of a notion of uniqueness⁵²³.

Nevertheless, the archipelago is mostly famous for its natural wonders. Certain popular historical sites (e. g. the Iolani Palace) are mostly located on the island Oahu, particularly in the capital city Honolulu. Kaua'i, known as *the garden island*, takes its pride mostly of its nature – as the name suggests. Both tourists and locals mostly enjoy its vast oceanic beaches, Waimea Canyon, and many trails in the mountains. Cultural heritage is not what

⁵¹⁹ M. Yent, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁵²⁰ M. C. Flannery, *European History in Hawaii*, [in:] *The American Biology Teacher*, Vol. 57, No. 6 (September 1995), pp. 371-374.

⁵²¹ Consider the chapter: *Three Key Debates: Positioning Hawai'i in World History* in: P. D'Arcy: *Transforming Hawai'i: Balancing Coercion and Consent in Eighteenth-Century Kānaka Maoli Statecraft*, Canberra 2018, pp. 5-48.

⁵²² C. Gosden, *Transformations: History and Prehistory in Hawaii*, [in:] *Archaeology in Oceania*, Vol. 31, No. 3, *The Creation of Time. Ussher's 4004 BC and Beyond*, October 1996, pp. 165-172.

⁵²³ See: J. Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, "What Kine Hawaiian Are You?" *A Mo'olelo about Nationhood, Race, History, and the Contemporary Sovereignty Movement in Hawai'i*, [in:] *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 13, No. 2, *Special Issue: Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge*, Fall 2001, pp. 359-379.

people usually come to the island for. On the level of local memory practices, the biggest emphasis is placed on the legacy of often mentioned here King Kaumuali'i. The main road connecting most of the places on the island is called *Kaumuali'i Highway*. His statue greets visitors to the Kauai Museum – one of the very few museums on the island, situated in the main town, Lihue. Kaumuali'i is also a central figure of the historical exhibition inside the museum. Among others, the collection features a replica of *Mahiole*, his helmet and portraits of king accompanied by various historical figures. There is a painting of Kaumuali'i sided by Japanese shogun Tokugawa⁵²⁴. The description reads *Tokugawa & Kaumuali'i. Two great warriors that had one thing in common. They wanted peace for their people!*



The painting from Kauai Museum - photo by K. Dziekan

The virtues of courage and love for peace are often emphasized when describing King Kaumuali'i. The focus on local, indigenous heritage of Kaua'i is the result of much

⁵²⁴ A reference to Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), the founder and first shōgun of the Tokugawa Shogunate of Japan. Considered one of the three "Great Unifiers" of Japan, hence the reference to Kaumuali'i.

broader decolonization processes and the notion to bring more focus on local traditions, history, language, and cultural heritage⁵²⁵. In 2012, an organization Friends of *King Kaumualii* / *'A'ohē hana nui ke alu 'ia* was founded.

Its mission is to *honor the last and great King King Kaumuali'i of Kaua'i*⁵²⁶. This is a non-profit organization, which carries out various activities: commemorative, cultural, educational, and others. They became an important memory actor in recent years on Kaua'i.

However, back in the late 20th century the indigenous perspective did not play such a significant role in official narrative yet. The potential of Kauai historical heritage was seen with such places as the location of James Cook landing – his statue was dedicated in the proximity of this location already in 1928. Therefore, the potential of *Russian Fort Elizabeth* / *Pā'ula'ula o Hipo* was mostly perceived with its Russian episode, although Hawaiian contribution was soon to be noticed. After the plans of 1984 were not fully implemented another attempt was taken in 1992. Again, Martha Yent of State Park prepared a survey in July 1992. However, there was a distinctive change in the description. The section on historical significance reads: *Russian Fort Elizabeth is located on a southeast bank of the Waimea River and just outside of the town Waimea on the west side of Kauai. The fort site is situated on a bluff above the river mouth and overlooks the shoreline, the Waimea River, and Wimea town. The fort was partially constructed and initially occupied by George Schaeffer and the Russian American Company in 1815. This construction was supported by Kauai King Kaumuali'i and the labor force consisted largely of the Hawaiian community at Waimea. Fort Elizabeth is one of three forts constructed by the Russian American Company. Forts Alexander and Barclay were built at the mouth of the Hanalei River on the east side of Kauai. Before completing the forts, the Russians were expelled from Hawaii in 1817. Fort Elizabeth by Hawaiian troops until*

⁵²⁵ See more on the contemporary look on the work with heritage: G. Ashworth, *Planowanie dziedzictwa*, trans. by M. Duda-Gryc, Kraków 2015.

⁵²⁶ <https://kauaikingkaumualii.org/friends-of-king-kaumualii-2/> [access: January 21st, 2022]

*1864 when the fort was dismantled. These forts reflect the early political climate in Hawaii when foreign countries were vying for influence with the Hawaiian leaders*⁵²⁷.

In comparison to previous description one can easily notice the emphasis on Native Hawaiian contribution into the construction of the fort as well as the political subjectivity.

Early 1990s are generally the time when indigenous peoples' voices start to be heard more loudly both in academia and cultural production⁵²⁸. Previously, the description just informed the reader that the *Russian forts* were built. It did not state built by whom or in what capacity exactly. It should be therefore assumed that they were built by the Russians to serve their purposes. Whereas in the 1992 description it is stated that the labor force consisted mostly of indigenous people. Previously there was a brief mentioning that it refers to the *period of history when international rivalry for influence in Hawaii affected the island's political system*. In 1992 the description states that the *forts reflect the early political climate in Hawaii when foreign countries were vying for influence with the Hawaiian leaders*. The visible subjectivity of Hawaiian leaders and people, combined with their contribution into the site was a harbinger of changes that were soon to come and to influence the perception of history in Kauai and various commemorative practices on the island.

7. 1992 Visitor Survey by Martha Yent

What is particularly interested that the 1992 survey was also conducted among the visitors who were frequenting the site. It was the first attempt to examine what exactly was driving people to visit the fort remnants. It also gave a hint on what was the perception of the remnants among those people after they have visited it. Team led by Martha Yent listed several assumptions which the survey was to be based on. First assumption reads: *visitors*

⁵²⁷ M. Yent, *Visitor Analysis Survey (preliminary)*. *Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park. Waimea, Kaua'i*, prepared for: *Division of State Parks. Department of Land and Natural Resources*, 1992, p. 1.

⁵²⁸ Consider the crucial contribution to the scholarship within the field of Cultural Anthropology by Lila Abu-Lughod: L. Abu Lughod, *Writing Against Culture*, [in:] *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. R. G. Fox, Santa Fe (New Mexico) 1991, pp. 137-162. Locally in Hawai'i consider: H-K. Trask, *Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle*, [in:] *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1991, pp. 159-167.

