THE ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
AMONG FIVE PACIFIC ESKIMO VILLAGES

by

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A natural disaster provides an opportunity to study the response of existing institutions to intense social stresses. Spontaneous and rapid internal social change often occurs as significant community relationships cope with challenges during and after a disaster. Such is the case with the Russian Orthodox Church in five Pacific Eskimo villages during and following the March 27, 1964, Alaskan Earthquake.

The five communities investigated in this study are Chenega, Kaguyak, Old Harbor, Afognak and Ouzinkie. All are located along the relatively warm North Pacific Coast, well south of the frozen winter coast typical of other areas occupied by Alaskan Eskimo. The villages are small, ranging in size from 36 persons in Kaguyak and 70 in Chenega to about 200 persons in Old Harbor, Ouzinkie and Afognak.

Chenega was located on one of many islands along the Western shores of Prince William Sound, approximately 80 miles southeast of Anchorage, Alaska. It was one of the nearest villages to the earthquake’s epicenter. After the disaster only two buildings remained standing, and the village was moved to the eastern side of Prince William Sound at the site to Tatilek.

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Kaguyak and Old Harbor are situated on the southeastern coast of Kodiak Island; Afognak and Ouzinkie are on islands near the north shore of Kodiak Island. Kaguyak, like Chenega, was relocated at the site of another village, Ahklok. Afognak relocated at a new site near the old village. Old Harbor was also destroyed, but rebuilt in the former site. Although the cannery at Ouzinkie was destroyed, the rest of the community was relatively undamaged and they have remained in the same location.

The villages represent two Pacific Eskimo groups: The Koniahq of Kodiak and Afognak Islands, and the Chugachmiut of Prince William Sound. Linguistic and archeological studies indicate these people migrated relatively recently from the mainland of southwestern Alaska. Dumond's reconstruction of archeological sequences in the Naknek drainage estimates the time of this move about 1200 to 1300 A.D. (Dumond, 1965). The area was occupied earlier by a yet unidentified group which was either replaced or dominated by these new people.

Although the linguistic and cultural ties are with the Eskimo of the Yupik-speaking branch of Eskimo, the people in all five villages consider themselves "Aleut." Technically, the term Aleut refers only to inhabitants of the Aleutian Islands in the area beginning about Point Moller on the Alaska Peninsula and extending 1200 miles westward along the chain. These "true" Aleuts represent a much earlier branching of the Eskaleutian language and culture, having migrated about 4000 to 6000 years ago, and are distinct in many other ways from the Pacific Eskimo (Dumond, 1965).

When the Russians first arrived in the Kodiak area in the 18th Century, the
only "true" Aleuts among the Pacific Eskimo were either slaves or hostages. Yet for some unknown reason the people of this area call themselves "Aleuts" and consider "Eskimo" somewhat inferior. For the sake of technical consistency, and despite the preference of the local cultures, they will be referred to as Eskimo in this paper.

The communities are relatively homogenous culturally. They share an orientation to the sea which is reflected in their seasonal fishing economy. Fishing is occasionally supplemented by land hunting and trapping. They are close-knit and self-sufficient, except for an economic dependency on the area canneries. Each community has varying degrees of Caucasian genetic influences, primarily from Russian and Scandinavian sources. Typical Eskimo social patterns persisting in the villages include informal village leadership, frequent adoption of children, and intense kinship ties. Widespread utilization of modern material culture occurs in all villages. Items such as radios, washing machines, deepfreezers, refrigerators, and light plants are common. In general, the people are not living in poverty, although material affluence depends on the success of the fishing season.

The Russian Church

One of the most lasting influences of the Russian period in Alaska (1763 - 1867) was the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church. The church had a mission in Siberia by the late 16th Century, and an Orthodox community in Peking by the 17th Century. Thus, when the Russian merchants
began pushing into Alaska in the 18th Century, Orthodoxy had long been established along the East Coast of the Pacific.

A surge of missionary zeal in the courts of Peter the Great and Czarina Catherine encouraged the early establishment of missions in Alaska. The Church was helped financially by merchants who believed they would obtain more money from the Russian rulers if they coupled their economic endeavors with activities done in the name of the Church. The strategy worked and considerable monies were sent to Alaska with the express design of Christianizing the natives.

