

Of Enlightenment and Alaska Early Moderns

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This article examines transformations of status-capital in the modern history of the Alaska Native Alutiiq. I redevelop Pierre Bourdieu's forms of capital and habitus to analyze how Alutiiq elites stay on course during massive changes in their social structure. By drawing attention to citizenship statuses of the nineteenth century Russian and American colonial periods, I explore how local structural inequalities emerge in Alaska, yet with leaders of the same Alaska Native kin groups moving into the new privileged positions as Russian Imperial citizen, then later as American citizen. The study identifies citizenship as a key technology of group identification in Alaska and, in particular, how civilizing processes associated with citizenship create marked objective differences among the Alutiiq. Alaska Native society's articulation with the Russian and, later, American cultural-political orders creates new kinds of local structural inequalities. By possessing the requisite cultural capital to comprehend structural shifts in politics and the economy, Alaska Native elites strategically fit into new legal and ideological regimes of belonging. What develops is an example of the durability of an Alaska Native ruling elite by means of the transformation of prestige.

Key Words: Alaska, indigenous cosmopolitanism, Enlightenment, citizenship

In this article I trace the emergence of historical categories of identity among a subset of Alutiiq Native people on Kodiak Island, Alaska, which I refer to as an Alutiiq elite (noble, burgher, national citizen [Russian and U.S.]). I examine how this group deploys these shifting categories to reproduce its elite status through time and describe how these identities articulate with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' conceptions of modernity. The analysis is based on my own historical ethnographic data collections (Mason 1996, 2002, 2008, 2010) and on the efforts of Russian-American historians writing about eighteenth-century Russian contact and the 1867 sale of Alaska from Imperial Russia to the United States. The period between these two points coincides with the emergence of three distinct categories of the Alaska Native condition: (1) noble class, referred to in early accounts of the Russian contact period and in later ethnographic publications; (2) *meshchane* (burgher), largely used in juridical documents; and (3)

'children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life,' a phrase that corresponds to the 1867 sale of Alaska to identify those Alutiiq granted United States citizenship.

My aim is to understand how these categories articulate with the Alutiiq experience of different sociopolitical economic orders established by two colonial powers, Imperial Russia and the United States. I want to know how these identities become social technologies through which a subgroup of the Alutiiq reproduce their hereditary elite status across the centuries. I argue that these categories increase the local authority of an Alutiiq ruling class and that a central feature of indigenous political identification in Alaska is the durability of prestige. In other words, this article explores ways that a traditional Alaska Native power elite transforms its originary sources of authority into the prevailing forms of status-capital emerging in each new era and cultural setting.

My conceptual framework for these status transformations relies on study into the social structure of rapidly changing societies. Work by Maria Stoilkova (2003, 2001) and Gil Eyal et al. (1998), for example, redevelops Pierre Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) *forms of capital* and *habitus* to analyze how elites stay on course during massive changes in social structure. Stoilkova's (e.g., 2010) research deserves mention because of her attention to the role of citizenship as a key technology in elite subject formation and in reproducing a structural position through which elites can carry out their historical project of modernizing society. By possessing the requisite cultural capital, for example, to engage with and comprehend structural shifts in politics and the economy, Stoilkova's elites strategically fit into new legal and ideological regimes of belonging. Drawing on this work, I call attention to citizenship statuses of the nineteenth-century Russian and American colonial periods to explore how local structural inequalities emerge on Kodiak Island, yet with leaders of the same Alaska Native kin groups moving into the new privileged positions as Alutiiq burgher, then later, as American civilized citizen. Elsewhere (Mason 1996, 2002, 2008), I argue that descendants of the Alutiiq burgher emerge as the first generation of leaders involved in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

The idea that citizenship has a significant role to play in the construction of group identity is by no means a new one (e.g., Das 1995; England 1999; Ong and Nonini 1997). Whether in movement or in residence, citizens and would-be citizens organize and articulate their interests through distinct models of membership and institutionalized forms of organization developed within the nation-state (e.g., Agamben 1998; Dominguez 1986; Sassen 1991; Soysal 1994). This

process of group formation, sometimes referred to as “citizenship-making” (Ong 1998), has specific characteristics that are shaped by political-economic rationalities, as, for example, in the United States, in which the regulatory aspects of economic liberalism extend to cover all facets of human behavior (e.g., Becker 1965; Burchell 1992; Gordon 1991).