*have a general curiosity about the Russians in Hawaii. When were the Russians here? Why were the Russians in Hawaii? The “Russian Fort” sign along the highway may spark this curiosity and encourage visitors to stop at the site.*⁵²⁹ Despite the shift in the narrative that could be observed in the section “historical significance”, the emphasis in the survey assumptions is still made on the “Russian Fort”. In fact, the Russians are the only association with the site, which is expected from the visitors. The survey was designed in a form of a questionnaire consisting of 3 parts: a visit of the park, the visitor profile, and the visitor survey. The survey took 2 days, and 79 questionnaires were completed. They represented 81 groups consisting of 189 individuals in total⁵³⁰. The surveyors were also making observations among the visitors frequenting the site throughout those 2 days. Findings from the questionnaire showed that: 64 visitor groups came from US Mainland, 12 from abroad (Germany – 5, Australia – 3, Canada – 2, Portugal, England, and Austria – 1 each) and 5 groups consisted of Hawaii residents.⁵³¹ Surveyors also observed 120 cars that came to the site (either passed by it or just used the restrooms without touring the fort) but did not stay to visit. An average time spent in the fort was 4-5 minutes. That could indicate that the visitors must have found the available options small and limited their stay to the basic overview of the site. Thus, one can hardly call it ‘touring the fort’. Interestingly, the visitors paid attention to broader time perspective of the fort’s existence, not limiting it to the “Russian Fort”. Also, among the extra questions posed by the surveyed people one was: *where were the Hawaiians when the Russians were at the fort?*⁵³² The survey summary reads: *During this preliminary visitor survey, the visitor population was comprised of largely adults from the mainland U.S. There were no tour groups or visitors from Japan stopping at the site during the survey. Many of the visitors arrived at the park between 10:00am and 3:00pm and the average length of stay was 5-10 minutes (...). The visitors indicated several interpretative needs that should be considered in modifying and expanding the interpretive materials at the fort. The most obvious need is for accurate and comprehensive orientation information, including*

⁵²⁹ M. Yent, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁵³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁵³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁵³² *Ibidem*, p. 19.

improved maps and small signs along the trail (...). Perhaps the mostly highly recommended interpretive improvement is restoration, more specifically the reconstruction of the fort buildings. Because of limited information regarding these buildings, scale models and graphic renderings have been suggested. Visitors appear to be receptive to these alternatives. Additional exhibits such as cannons and the Russian-American [a Russian American Company's historical flag] flag were viewed favorably. Although a visitor center was not strongly supported, it may be necessary to consider a small interpretive building to house the interpretive exhibits. Visitors did not feel that an interpretive staff was necessary. The recreational park users were not adequately addressed during this survey but there appears to be two park user populations. Those visiting the fort as a historic site and those visiting the park for recreational reasons. The distinction, as well as potential overlap, in those two populations needs to be addressed in future surveys⁵³³.

There are no archival materials of any further survey. Neither a visitor center nor any other smaller interpretive building was ever constructed either. The site has not changed much until today. The survey conducted by Martha Yent in 1992 remains as an only source of any methodologically prepared attempt to research the cultural, historical, and touristic potential of Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ula'ula o Hipo among its visitors. The survey proved that the site was popular, but its popularity would definitely be bigger if the infrastructure was more developed. It is noticeable that the number of potential group visitors - 120 cars who decided not to tour the fort was significantly bigger than the number of groups who visited it – 81 groups. Even though the visitors seemed to be interested in the broader historical and cultural context of the site (one that includes other inhabitants of the fort), the Russian period turned out to be the most interesting for visitors, as expected in the assumptions. An idea to raise the flag of Russian American Company over the fort is particularly interesting. That could be an example of a memory practice that would position the site within a very particular mnemonic narrative – the one regarding the site as a *Russian Fort*. A flag would symbolically assume Russian historical

⁵³³ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

ownership over the site. A visitor or visitors who provided the surveyors with such a proposal probably did not consider it in that sense. Nevertheless, this is how it could be interpreted had the flag ever been installed on a post within the fort premises.

The final attempt to restore the site took place in July 2018. A working group met several times to discuss further actions. It involved among other representatives of Kaua'i Historical Society, University of Hawai'i, Friends of King Kaumuali'i and State Park. Among the attendees were most deeply involved in the topic in recent decades: Martha Yent or Peter M. Mills. The representatives of Russian American community were also invited, but no one could attend. However, their involvement was acknowledged. A yet another idea to develop an interpretive center was discussed and decided to develop⁵³⁴. Those plans were not fulfilled and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019 has suspended the further development of the project.

8. Media coverage

Throughout the second part of 20th century the topic kept reemerging in local media from time to time. The narrative present in the articles reflected the popular understanding of the site. In 1969 Harold Hostetler from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin described the idea of protecting historic heritage in Hawai'i. Among various landmarks, he listed *'living' museums*. One of them was *Russian Fort Elizabeth on Kauai. A place telling the tale of European expansion into the Pacific early in the 19th century*⁵³⁵. A certain increase of the attention emerged in 1970s following the restoration projects and the general growing attention to the topic. In 1976 Nicolai N. Bolkhovitinov, one of the most renowned scholars on Russian America was a Visiting Professor at Portland State University. During his tenure he went to Hawaii to give a talk on Russian episode in Kaua'i's history, which was thoroughly covered by The Honolulu Star-Bulletin⁵³⁶. Roughly at the same time, The Honolulu Advertiser covered the topic of possible reconstruction of the site⁵³⁷. They

⁵³⁴ Paulaula / Fort Elizabeth. Working Group – Planning Meetings, July 2018, Archive of Kaua'i Historical Society.

⁵³⁵ H. Hostetler, *Plan Would Save Historic Landmarks Without Taxes*, "The Honolulu Star-Bulletin", April 6th, 1969.

⁵³⁶ P. Rosegg, *Scholar Traces Story of Russians, Hawaii*, "The Honolulu Star-Bulletin", December 5th, 1976.

⁵³⁷ J. TenBruggencate, *Old Russian fort may be restored*, "The Honolulu Advertiser", May 29th, 1975, p. A-2.

continued the story in 1982⁵³⁸. Next, in 1984 (which coincided with the survey) The Kauai Times told the story of William Richardson, a resident of Paipu – a small settlement on Kaua’i next to the fort remnants. He had an idea to restore the fort and started the cooperation with the mayor of Kaua’i. Since there was no possibility to pass the ownership over the site to the county, his ideas were never fulfilled⁵³⁹. In mid-1980s the fort reached certain media attention due to its popularity among the visitors. According to the annual cultural census prepared by the Hawai’i’s State Department of Planning and Economic Development, in 1984 Russian Fort Elizabeth turned out to be the most visited site on Kauai and generally one of the most popular on the whole archipelago, reaching 425.000 visitors throughout the year⁵⁴⁰. The second most popular site was the Kokee Natural History Museum – 72.299 visitors. However, the popularity did not come from the reconstruction attempts or an increase of interest in local history. The reason was rather ordinary. The fort was facilitated with restrooms conveniently located on the way to Waimea Canyon⁵⁴¹. Next year, the fort remained very popular, attracting 375.000 visitors annually⁵⁴². 1990s brought media attention on new perspectives related to the perception on the site. The work by Peter Mills became noticed in local press. Mills’ findings sparked a debate. The questions more and more commonly asked by the people on the island were resembled in the media: *Is it just a fort? Is it really Russian?*⁵⁴³. Kauai Times followed also the archeological excavations of early 1990s⁵⁴⁴. 1990s are also a unique period in the US-Russian relations. After the fall of Soviet Union and the introduction of *end of history*⁵⁴⁵ narrative, the mutual relations between former foes were blooming. In 1996, the journalists from The Honolulu Star-Bulletin enthusiastically suggested taking advantage

⁵³⁸ J. TenBruggencate, *The Russian Fort: all but abandoned after all the effort*, “The Honolulu Advertiser”, March 17th, 1982, p. A-12.

⁵³⁹ *Russian Fort: Poipu man wants it restored*, “Kauai Times”, February 22nd, 1984, p. A-8.

⁵⁴⁰ Unknown author, *Punchbowl, Arizona Lead Popularity Poll Among Isle Visitors*, “The Honolulu Star-Bulletin”, May 1st, 1985.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴² Unknown author, *Cemetery at Punchbowl first on visitors’ list again last year*, “The Honolulu Star-Bulletin”, March 30th, 1986.

⁵⁴³ L. Chang, *Studies shed new light on Russian Fort. The Kauai fort was manned by Hawaiians, the studies say*, “The Honolulu Star-Bulletin”, November 22nd, 1993; B. Krauss, *Digging up history at Russian Fort*, “The Honolulu Advertiser”, June 26th, 1994.

⁵⁴⁴ S. Dixon-Stong, *Digging for answers. Fort site of archeological dig*, “Kauai Times”, June 23rd, 1993, p. B-1.

⁵⁴⁵ F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York 1992.

of the Russian historical heritage on Hawai'i to boost tourism from Russia. It coincided with the notion of further development of heritage sites in attempt to promote tourism industry and the big debate on the influence of tourism on heritage on the other hand⁵⁴⁶. The newspaper ended its piece proposing: *Now that Soviet communism is dead and a market economy is being established in Russia, it may be time for a new Russian-Hawaiian connection through the visitor industry*⁵⁴⁷. Eventually, this idea was never fulfilled and the massive heritage tourism from Russia never appeared.

An interest in Russian Fort Elizabeth has dropped down in the beginning of 21st century and came back in the last few years due to the attempts to change the name of the site and other controversies which are analyzed in the further stage on this research.

9. Current state

Today, Kauai Historical Society continuous the interest towards Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ula'ula o Hipo as a cultural heritage site of Kaua'i. Ramona Kincaid, a librarian-archivist volunteer at KHS, comes from Oahu, Hawaii and has been living in Kauai for 30 years. She shared her perception on the Russian episode in Kaua'i:

For me personally, I don't represent everybody obviously, but I think it was an awkward attempt at trying to gain a foothold here in Hawai'i. (...) There has been a lot of interest, especially with Fort Elizabeth being renovated. In past 20 years there was a lot of interest, archeologists have come here to do digs and look at the site and try to discover more about it. Individuals, not a lot (less than half a dozen in 20 years) that people I noticed that have come here and ask specifically about it. I worked as a librarian at Kauai Community College as well and there were people asking about it as well, coming in and perhaps gain access to the material we had there. Two Russian researchers too.

⁵⁴⁶ Consider: G. J. Ashworth, P. J. Larkham, *Building a New Heritage: Tourism, Culture, and Identity in the New Europe*, London 1994.

⁵⁴⁷ Unknown author, *Tourists from Russia*, "The Honolulu Star-Bulleting", June 24th, 1996.

*There would be a benefit to having more information about it. I don't think people in Kaua'i are strangers to the notion of Russians being here. Because of the forts*⁵⁴⁸.

Nevertheless, the forts and the Russian period don't seem to play an important role in the island's history presented by the KHS. Their website features interactive sections on "history of Kaua'i" and "historical sites". There is no mention on Russians in the former. Even though there is a sub-section on "Western contact" and Kaumuali'i's conflict with Kamehameha I⁵⁴⁹. The latter consists of 11 sites on the island, but Russian Fort Elizabeth is not one of them⁵⁵⁰. There is no publication on the topic available at the KHS store either. Although involved in the activities surrounding the site the organization does not take a specific position in this complex issue.

10. Pā'ula'ula o Hipo - Hawaiization of the fort

Even though the site is mostly recognized through its 'Russian period', its history is so much longer and more diverse. It is argued that even the landscape itself plays a very important role in memory practices in various societies throughout the world⁵⁵¹. What is the most important, the site bears a big symbolic significance to Hawaiian people. It is very often referred to as a sacred place⁵⁵². Local narratives also emphasize the role of King Kaumuali'i in building the fort. The ground was already symbolic, and it received another layer of symbolism through the active participation of Kaumuali'i's men in constructing the fort⁵⁵³. The name of the site itself holds a special meaning for Native Hawaiians. Pā'ula'ula o Hipo means *red/scarlet enclosure of Hipo* and was named this way for a reason. The red color has a symbolic meaning for Hawaiians too.⁵⁵⁴ As in many other cultures red and scarlet colors refer to royalty, monarchy, or ruling estate in general.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Ramona Kincaid, conducted at the Kauai Historical Society by Kacper Dziekan on October 29th, 2021.

⁵⁴⁹ <https://kauaihistoricalsociety.org/historyofkauai/> [access: June 16th, 2022].

⁵⁵⁰ <https://kauaihistoricalsociety.org/map/#guide> [access: June 16th, 2022].

⁵⁵¹ P. J. Stewart, A. Strathern, *Landscape, Memory and History. Anthropological perspectives*, Sterling, Virginia 2003.

⁵⁵² P. R. Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁵⁵³ E. A. Powell, *Unearthing America's Czarist Heritage*, [in:] *Archaeology*, Vol. 59, No. 5 (September/October 2006), p. 63.