By calling attention to citizenship-making among the Alutiiq, I hope to open up space for conversations about the role of “civilizing processes” (Elias 1978) in creating marked objective differences among Alaska Natives. Such differences in the literature are often glossed over by attention to distinctions of language and region (e.g., Crowell 2001). Yet, as I demonstrate, the Alutiiq burgher and the Alutiiq non-burgher, though inhabiting the same village, occupy distinct worlds: in the nineteenth century, Alaska Native consciousness and practice had become entangled to myriad political landscapes, historical capitalisms, scientific authorities, and state interventions, as well as to local sentimentalities and practices of preserving ancestral authorities. Relying on the framework of Bourdieu concerning modes of prestige and distinction (1985: 730–735; 1984), I provide an introduction to these entanglements by tracing Kodiak Island’s elite agents as they pass through three distinct categories of their historical human condition (noble class, burgher estate, and civilized citizen). In so doing, I demonstrate how experiences of an assumed social do not manifest themselves in the same way.

Alutiiq nobility as a vocation

In addition to shared linguistic forms, the archaeological and historical records identify a “Pacific Eskimo” of Kodiak Island (the preferred term is Alutiiq) as sharing cultural features with their Western Yup’ik neighbors to the north: aspects of cosmology, religious ceremony, etc. (e.g., Clark 1984, 1992; Fienup-Riordan 1990; Hrdlička 1944; Leer 1978). The record indicates, however, that the Alutiiq did not share the Yup’ik egalitarian political organizational form. Instead, the pre-contact Alutiiq were rank stratified. Similar forms of stratification are prevalent along the Pacific Northwest coast (e.g., Heizer 1947; Schweitzer 2003; Townsend 1980).

According to the archive, the early Alutiiq-Russian encounter identifies an Alutiiq elite or *noble class*. Anthropologist Donald Clark, citing eighteenth-century accounts of the Alutiiq contact period with Russians, states: “a position of leadership was inherited or at least filled by one of [an Alutiiq] *noble class*” (1984: 192 emphasis added). Anthropologist Lydia Black states of the Alutiiq hereditary ranking

system: “[ruling] elite kin groups, *nobles*, commoners and slaves that approached [rank] stratification” (2004: 134, emphasis added). The term *noble* appears in the literature from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century to describe Alutiiq political organization. Danish anthropologist Kaj Birket-Smith (1953) is the last to use the term *noble* in English within the context of Alutiiq ethnographic research.¹

During the late eighteenth century, Russian colonization of Kodiak ushered in a period of intense disruption and trauma. Labor exploitation, massacres, and epidemics are well documented. Russian wars of conquest, coupled with introduction of disease, dramatically reduced Kodiak’s Alutiiq population from 8,000 people in 1784 to 6,000 people in 1792 (Clark 1984: 186–187). In these records, *population numbers*, *dates*, and *devastation* are systematically registered (e.g., Lührmann 2000: 40 provides early nineteenth-century Kodiak population numbers recorded by Russian-American company personnel, Langsdorff and Lisianskii). Writing of these events, Black states, “it is not an exaggeration to say that for the Alutiiq of the Kodiak region, the period of Russian conquest was their darkest hour” (1991: 170; see also Black 1991: 169–173; Crowell 1997: 40–46).

Despite intense disruption, Black notes that members of an Alutiiq noble class were “willing to cooperate with the Russians” (2004: 134). As a consequence, the Alutiiq noble maintained a hereditary status. As a reward, the elites were given authority to decide the election of all Alutiiq leadership appointments by Russian authorities (see Black 1991: 173; Gibson 1987: 89; 1976: 110; Lührmann 2000: 78; Tikhmenev 1977: 411–430). Why was the Alutiiq noble so willing to cooperate with their invaders, the Russians, who wreaked such total human destruction on Kodiak Island? The complicity suggests, perhaps, that the nobles could not bear to renounce their social existence as elites. Examining court society in early modern Europe, Norbert Elias notes that only as an elite could members of the “noble class” preserve what gave them direction and purpose in their own eyes—their social existence as a noble class, their aloofness from all else, their prestige—this was the center of their self-image, spiritual salvation, social existence, and of their personal identity (1983: 99).