⁵⁵⁴ P. R. Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Another interculturally shared meaning are references to blood and soil. It all brings symbolism of status, but also sacrifice, sense of ownership or belonging. Applying such a meaning to site on which the fort is to be constructed automatically makes the construction filled with this meaning. Hence, the name itself - Pā'ula'ula o Hipo, until today remains a crucial aspect of Native Hawaiians' cultural memory of the site. Similarly relevant is the Hawaiian language that is used to name and describe the place. Gerald Echterhoff argues that *linguistic format can have profound effects on memory in its individual, collective and cultural manifestations. Language, a system largely based on conventional rules, is as much of a product of culture as it is a tool for people to shape culture. Thus, language effects on memory also reflect the cultural dimension of memory. (...) language is a principal, genuinely human means of interpreting and retaining experiences. Indeed, some mental representations are impossible without language, such as the representation of one's own name*⁵⁵⁵. Native Hawaiians feel particularly attached to their language and its presence in public sphere, because they had been stripped of this opportunity for many decades⁵⁵⁶. After the annexation of Hawaii US government has introduced a political, cultural and educational policy that was intended on eradication of local culture and replacing it with general, national, American culture⁵⁵⁷. Introducing English language and limiting the use of Hawaiian was one of the tools to achieve that goal. It was a common practice among most of the colonial empires and it led to assimilation and acculturation of indigenous people into the American society⁵⁵⁸. However, full cultural genocide did not happen, and Hawaiians managed to preserve their culture and their language. A certain revival of local culture could be observed in recent years. Therefore, the emphasis on local names is particularly important for Hawaiians and such is also the case on Kaua'i with Pā'ula'ula o Hipo. Puali'ili'imaikalani Rossi, a researcher in Anthropology and Hawaiian

⁵⁵⁵ G. Echterhoff, *Language and memory. Social and cognitive processes*, [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll, A. Nuenning, Berlin and New York 2008, p. 263-264.

⁵⁵⁶ See: K. Wurdeman-Thurston, J. Kaomea, *Fostering Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction: Lessons from a Native Hawaiian Classroom*, [in:] *Language Arts*, Vol. 92, No. 6, *Insights and Inquiries*, July 2015, pp. 424-435.

⁵⁵⁷ Consider: Ch. Tachihata, *Hawaiian Sovereignty*, [in:] *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 202-210., and more recent: N. Goodyear-Ka'opua, B. Kamaoli Kuwada, *Making 'Aha: Independent Hawaiian Pasts, Presents & Futures*, [in:] *Daedalus*, Vol. 147, No. 2, *Unfolding Futures: Indigenous Ways of Knowing for the Twenty-First Century*, Spring 2018, pp. 49-59.

⁵⁵⁸ See: F. White, *Rethinking Native American Language Revitalization*, [in:] *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1/2, Special Issue: *Indigenous Languages and Indigenous Literatures*, Winter - Spring, 2006, pp. 91-109.

Studies from Kauai Community College/University of Hawai'i explains: *For Hawaiians names are very, very important. Place names are just as. We consider place names what we called almost 'kupa' or natives themselves. A place name holds much, much meaning. Because a place is not just called something for no reason. There is a story behind it, there is significance behind it, there is history behind it (...). In a case of Russian Fort, the idea was not to forget a Russian part of it, but it was to acknowledge the fact that that place had a Hawaiian name before all of this occurred. This place had a history, had a significance. Yes, the Russian factor was part of its history, but it also had a history before it*⁵⁵⁹.

Emphasizing the Hawaiian name of the site is a part of cultural remembrance practice of Kauai's past and even the whole archipelago in general. It could be also seen as part of the bigger process of *reclaiming* the history and culture from its colonial constraints, known as *decolonizing the past*. This process takes place on various levels. It is being more broadly developed in communicative memory⁵⁶⁰ of certain small groups – families, circles of friends, where local memory practice was transmitted from one generation to another and thus preserved. But it is also developed in cultural memory of broader community, where larger symbolic systems are being replaced⁵⁶¹. Formerly imposed foreign cultural memory practices (in this case brought by the US official policies) are being replaced with Kaua'i's local canon of cultural memory.

11. Memory of King Kaumuali'i

As mentioned before, a central figure to Native Hawaiians cultural memory on Kaua'i is King Kaumuali'i. Various formats of cultural memory representations exist throughout the entire island. Main highways and several buildings are named after him. His statue greets visitors coming to Kaua'i Museum in downtown Lihue – the main town on the

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with Puali'ili'imaikalani Rossi, conducted online via zoom platform by Kacper Dziekan on October 29th 2021.

⁵⁶⁰ See the distinction between *communicative* and *cultural memory* in: J. Assmann, *Communicative and Cultural Memory*, [in:] *Collective Memory Reader*, ed. J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy, New York 2011, p. 109-118.

⁵⁶¹ M. Rothberg, *Remembering back. Cultural memory, colonial legacies, and postcolonial studies*, [in:] *the Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. G. Huggan, Oxford 2013, p. 365.

island. His influence on the island is an important part of museum's narrative. Those are the elements created by official actors of memory practices – State of Hawaii, State Park, Museum, etc. To certain extent they respond to the popular demand. However, as argued by Lorenzo Zamponi there is also a space to be filled by social movements⁵⁶². They provide the community or society with a certain perspective on a subject matter. They become mnemonic agents, who contribute to the identity building processes. On Kaua'i, such is the case of the Friends of King Kaumuali'i. Its mission is to: *honor the last and great King Kaumuali'i of Kaua'i by: creating awareness of his reign & role in Kaua'i/Hawai'i history; creating educational and cultural programs for local and tourist communities, and erecting an 8-foot bronze statue of the King at Pā'ūla'ūla, Waimea (old Russian Fort)*⁵⁶³. The organization positions itself as a mnemonic agent. Their goals deal directly with certain perspective of the reconstruction of local past. Friends of King Kaumuali'i intend to interact both with internal (local) individuals and groups and external (tourists/visitors). Such memory practices (through educational and cultural activities), also known as *figures of memory*⁵⁶⁴ influence reshaping the collective identity in local community as well. They become a *memory community*⁵⁶⁵ Placing King Kaumuali'i in the center of local cultural memory and identity provides a new narrative on Kaua'i past. The final goal listed by the Friends of King Kaumuali'i has already been achieved. A statue of the king was dedicated at Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ūla'ūla o Hipo in March 2021. It came along with an interpretive and commemorative panel installed nearby. The latter was designed and installed by the State Park but supported by the Friends of King Kaumuali'i. Therefore, it was a joint act of an official mnemonic agent with a grass-root organized one. On symbolic ground, this could be seen as one of the most important actions. The site as such is considered sacred by Native Hawaiians. It witnessed one of the biggest skirmishes in the entire history of Kaua'i with King Kaumuali'i being a central

⁵⁶² L. Zamponi, *Collective Memory and Social Movements*, [in:] *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, ed. D. Snow, D. della Porta, B. Klandermans, D. McAdam.

⁵⁶³ <https://kauaikingkaumualii.org/friends-of-king-kaumualii-2/> [access: February 2nd, 2022].

⁵⁶⁴ J. Assmann, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, [in:] *Collective Memory Reader*, ed. J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy, New York 2011, p. 213.

⁵⁶⁵ W. Kudela-Świątek, *Wspólnota pamięci*, [in:] *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, p. 525-527.

figure of this skirmish. A skirmish that was intended to regain independence to the island. It all makes Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā‘ula‘ula o Hipo a memorial site and almost a war memorial site. The latter are semi-sacred sites, as argues Jay Winter⁵⁶⁶. Thus, Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā‘ula‘ula o Hipo has a double-sacred meaning for Native Hawaiians. An act of dedication a statue of their most beloved ruler is an act of reclaiming the site for local cultural memory and identity practices. Further development of various future activities at the site is to be expected.



An interpretive and commemorative panel installed in March 2021 at Pā‘ula‘ula o Hipo / Russian Fort Elizabeth by State Historical Park with support from the Friends of King Kaumuali‘i – photo by K. Dziekan

⁵⁶⁶ J. Winter, *Museums and the Representation of War*, [in:] *Does War Belong in Museums? The Representation of Violence in Exhibitions*, ed. W. Muchitsch, Bielefeld 2013, p. 21.



A statue of King Kaumuali'i dedicated at Pā'ula'ula o Hipo / Russian Fort Elizabeth by the Friends of King Kaumuali'i in March 2021 – photo by K. Dziekan

12. Russian episode in local awareness on Kaua'i

The need to emphasize the role King Kaumuali'i played in Kaua'i's history comes from various reasons. Many have to do with colonial past and the mainland American narrative imposed on local education, cultural practices, and public sphere. Such shift in narratives is typical in post-colonial societies and communities and in this case can be observed throughout the entire archipelago of Hawaiian Islands⁵⁶⁷. However, Kaua'i specificity is related to its own perception of the royal period prior to the annexation by the US, noting that this island has the earliest archeological sites in the whole archipelago⁵⁶⁸. Whereas general Hawaiian narrative emphasizes the role of Kamehameha I *the Unifier*, on Kaua'i he could be seen as an invader, while Kaumuali'i is the great ruler deserving homage and praise. Since this crucial historical episode coincides with the arrival of Russians and the role, they played in this affair the focus on Kaumuali'i brings also the focus on *the Russian period* and the Russian heritage on the island. Despite its significance, those historical nuances are not broadly known on Kaua'i, which is another reason why Friends of King Kaumuali'i seek to introduce this narrative wider into cultural memory of the islanders. They listed educational projects as one of their key activities as education is crucial for constricting identity and memory and that period is not properly covered in curriculum. Puali'ili'imaikalani Rossi explains: *I teach two classes focused on Hawaiian history. One is called "Hawaiian history" and the other one "History of Kaua'i". The former is a history of the Hawaiian Islands, which is broader (...). History of Kauai is more focused on Kauai. The concept of the Russian Fort as well as Georg Schaeffer coming over to Kaua'i are definitely in it. "History of Kauai" is focused on it more, but both courses look at it. Because it does change the narrative of what was happening in Hawai'i history. If I look at it from overall, general history, it's significant in that it does expose some of the contention between Kamehameha and King Kaumuali'i. Because Kamehameha has this*

⁵⁶⁷ Consider: L. Kahaleole Hall, *Which of These Things Is Not Like the Other: Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders Are Not Asian Americans, and All Pacific Islanders Are Not Hawaiian*, [in:] *American Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 3, Special Issue: *Pacific Currents* (September 2015), pp. 727-747.

⁵⁶⁸ M. T. Carson, *Chronology in Kaua'i: Colonisation, Land Use, Demography*, [in:] *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 115, No. 2 (June 2006), p. 177.

idea of taking over the Hawaiian Islands and he comes to the agreement with King Kaumuali'i that the latter won't remain on Kaua'i. That is the main focus, but people tend to forget that there is this part in which Kaumuali'i makes his negotiations with Georg Schaefer and we have this interesting Russian narrative in our history. Kauai more than other islands has this Russian influence for a while. We do cover it, because in my opinion it is very important part of our history. Especially the Kauai history, because we have this place called "Russian fort". Everybody knows there is a Russian Fort, but why is it called that? Why have we called it that? What was its original name? Why was it important to our history? It was a big thing for us at that time. Not much is taught about it. A lot of students regardless of whether they are from Hawai'i or from other parts of the world know there is a Russian fort, but they don't know why there is a Russian fort. They are introduced to that.

I feel that the introduction to Hawaiian history in public schools on Kaua'i is very general and it's not very detailed. In public school you are given Hawaiian history 3 times: once in 4th grade (9 years old), again in 7th (12 years old) and then in the freshman year (14 years old). They are only introduced to Hawaiian history 3 times and not very significant time for them to understand what history really is. It's very general, what they are given (...). There is also a standard system across the whole state of Hawai'i. All students are using the same textbooks. What may be relevant to a Kaua'i student, like the whole Schaeffer incident and Kaumuali'i – they are not going to be introduced to it, because it's not part of a standardized curriculum throughout the state. What's relevant to a student from Hawa'i Island may not be significant for a student from Kaua'i⁵⁶⁹.

13. Empress Elizabeth's Fort – Russians as a mnemonic agent

Russian presence on Kaua'i in 1816-1817 left an undoubtful legacy. There is another social group interested in it – Russians on Hawai'i, Russian Americans or generally people feeling personal connection to Russia. During the Cold War era there was not much

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Puali'ili'imaikalani Rossi, conducted online via zoom platform by Kacper Dziekan on October 29th 2021.

interest from their part as the story of Russians on Hawai'i and Fort Elizabeth was not commonly known. The US-Soviet relations were tight and there was no official cooperation on that matter either. Although a local resident who wanted to restore the fort in 1984 saw it as an opportunity for a de-escalation of US-Soviet relations, it was an exemption⁵⁷⁰. The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of Cold War brought a bigger interest in American-Russian cooperation and mutual relations. The Russian Colonization of America began to be researched broadly by mutual groups of scholars, joint conferences were held and various other – cultural or educational projects and activities started to be implemented. Ongoing debate on the potential reconstruction of the fort fueled Russian interest in participating in it. 21st century brought a closer attention to the topic as an interest in history developed in Russian under the new president Vladimir V. Putin. Besides, two big anniversaries were looming – 2017 marked the 150 years since the sale of Alaska and Russia's ultimate withdrawal from America and 200 years since the Schaeffer's affair on Kauai. A new project aiming at restoration of Fort Elizabeth came from initiative group consisting of Russian Americans and Russia enthusiasts who decided to reconstruct the site. This loose initiative group can be considered as a mnemonic agent actively participating in the process. They managed to receive support among others from Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Government of Moscow, The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, but also initiatives involved in Russian heritage in California: Fort Ross Conservancy, Russian Center of San Francisco, or Renova Foundation. In November 11-13th, 2017 they organized a big forum on Kaua'i. It was the biggest event dedicated to Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ūla'ūla o Hipo that has ever taken place. It featured numerous speakers involved in the subject matter⁵⁷¹. An initiative called "Fort Elizabeth" was launched with several projects to carry on, among others the graphic novel telling a story of Russians in Hawaii in an entertaining way⁵⁷². The biggest project is the vision of future visitor center to be built on a site. The visual project is already created, and the visitor center is expected to include a museum in it. A museum

⁵⁷⁰ *Russian Fort: Poipu man wants it restored*, *Kauai Times*, February 22nd, 1984, p. A-8.