A Kodiak Island elite, seen through the prism of Europe’s lingering court society, suggests that the Alutiiq noble was not concerned with wealth or commercial activity, but with maintaining an elite character and rank in a society of *chazyai* (Hieromonk Gedeon, on Kodiak from 1804 to 1807, uses the term *chazyan*—“landlord,” in Lührmann 2000: 79). The use of the term *noble* suggests also a corporate body that recognizes this elite status. After all, as Elias notes, just as an emperor,

in order to *feel* like an emperor, needs subjects to rule over, a ruling elite, in order to possess that *inner feeling* that they are rulers, must possess a population who are conscious of themselves as subjects of rule (1983: 117–146). Thus, while an Alutiiq elite was present before the Russian contact period, this same elite was capable also of maintaining rank *during* the early contact period. The concept of nobility as a vocation would, in time, constitute an ephemeral style of elite with the advent of the nineteenth-century Alutiiq burgher, who followed in Kodiak's elite noble class footsteps.

Rise of an Alutiiq burgher estate

With integration into the Russian Imperial context, children of the Alutiiq noble intermarried with Russian colonizers. Their children became part of a historical emergence of a “privileged” Creole Russian-Alutiiq class (Black 2004: 218; 1990: 147; Oleksa 1990; Partnow 1994: 106–141). By early nineteenth century, members of the Creole Alutiiq secure positions in the Russian American company, established on Kodiak in the eighteenth century. Many Creole Alutiiq were sent to St. Petersburg, Russia, for university education at the company's expense. Education included shipbuilding, navigation, religious studies, medicine, and the arts (Okladnikova 1987).

The term Creole was introduced into the European Russian context sometime before 1816 for exclusive use in Alaska. In the 1821 Russian Imperial Charter authorizing activities of the Russian American Company, Alexander I (1777–1825), Emperor of Russia, decrees: “Creoles, who according to the latest information numbered 180 souls of male and 120 of female gender, and all those who should be born in the future are to . . . constitute a separate estate under enjoyment of the following rules: [first] Creoles are Russian subjects . . . [with] right[s] to governmental protection on the same basis as all subjects belonging to the *burgher estate* . . .” (Black 2004: 215 with emphasis; see also Dmytryshyn et al. 1989: 360, 468). The term for the burgher estate in Russian is *meshchanstvo*.

While the juridical meaning of *meshchanstvo* functioned in a way as to endow a group of Alaskans with certain rights as citizens of Imperial Russia, the cultural connotations of this category as used in Russia do not so readily convey the historical moment I capture in this analysis. With the status of Russian citizenship came the rise of a new societal order in Alaska. For the Creole Alutiiq, citizenship coincided with the breaking of rank order and the introduction of a logic of class stratification, the values of civil rights, meritocracy, and credentials. Actually, Russian citizenship marked a threshold into a particular

kind of modernity: the Creole Alutiiq became Alaska's first home-grown early modern.

It is precisely because I identify this moment as a threshold of modernity that I retain the earlier translation of the burgher to refer to the citizenship status of the Creole Alutiiq. In this period, the burgher signifies a sense of cosmopolitanism and transformation to modernity. The burgher status is bound to the twin concepts of maturity and reason—two words reflected on at length by Immanuel Kant in his 1784 published response to the question “What is Enlightenment?” (e.g., Foucault 1984). Immanuel Kant, a professor of logic and metaphysics, was an eminent burgher himself.

For the Alutiiq burgher, then, their Russian citizenship was more than a bundle of political rights. Within the context of Imperial Russia, the Alutiiq burgher status was a juridically based social category (*sosloviia*). It is true that the Russian concept of *meshchane* was derogatory. Still, by the nineteenth century this category also represented a newer set of meanings that were associated with an enlightened, socially progressive milieu (Wirtschafter 1997: 64). As such, the burgher identity presented conditions of possibility that signify the opportunity to obtain a European education and to hold a lead position with Alaska's Russian-American trading company. In a way, the burgher status can be seen as an attitude that provided a mode of relating to the reality of the time through a relation of belonging. This attitude characterized a sense of individual will oriented toward developing intellectual, scientific, and artistic achievement. In short, the status of the Alutiiq burgher (or “Pacific Eskimo”) of the nineteenth century is that of an enlightened modern person.