⁵⁷¹ <http://www.fortelizabeth.org/forum2017/> [access: February 2nd, 2022].

⁵⁷² <http://www.fortelizabeth.org/graphic-novel-project/> [access: February 2nd, 2022].

which will give to visitors an overview of the park's major cultural stories, covering the Native Hawaiian, English, Russian, and American eras with a scale-sized fort model. Also we plan to display are several cases of beautiful historical artifacts, documents and digital materials. At this time the Fort Elizabeth is in the early stages of fundraising to design and build the Visitor Center.⁵⁷³ Even though the initiative emphasizes the role of other periods and actors in the history of the site (especially indigenous people), its primary focus is placed on Russian period. Such a choice created tensions between the initiative and residents representing the Native Hawaiian perspective. Since the initiative is just called Fort Elizabeth it misses the name in Hawaiian language. The reasons how crucial the name is for Native Hawaiians have already been covered. It created yet another tension with the opposite attempt to drop the name “Russian Fort Elizabeth” and only keep the Hawaiian name Pā‘ula‘ula. A memory conflict over the name of the site made headlines in some Hawaiian and Russian media⁵⁷⁴. *Russia Beyond* – an English-language Russian government-controlled media outlet even accused Hawaii of *declaring war on its Russian heritage*⁵⁷⁵. A tentative compromise was made in 2020, and the name remained: Pā‘ula‘ula / Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park. The story took a final twist in Spring 2022 when the pressure of renaming the site accelerated significantly. The sign leading to the place was vandalized in March 2022, when the word “Russian” was blacked out with spray⁵⁷⁶. There was a political background to this story too. The interest of Russian individuals and organizations in the fort has been a matter of an investigation from the FBI in recent years. Finally, in March 2022, one of the keypersons behind the 2017 bicentennial events, Elena Branson was accused of *Conspiracy to Act as an Agent of a Foreign Government [Russia] without Notifying the Attorney General*⁵⁷⁷.

⁵⁷³ <http://www.fortelizabeth.org/visitor-center/> [access: February 2nd, 2022].

⁵⁷⁴ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2018/05/the-quest-to-rebuild-an-old-russian-fort-on-kauai-and-meet-putin/>; <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2019/01/20/kauai-park-with-ties-russia-is-stirring-up-an-international-name-dilemma/>; <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/7718789> [access: February 2nd, 2022].

⁵⁷⁵ <https://www.rbth.com/lifestyle/329874-hawaii-russian-heritage> [access: February, 2nd, 2022].

⁵⁷⁶ <https://www.civilbeat.org/beat/vandals-deface-sign-at-kauais-controversial-russian-fort/> [access: June 16th, 2022].

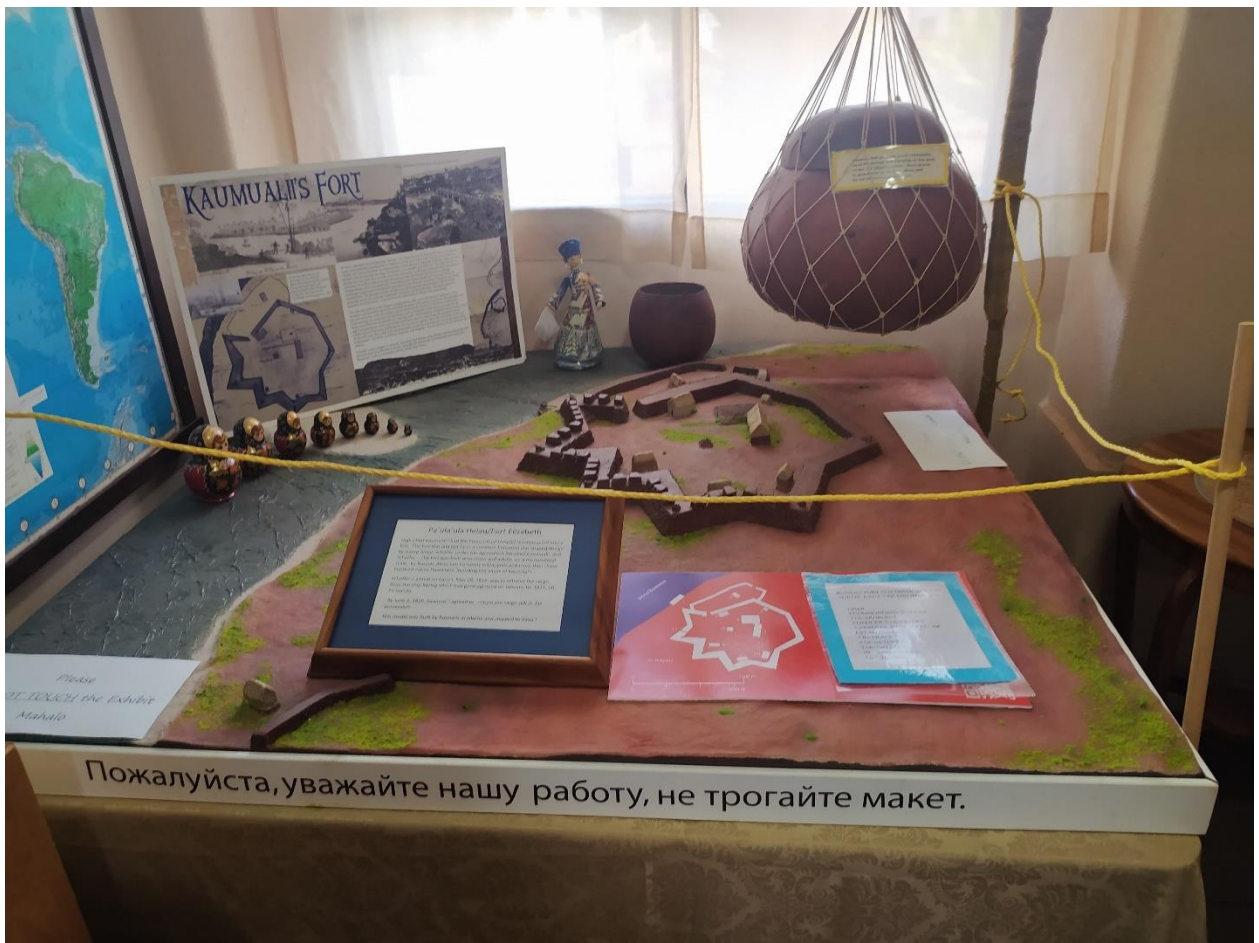
⁵⁷⁷ Complaint 22 MAG 2178, Violations of 18 U.S.C. §§ 371, 951, 1001, 1546 & 2; 22 U.S.C. §§ 612 & 618, County of offense: New York, New York, United States of America v. Elena Branson a.k.a. Elena Chernykh, March 8th, 2022.

One of the concrete charges stated: *In or about 2019, BRANSON coordinated a campaign to lobby Hawaiian officials not to change the name of a fort located on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, in part by providing Hawaiian officials with messages from Russian officials and by organizing a trip for Hawaiian officials to Moscow to meet with high-ranking Russian Government personnel*⁵⁷⁸.

A pressing demand on a name change led to placing such proposal on the agenda for the meeting of State of Hawaii Board of Land and Natural Resources. During the meeting held on June 9th, 2022, the board members voted unanimously to drop the name: “Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park” and to introduce a new one. From now on, the full and official name of the site is: “Pā‘ula‘ula State Historic Site”.⁵⁷⁹ It is worth to note that not only did the words “Russian” and “Elizabeth” were erased, but also the word “fort”. Thus, even semantic-wise the place lost its meaning as forts are often associated with colonial policies and definitely are not associated with Native Hawaiian history and culture. Assumingly, calling it “a site” allows broader, and more capacious substance of the place. This way, Russian historical footprint disappeared from the remembrance practice visible through names and signs. It is unknown how will the whole story continue. Although “Russian Fort Elizabeth” and “Pā‘ula‘ula o Hipo” are the main two versions of the site’s name, there is a different one too. Next to the park there is a small museum: West Kaua‘i Technology and Visitors Center. It features a very small exhibition dedicated to the park, where it is called Kaumuali‘i’s Fort. Such a name puts again King Kaumuali‘i in the center, but also makes him an *owner* of the site.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷⁹ State of Hawaii, The Board of Land and Natural Resources, Agenda for The Meeting of The Board of Land and Natural Resources, Date: June 9, 2022, Time: 9:00 A.M., Location: In person at 1151 Punchbowl St. Room 132 (Kalanimoku Building), online via ZOOM, livestream via YouTube.



An exhibition presented in West Kaula'i Technology and Visitors Center - photo by K. Dziekan

14. Competitive vs. multidirectional memory

A phenomenon where various groups present different perspectives on their shared past is generally known as *competitive memory* or *conflicted memory*⁵⁸⁰. It is a common situation that exist all over the world and has a long history of existence. Michael Rothberg proposed to look at this challenge from a different angle and coined a term *multidirectional memory*. He suggested that *we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative*.⁵⁸¹.

⁵⁸⁰ P. Forecki, *Konflikt pamięci*, [in:] *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, p. 193-195.

⁵⁸¹ M. Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory: remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009, p. 3.

Therefore, an inevitable situation with various memory agents presenting narratives incompatible with one another could lead to the development of some sort of multidimensional solution. A solution that provides space for various narratives existing together. Thus, it could replace the *competitive* as the latter implies a conflict or has negative notion to say the least.

15. Conclusion – a conflicted memory

At this point Pā‘ula‘ula / Russian Fort Elizabeth remains a site of a conflicted memory between Native Hawaiians, Russian Americans, and mainland Americans. The latter are not a clear, coherent group with a specific perspective, although the official US remains a mnemonic agent through the State Park and State of Hawaii’s Board of Land and Natural Resources. Russian Americans interested in fort reconstruction are not a coherent group either. In fact, the interested party consists of Russian nationals, Russian Americans, and other non-Russian Americans who for all sorts of reasons are akin to this idea. Native Hawaiians seem to be the most coherent group of those three. They have clear representatives and precise goals. According to Michael Schudson: *The full freedom to reconstruct the past according to one’s own present interest is limited by three factors: the structure of available past, the structure of individual choices, and the conflicts about the past among a multitude of mutually aware individuals or groups*⁵⁸².

The current situation on Kaua‘i resembles the Schudson’s definition of limits to the full freedom to reconstruct the past. Puali‘ili‘imaikalani Rossi explains the Hawaiian perspective of the past: *There is definitely a negative perception of Americans. Not necessarily other European countries. When our students learn about Hawaiian history there is definitely a negative perception of American influence here in Hawai‘i. That is partly due to the fact that it was an American influence that resulted in an overthrow and annexation. When it comes to European influence, I almost feel that is less of a negative perception on part of our students and on part of our people. Primarily because there*

⁵⁸² M. Schudson, *The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past*, [in:] *Collective Memory Reader*, ed. J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy, New York 2011, p. 288.

wasn't as this negative result that ahs put us in this situation that we are in today. Having said that, when it comes to Russia and our relationship with Russians, students, and people in Hawaii in general don't even realize that it had actually happened. That Kaumuali'i was using this relationship to gain leverage to maintain his sovereignty and independence. I don't think that there is even that perception. I don't think that a lot of us even look at that relationship because it doesn't really exist today. We don't have any relationship with Russia because it was such a small time period. However, the significance of that, that moment has definitely played the part in how our history unfolded on Kauai, less so on the other islands. There's still an influence here it's just I don't think a lot of people recognize it. It doesn't really leave into the struggle we're facing today as people who were displaced from our land, people that are struggling to retain some sort of autonomy. Today there is definitely a push from the side of Russia to claim that Pā'ūla'ūla is theirs. Even though it's given a name "Russian Fort", nobody on Kaua'i really sees that as being a relationship between us and Russia. We look at this place as something that has the name 'Russian Fort' and maybe Russians built it or maybe we took influence from Russia when creating this fort. Everybody has a different scenario as to how the name came to be. But very, very, very few people see this as being a RUSSIAN FORT. In other words, yes, it has the name "Russian Fort", but nobody sees it as really being "a Russian Fort", as it belonging to Russia, that Russia has any claim to this place.

Few years ago, I was invited to come to Pā'ūla'ūla with my students to take part in the presentation by Peter Mills. There were also representatives from Russia, although I'm not sure what group actually was there. They were doing some recordings. It was a situation in which we were asked to do protocol. My students brought offering, we presented chants. It was a very uncomfortable situation in that students felt like there was very little respect on a side of the visitors that were there. They [the students] were concerned that there was this sort of narrative being built upon this, again, being "a Russian Fort" and it they almost felt like they were being infringed upon in a way like they were there to present offerings and to recognize that this place was once the home of Kaumuali'i. It was one of the places that we resided at. They were vey much taken aback

by the way they were received and they way it was sort of portrayed to them that the visitors were trying to put a claim on this site.

We have found out later that after we left, they attempted to raise a Russian flag over the fort. That was very disturbing for some of our students and some of our community members. Because we have already gone through having our flags taken down. We have already gone through this claim that we are not Hawaiian, that we are part of the United States. Now to have another country come in and raise yet another flag over a place we consider to be very sacred and a place that we consider to be Hawaiian was rather insulting⁵⁸³.