What historic and ethnographic forms characterize a shift from the Alutiiq noble to the Alutiiq burgher as an elite consciousness? There are several. First, the Alutiiq burgher's appearance was ensured by the establishment of the Russian American Company (RAC) on Kodiak Island. This fact was never more clearly reflected upon at the time than in the criticisms expressed toward the company by the celebrated Alutiiq burgher, Lt. Alexander Kashaverov. In 1861, during a debate on the future of the Alaskan colony, Lt. Kashaverov, then living in retirement in St. Petersburg, published three articles opposing the renewal of the RAC charter. He states: “Are we who were born in Russian America really supposed to consider forever the best interests of the Russian American Company as we have been taught from our childhood, and smother within ourselves every natural striving, every idea about the interests of our native land?” (in Oleksa 1992: 151). Whatever the conditions of the precontact Alutiiq were, with the arrival of the commercial company, hunting and gathering

society on Kodiak was irreversibly altered. As Kashaverov suggests, imperial expansion did not bring the cultural history of Alaska Natives to an end; rather, it resulted in the appearance of an entirely new historical subject.

Second, the Alutiiq burgher population was a result itself, in part, of changes in the subsequent government charters of 1821 and 1844 with the RAC. Without abolishing former procedures, the charters “defined more precisely” the policy to be followed by RAC representatives (Tikhmenev 1977: 243; Bancroft 1960: chapter 26). Requirements of RAC management involved “reorganizing [the company] to conform more closely to the modern [European] conditions.” (Tikhmenev 1977: 243). These conditions reflected emerging national responsibilities. Mid-nineteenth-century Europe witnessed a rapid increase in state expenditures and the size of bureaucracies. *Bureaucratic expansion* also meant *bureaucratic specialization* and opened the gates of official preferment to much greater numbers and *far more varied social origins* than up to that time (Hobsbawm 1964: 229; Anderson 1991; Owen 1981; see Fedorova 1973: 157, 210 for the RAC context).

With expansion of RAC services in the early nineteenth century (Black 2004; Fortune 1990; Vinkovetsky 2001) and small Russian population growth during RAC governance (Neunherz 1975), the Alutiiq burgher was educated to perform tasks necessary for managing settlements. RAC Captain Golovin writes that the Alutiiq burgher educated in Russia “must serve the [RAC] for ten years; those educated in the colonies serve for fifteen years . . . When creoles are in [RAC] service, they of course receive wages and living quarters and provisions, just as the Russians do, and their pay is increased according to the quality of their work. . . . Nearly all receive pensions from the company. Everything [the Alutiiq Creole] needs, such as clothing and provisions they can obtain from the RAC warehouses at a set price on the same basis as all RAC service personnel” (Golovin 1979: 18).

Thus, the Alutiiq burgher became proficient without direct Russian supervision. Kiril Khlenikov, a Russian traveler to Kodiak Island during the 1820s, states, “Creoles taught on the spot do their work very well. Among them are students of navigation, who command small vessels; there are bookkeepers . . . who know accounting, and masters of bronze work and copper casting who are probably as good as their masters. Now one can hope to have students of medicine, surgery and navigation, who are already highly praised” (Fedorova 1973: 213; see also Black 2004; Chevigny 1965; Golovin 1989; Lavrischeff 1935; Neunherz 1975; Okladnikova 1987; Oleksa 1992; Pierce 1976). Within ten years of the company’s 1805 edict, Oleksa writes, “two schools at

Sitka were training two hundred native and Creole students, and the first Creole navigators were sailing aboard company ships. In 1825, four Creole boys were studying medicine, anatomy and surgery in Europe” (1992: 134).

An Alaska Native burgher society emerged. Tikhmenev writes that, in 1805, there were 475 employees of the RAC in Alaska (1977). A population census taken in 1841 indicates there were 714 Russians or Europeans of foreign birth, 1,351 Creoles, and 5,417 Indians (Bancroft 1960). Neunherz notes that, while there were 658 Russian employees by 1856, Creole employees numbered 991 in 1833 and had *expanded* to 1,902 by 1856 (1975). Growth of RAC personnel was followed by an increase in requirements of distinctive commodities. Historians note that the quantity and quality of market goods for the Russian colony increased (Black 2004; Gibson 1987), but so also did the *variety* of products desired (Black 2004; Garrett 1979; Gibson 1976; Tikhmenev 1977). In seeking distinction for the colonies, RAC ships, along with other Russian firms trading with Alaska, took advantage of the opening of Shanghai to foreign traders. The first Russian American Company ship to arrive in Shanghai “was the Knyaz Menshikov from Novo-Archangelsk (Alaska), which docked in September 1848” (Sladkovsky 1974: 184; see also Foust 1969).

The particular form of Russian colonization—socially and culturally enlightened habitus through political and economic rights—suggests a third historical shift. This form of Russian citizenship-making resulted also in separate ethnic developments. The RAC Charters identifying Creoles and indigenous peoples as Imperial citizens and subjects, respectively, integrated Alaskans, burgher and non-burgher, into distinct cultural relationships with the RAC and among themselves (Black 1990; Liapunova 1987; Owens 1987).

Consider the arc of social mobility for the Alutiiq burgher. Russian and American visitors to Kodiak during the nineteenth century recognized that “there was no bar to the promotion of these Creoles either in church or state, and many of the most honored and responsible officials . . . met in the territory were Creoles who had been educated in Russia” (Huggins 1981: 25). The Alutiiq burgher Alexander Kashaverov, mentioned earlier, was educated as a ship navigator and rose to the position of Lt. Captain and, finally, appointed commander of the Siberian port of Ayan (Oleksa 1992: 151). His parents were an Alutiiq burgher mother and Russian serf father (Black 2004: 214; see Sherwood 1965: 21 and Dauenhauer 1990: 160 for descriptions of Creole Lukin who the RAC educated and relied upon for geographic exploration).

This generational shift in social position reflects the mobility projects of the Central and Eastern European burgher as well as the

Russian social middle-class categories of *soslovie* (Wirtschaftler 1997, 1994). Norbert Elias writes, for example, that the whole burgher movement was one of upward mobility: Goethe's great-grandfather "was a blacksmith, his grandfather a tailor" (1978: 20). From similar social origins come Herder, Kant, Fichte, and many others of the Bildungs Bürgerthum movement, the intellectually formed middle class. From the status of the Creole burgher receiving an education in St. Petersburg, writes historian Fedorova "came the well known students of Russian America: Andrei Glazunov, Petr Vail'evich Malakhov, Aleksandr Filippovich Kashevarov, Petr Fedorovich Kolmakov . . . and others" (1973: 213).

Alaska Native burgher mobility lies in stark contrast to a description of subsistence wage earners at an ice factory on Woody Island, where, concurrently, the Alutiiq non-burgher "receive about twelve cents a day besides a meal at noon consisting of fish soup and black rye bread. Last, but by no means least in the eyes of the natives, each laborer—in the season for cutting ice—received thrice a day two-thirds of a gill of vodka. They were not permitted to carry this away in a bottle but . . . had to drink it in the presence of the overseer, or headman" (Huggins 1981: 20).

Concerning the Kodiak Island of the nineteenth century, the Alutiiq burgher and Alutiiq non-burgher lived hand-in-hand, but their respective social position and attitude would become distanced. The children of the Alutiiq burgher were "not forced to go out on hunting parties" with the reasoning that such "children are not accustomed to such hunting . . ." (Golovin 1979: 18). Both Russian and American travelers to Kodiak observed that the Alutiiq burgher "assumed a haughty tone with natives [i.e. Alutiiq non-burgher]" and that it was the "Christian judgment" of the burgher that prevented them from making the non-burgher "worship in a separate church or even in a separate part of the church, the 'negro pew'" (Huggins 1981: 25). Citing RAC documents edited by A. I. Andreev, Fedorova writes ". . . the Creole, feeling in himself European blood, considers himself above the Aleut [non-burgher] and does not want to live and work with him. In spite of all efforts by the colonial leadership, the Creoles do not join the fur hunting parties themselves nor send their children out . . ." (Fedorova 1973: 212).

The American traveler Huggins provides a glimpse into the distinctive life of the Alutiiq burgher, and specifically the importance they place on interiors, etiquette, and social form: "nearly every Sunday, as on holidays, the [Alutiiq] *crème de la crème* assembled at the hospitable home of the governor, where every room of which was thrown open" (1981: 11 emphasis in text). In the following sentence, he writes

of a “refreshment room” and “dancing hall”. He stresses also a contrast between the socially formed Alutiiq burgher class and the economically oriented American bourgeoisie, stating: “the Creoles are generous and hospitable, and perhaps as honest as other people, but have little idea of punctuality and fidelity in business appointments as understood by Americans” (Huggins 1981: 11; for contrasting cultural distinctions between bourgeoisie and burgher, see Elias 1978).