The role of a sacred sites in memory practices has already been discussed. Rossi provides yet another example of such a phenomenon in the context of Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā‘ula‘ula. For Native Hawaiians this site is both symbolic and literal *lieu de memoire*, as it resembles the centuries of their presence on the island as well as their historical, cultural, and political backbone through the figure of King Kaumuali‘i – a yet another *lieu de memoire*. He is one of the strongest symbols of the island and the central character of the early 19th century events. There is little space for Russians in this narrative. If any, as a supportive role.

The flag of the Russian-American Company raising over the fort is reproduced in various media articles and the video including it is posted on the website of Fort Elizabeth initiative⁵⁸⁴. After the backlash from local community, Mihail Gilevich, one of the activists behind the Fort Elizabeth initiative tried to defend the act: *Russians have great respect for the Hawaiian history there and the flag was raised to honor the Russian ancestors. It doesn't mean someone was trying to disrespect local rules or claim anything⁵⁸⁵.*

Nevertheless, flag raising, as well as the name and the vision of site's future remain the topics of competitive memory among those two mnemonic agents. If there ever was a museum to be built there, the narrative presented on the exhibition would be a yet another

⁵⁸³ Interview with Puali‘ili‘imaikalani Rossi, conducted online via zoom platform by Kacper Dziekan on October 29th 2021.

⁵⁸⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk5ay0BUy_A&t=1s [access: February 2nd, 2022].

⁵⁸⁵ <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2019/01/20/kauai-park-with-ties-russia-is-stirring-up-an-international-name-dilemma/> [access: February 2nd, 2022].

crucial challenge among those actors. Since early 2020 most of the plans and initiatives have been suspended due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and it is the matter of future on how the situation will unfold and whether or not could Pā‘ula‘ula / Russian Fort Elizabeth become a site of a multidirectional memory.

Conclusions

Cultural memory of Russian Colonization of America differs significantly on various levels. It differs between the respected groups serving as memory agents. It differs geographically between the locations. Finally, it also differed throughout the past decades and those differences were influenced by numerous factors: both local and global events, new archeological and historical findings, new intellectual discourses. The emphasis on specific aspects of the Russian presence in America and the colonization itself was changing as well. Such a changing emphasis could be observed in the work of institutions designed to play a role of custodians of memory. This was visible in all three case studies: in Sitka, at Fort Ross and in Kaua'i. A common link in all three cases is the growing significance of the indigenous perspective in their cultural media representation. This aspect has become particularly important in the 21st century. As a result, the difference is visible even with linguistics. One site even got its name changed: Russian Fort Elizabeth into Hawaiian name: Pā'ula'ula in June 2022. The other, Fort Ross, through one of its organizations Fort Ross Conservancy added the Kashaya Pomo name *Metini* into its projects, publications, and signs. There is no change in the official name of the park (Fort Ross State Historic Park) though. In Sitka, the Tlingit name Sheetka has been commonly used as well and is presented on the main video in Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center. The perspective of indigenous peoples is also visible in new exhibitions at Visitor Center's at both Sitka National Historical Park and Fort Ross State Historic Park. There is no Visitor Center at Russian Fort Elizabeth / Pā'ula'ula, although the analysis of archives containing the historic reconstruction plans showed that the emphasis was put on Russian component. One can assume that, if ever such a visitor center was to be built, the focus would be rather on Hawaiian history and the character of King Kaumuali'i.

There is little presence of the Russian America in the cultural memory of Russians in America. This is because the vast majority of Russian settlers left the colonies once they were sold (Fort Ross in 1841, the rest of the colonies in 1867), or the site was abandoned as in the case of Kaua'i in 1817. Therefore, there is no direct continuity. The only site with strong Russian mnemonic cultural representation is Fort Ross, which is vastly connected

to the *white* emigration after the October Revolution. Interestingly, Fort Ross seems also to be the only site relatively free from conflicted memory. Various memory agents: Russian Americans, Native Californians, descendants of the property owners from the Ranch Era and local indirectly connected residents work together in the non-profit Fort Ross Conservancy and discuss the narratives and memory production transformed and processed within the initiative. Russians or Russian Americans are not among the key actors in Sitka and Kaua'i. Those are the sites of significant conflicted memory. The occasional Russian involvement could be seen either through the responses from Russia's officials to the heated topics of conflicted memory (e. g. attempt to change the name in Kaua'i and the removal of Baranov statue in Sitka) or the media coverage in Russian outlets. Those two cases, Hawai'i and Alaska seem to have differences between one another as well. When it comes to the former, it seems that there is no significant backlash towards the changes proposed by the memory agent being a representation of the indigenous population: the organization Friends of King Kaumuali'i. Neither the memory custodians (such as Kaua'i Historical Society or Kaua'i History Museum) nor the local community stood against them. In the latter, the similar memory agents: Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood and a loose, informal initiative group faced a more cautious response from both local community and the officials – especially in the case of an attempt to rename the Baranov Elementary School. The case of the removal of Baranov statue was a good illustration to this situation as well. Some people wanted to get rid of the statue entirely. Although placing it in the museum seemed like the best compromise possible, the fact that the compromise was needed in the first place is quite telling.

Further, an interesting conclusion could be drawn from the analysis of the specific memory image ascribed to specific historical characters who play the role of a *lieu de memoire*. Again, there is difference between Fort Ross, where there is no conflicted memory and there is also lack of such a character. In the cases of both Sitka and Kaua'i such a *lieu de memoire* is particularly powerful. Both chief Katlian and King Kaumuali'i are attributed with numerous heroic features and are confronted by the *villain* type of antagonists: Chief Manager Baranov and Doctor Schaeffer respectively. What is more, there is no visible

negative perception of two key figures among the Russians at Ross: first and last commanders: Ivan Kuskov and Alexander Rotchev.

Finally, the recent years brought a growing interest in the new dimension of Russian colonial presence in America: the outcomes of the interaction with nature. Although existing at least since 1970s. from the beginning of 21st century environmental history has become one of the most emerging fields of history as discipline⁵⁸⁶. Such a trend coincided with the general growth of interest in environmental issue in many societies. Therefore, the environmental dimension and environmental legacy of Russian colonization of America becomes more and more visible within the memory production of different actors. Particularly Fort Ross Conservancy. But also, environmental aspects of this colonization are addressed by Sitka National Historical Park and I believe it is safe to assume that this aspect will mirror on the exhibition in the Russian Bishop's House which is being prepared. Perhaps this could be a starting point for the redefinition of various memory practices and a way to seek solutions within the framework of multidirectional memory instead of a conflicted one.

⁵⁸⁶ See: S. Sörlin, P. Warde, *The Problem of the Problem of Environmental History: A Re-Reading of the Field*, *Environmental History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, January 2007, pp. 107-130.

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