Such observations are found repeatedly in late nineteenth-century American travel journals. One American businessman visiting an RAC official states: “before I left him he introduced me to his wife, a very pretty Creole who graciously handed me a cup of good tea which apparently was kept always ready in a kettle (the Russian samovar) on the fire. Unfortunately Mrs. L. spoke only Russian” (Teichman 1963: 182). The traveler refers to the dwelling as “a large apartment furnished in the customary Russian style with a great number of seats and resembling an audience chamber rather than a private room” (180). He refers more generally to them as the “upper class. . . . In short, the people [who] lead a *dolce far niente* [pleasantly idle] existence (185).

Another American writing of his visit to Kodiak in the 1880s states, “Creole girls whom we observe in these settlements are exceedingly handsome. . . . Most of them live in scrupulously clean houses, the floors scrubbed and sanded . . . walls papered and decorated with pictures of saints and other pious subjects; old Russian furniture, chairs, settees, bureaus, and clocks of our own make . . . little curtains over the small windows and big curtains puckered around the beds—everything is usually clean, tidy, and quiet with in the Creoles home” (Elliot 1886: 108–109; see also Hallock 1886: 187). The above author offers also a lengthy description of “Kaniags,” or the non-burgher “who are the natives of this island” and whose “simple lives” are associated with long hunting journeys and bidarkas (skin boats) (Elliot 1886: 109).

As late as 1900, the burgher distinction continues to surprise American travelers, as in one description of the marriage of a “good-looking Creole girl named Archimanditoffra” (Higginson 1908: 198). “The most startling feature of this wedding was of Russian rather than savage origin” (*ibid.*). At the wedding, “beauty and fashion were assembled. The ladies were showily attired in muslin dresses, white satin shoes, silk stockings, and kid gloves; they wore flowers and carried white fans. The ball was opened by the bride and the highest officer present; and quadrille followed waltzes in rapid succession until daylight. The music was excellent. . . . Tea, coffee, chocolate, and champagne were served generously, varied with delicate foods . . . strong liquors and expensive cigars. . . .” Referring to distinctions

between the burgher and non-burgher, the same traveler writes, “at all seasons of the year the tables [of the Creole] . . . were supplied with game, chickens, pork, vegetables, berries, and every luxury obtainable; while the food of the common laborers was, in summer, fresh fish and in winter salt fish” (*ibid.*: 197–198).

Would the Alutiiq burgher have shared the sorrows of their non-burgher neighbors during the devastating epidemics of that period? Within the context of their responsibility to the Russian state monopoly company for which the Alutiiq burgher worked, they would have experienced such critical events through disciplined, repetitious bureaucratic reflection. The documents left behind are evidence of this response, where with the same pen and paper are recorded populations as well as merchandise, epidemics as well as marriages. The Alutiiq burgher was a productive member of the company staff who undertook extraordinary care to provide clear and accurate records for the company and church bureaucracies (Oleksa 1992: 138, 155; Okladnikova 1987).

Jack Goody writes of the intensification in consciousness when moving from an oral based society to a society that privileges the written alphabet, including specific forms of abstraction, universalization, and depersonalization (1986). Whatever the intensities were for the increasingly documentized world of the Alutiiq burgher, the assembled conditions did not correspond to those of their non-burgher neighbors, the Alutiiq whale and seal hunters. These two worlds were universes apart. As nineteenth-century Russian sketches on Alutiiq mammal hunting attest (e.g., kayaks navigating through waves several meters high while hunting animals the size of SUVs), the existential, social, and technological requirements that link the skin kayak and throwing board technique to a successful mode of production (i.e., *reproduction*) do not result in the same forms of habitus as do sitting in chairs, reading official correspondences and exchanging glances with oneself in the mirror.

Such latter forms of habitus did exist in nineteenth-century Russian-Alaska as evidenced in a circa 1880s photograph of the interior of Alaska’s Russian American Company headquarters (the photograph is reprinted in Black 2004: 277). In this depiction of the company’s drawing room, imported European furniture and framed artworks are thoughtfully positioned along with a stand-up mirror strategically placed in the corner to capture and reflect all activity toward the center of the room. The only difference between self-fashioning bureaucratic practice in European Russia and Alaska was that on Kodiak Island the practice of whale hunting lay twenty-five meters outside the company’s drawing room entrance.

Crucially, as evidenced below, the Creole status was marked by patrilineal inheritance. *Creole* refers to the children of Russian men and indigenous Alaskan women (“ . . . each of them should enjoy the lawful rights belonging to his father’s class,” Fedorova 1973: 214; see also Dmytryshyn et al. 1989: 360, 468). Children from a Creole woman married or joined together with a non-Creole Alutiiq man were not considered members of the Alutiiq burgher estate by the Russian government, but as members of the Alutiiq fathers’ group. Legally, children of a Creole male in all unions retained their fathers’ privileged burgher status (“Most Creole women married Russians and Creoles,” in Fedorova: 1973: 209).

The price of civilization

In 1867, Imperial Russia transferred sovereignty of Alaska to the United States. The structure of social hierarchy on Kodiak Island after the transfer is unique. The Alutiiq burgher status during this transfer provides insight into an early twentieth-century political distinction between the Alutiiq elite and non-elite. As with the Russian colonial period, United States political categories articulate the social and cultural forms of capital that became available to the Alutiiq.

The post-1867 structure of hierarchy on Kodiak Island also provides a context for understanding the kind of Alutiiq heritage that emerged during the 1970s. Descendants of the Alutiiq burgher obtained United States citizenship and were raised during the second quarter of the twentieth century. They became the first generation of Alutiiq leaders involved in the Alaska Native land claims movement of the 1960s and served also as architects of the 1970s Alutiiq heritage work (Mason 1996, 2002, 2010).

The effects produced by the 1867 Treaty of Purchase, the transfer document of Alaska from Russia to the United States, reflect a particular mode of cultural citizenship. According to law historian David Case, in 1867, the meanings of two words, *civilization* and *citizenship*, were synonymous under United States naturalization law (1984: 52). These words were critical for determining how the Alutiiq burgher would be defined in the new United States territory. Case argues that Article III of the 1867 Treaty distinguished between “uncivilized tribes” and the other “inhabitants of the ceded territory” (58) Alutiiq categorized under the heading “inhabitants . . . ” would be “admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages and immunities of citizens of the United States,” including “the free enjoyment of their liberty, property and religion.” These same rights, however, were

denied to the Alutiiq who become identified as “uncivilized tribes” (Case 1984: 52–58).

Who then became identified as *inhabitants*? Or rather, what were the criteria the United States used for defining *civilization*? While nearly all Alaska Natives “appeared as uncivilized tribes,” Case writes that the Alaska territorial court remained “undecided” and invented its own categories: “civilized” and “uncivilized”. Case states that, as interpreted by one Alaska court, the distinction between *civilized* and *uncivilized*, “was derived from the Russian categorization of Alaska Natives under the last Russian-American Company charter. The charter specifically defined the relationship the Company was to have with the inhabitants” (1984: 58). This “relationship” differed between those Alutiiq whom the Russians categorized as “dependent” and those who were “independent.”

If granting United States citizenship relied upon identifying who was *civilized* and the Alaska court distinguished *civilized* from *uncivilized* through reference to the Russian state definition of *dependent* and *independent*, then the remaining question is: what did *dependent* and *independent* mean? That is, to whom did these terms refer? According to Case’s own definition, *dependent* people were those who were “perhaps married to Russian men or women. They were considered to be subjects of the Russian czar and entitled to all the rights of a Russian citizen . . . The intent of the Russian-American Treaty was to admit those entitled to Russian citizenship also to U.S. citizenship” (1984: 58). Thus, the Russian Charter, which defined the Creole Alutiiq burgher status as dependent, provided a pathway into full citizenship and civilized status under the United States naturalization law.

In post-1867 Alaska, the *civilized/uncivilized* distinction had a profound effect in the area of civil rights and entitlement to education. Prior to the Citizenship Act of 1924, only United States citizens (under the Nelson Act) could be educated in “white” territorial schools. Attendance at these schools was permitted for “children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life.” In addition, in accordance with these laws, the Alaska court required Alaska’s *civilized* citizens of mixed blood to abandon their tribal relations as “the price of being ‘civilized’” (Case 1984: 60).

The problems for an Alutiiq burgher woman who joined with a non-burgher Alutiiq man must have become particularly acute. She would obtain United States citizenship because her father was burgher. Yet, her children, inheriting the status of their non-burgher father, would be denied citizenship and individuality and be collectivized into the status of uncivilized tribes.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated two transformations of status-capital in the modern history of the Alutiiq people. The Alutiiq noble of the eighteenth century transformed into the nineteenth-century privileged status of the Alutiiq burgher, who became articulated into the United States as a civilized citizen subject with political, social, and cultural rights, including education in the racially segregated territorial schools. This transformation developed initially as political rights (Russian citizenship) emerging as a form of bureaucratic expansion, but became understood soon after as distinct social and cultural rights that further developed ethnic division in the region.

If Kodiak at contact was rank stratified and authority exercised by a noble class, this society's articulation with the Russian cultural-political order created a new kind of local structural inequality. Descendants of the local elite moved into positions of political-bureaucratic privilege and intellectual authority as members of a burgher estate. What developed is an example of the durability of an Alaska Native ruling elite on Kodiak by means of the transformation of prestige. That is, children of a traditional Alutiiq noble class transformed their originary social and existential authority into new forms of political and cultural capital. Rank order was dismantled. Local hierarchy was maintained by replacement of the noble class with new forms of authority through the logic of class stratification. This was a critical shift. What developed was a change in the consciousness of an Alutiiq elite from a concern with indigenous forms of conspicuous consumption intended as a marker of elite status (e.g., the status honor ritual of the potlatch) to the possession of a modern attitude. The latter stresses personal maturity and reason in the form of utility and restraint. In sum, while the Alutiiq retain their elite status, social reproduction of elite consciousness has radically shifted.

Pierre Bourdieu notes that a shift from authority exercised by a traditional pre-capitalist elite class to a titular bureaucratic estate represents a transformation in the exercise of power—a shift from “symbolic” to “overt” domination (1990: 122–134). It reflects a change in the *objectification* of capital (see also Sahlins 1960). Literacy enables the accumulation in objectified form of cultural resources inherited from the past. Capital is only given its full realization with the appearance of an educational system, which awards qualifications by “durably consecrating” their positions in the structure of the distribution of power (Bourdieu 1990: 125).

By contrast, for pre-capitalist modes of domination, relations of power are made, unmade, and remade through personal interactions

that rely on visible (conspicuous) expenditures of time, energy, and redistribution. This is necessary to secure personal symbolic recognition (e.g., Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* 1990). However, educational institutionalization makes it possible to dispense with demonstration, or at least to cease depending on it completely in order to secure the belief and obedience of others. As Bourdieu writes, "educational qualifications, like money, have a fixed value which being guaranteed by law, is freed from local limitations and temporal fluctuations" (1990: 132). Legitimized through the authority of the European educational system and Russian state legal apparatus, the Alutiiq burgher status was endowed with a permanence and opacity that lay beyond the reach of individual consciousness.

Thus, with their entry into history, the Alutiiq burgher participated collectively as agents in acts of enlightenment that were accomplished personally. As stated in the 1821 Charter, the Creole Alutiiq "distinguish themselves by their zeal" (Black 2004: 214). The burgher is therefore distinct from the nobility because it is "sober and utilitarian, while the noble is obliged to engage in 'conspicuous consumption' to maintain status honor" (Eyal et al. 1998: 58). On the discursive level, there is little doubt that their consciousness was that of a modern attitude. Evidence of this is the emphasis placed on personal accomplishment as opposed to the unproductive labor of the nobility. After the 1821 Imperial Charter, the Alutiiq burgher begins to appear in the historical record as navigator, shipbuilder, doctor, artist, clergy. As such, self-legitimation consists primarily of intellectual, scientific, and artistic achievement. Counterpose this to the noble class, who accomplish nothing in the sense in which others do, but for whom the shaping of their distinguished and distinctive behavior is central to self-image and self-justification.

Notes

Received 10 August 2008; accepted 8 March 2010.

I thank Maria Stoilkova and Shihayah Young whose assistance in revising this manuscript was invaluable. This article is based on my lectures at the Department of Social Anthropology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, on February 26, 2007; the Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska at Fairbanks, on February 18, 2005; the Department of Cultural and Social History, University of Greenland, on October 12, 2004; and the Department of Eskimology and Arctic Studies, University of Copenhagen, on October 8, 2004. I thank my hosts on these occasions for their invitations, hospitality, and comments upon the arguments presented. I thank also three anonymous reviewers for their detailed comments.

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1. The disappearance of the noble suggests a shift in the construction of anthropological knowledge at the ethnographic level, which, during the 1960s, began favoring demographic studies initiated by American anthropologist William Laughlin and may have also been influenced by the crisis conditions of the 1964 tidal wave (see Davis 1970, 1971, for the sociocultural effects of the 1964 earthquake. On Laughlin's intervention, see *Arctic Anthropology* 1966, 3(2): 1–240 in particular, the work of his student Kenneth Taylor in that volume; for an overview of Laughlin's contribution to the field, see Frohlich et al. 2002).

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