In 1794 the first eight priests arrived in Kodiak and began work. By 1796 one of them, Ioassaf, reported he had baptized 6,740 persons on Kodiak and adjacent islands (Okun 1951:210). By the time of transfer to the United States in 1867, the whole Alaskan area in Russian control was under the missionary jurisdiction of an Orthodox Bishop at Sitka. The church claimed 25,000 converts. Ninety-six churches had been built, all of which are still listed in the Russian Orthodox Yearbook, though many of the villages are now abandoned.

The Russian Orthodox Church has retained its strength in the present time in many native Alaskan villages. The Bishop of Alaska claims Orthodox membership in Alaska is about 10,000, which is about one-fourth the native population. In addition to the Bishop, fifteen priests and forty lay readers serve the areas of the Aleutians, Cook Inlet, the Kuskokwim River, and the North Pacific Coast, including the villages of this study. Each of the communities in this study has at least one lay reader. One
village, Ouzinkie, has a monk who has served in the area since he came from Russia in 1917, but this is the only community which has the services of a priest. The other villages depend on local lay leadership to conduct their church services. An annual visit from a priest or the Bishop supports this leadership.

In the five villages with which this study is concerned, a prominent landmark is the church building. The structure is well cared for and often has been constructed on land slightly higher than the rest of the community. Each church has at least 60 ikons. Chenega reportedly had over 100 ikons. Some of these holy pictures have been purchased recently; but many are old, often dating from the Russian period.

Services are held regularly Saturday night and Sunday morning; Sunday afternoon services occasionally are held. Every village has its own saint's day which is a holiday when special services are conducted. Major ceremonies occur at Christmas and Easter. Christmas is characterized by "Starring," that is, taking a home-made star to each house, singing, and being treated to food and drink. Masking and masquerading, particularly by young men, occurs after Christmas. Lent is carefully observed. Meat, dairy products, alcohol, dancing, and movies are restricted during this period. Many services are held. During Easter, the church's dearest ikon, the plastineek, a picture of Christ in a tomb, is carefully uncovered and carried around the outside of the church three times; the congregation follows, singing and carrying candles. The ikon is then returned to be covered again for another year.
In addition to religious ritual, other aspects of village life, such as language, economics, social activities, kinship, and political leadership are influenced by the church. The Russian language is used in all church services. In Kaguyak, a person said they used English only when the new priest from Kodiak came, because "he don't understand Russian so good."

Many Russian words have been incorporated into everyday speech, which also includes English and Yupik Eskimo.

Certain economic aspects of the community are affected by the presence of the church. Donations after fishing season are expected; and the names and amounts posted for all to see. In one community, a policy was arranged every fishing season with the local cannery to withhold from each check a certain amount for the church. However, the practice was discontinued and now the contributions are volunteered. Still, the church is sustained not by outside financial aid, but by local funds, and it is the only institution which functions in this manner. If any other institution is present, such as a school, or another church, it is supported from outside the community.

Social activities have a church referent. The major social events of the year coincide with church ceremonies, particularly Christmas and Easter. With the exception of a traditional "toot" in town after fishing season, the times for "parties," that is drinking bouts, occur in reference to the church calendar -- after church holidays, during masking, and after Easter. The church also regulates times for not drinking: Saturday, Sunday and during Lent.
Kinship also is influenced by the church. Certain relationships are either created or reinforced by the church's godparent tradition. When a person is baptized, his appointed godparent is often a relative, particularly an uncle or aunt. But if the godparent is not a relative, then the new association serves to tie non-relatives within a classificatory kinship system. In a number of cases, godparents have adopted a godchild, which follows, on the one hand, the old Eskimo custom of adoption (see Lantis, 1960) and the new religion on the other hand. Finally, visiting is often dominated by relatives, or by persons tied by a god-parent relationship.

The only village-wide activities are church-related activities. As one woman said when asked about social activities, "Church is mostly what we do." Even in the three villages, Old Harbor, Ouzinkie and Afognak, where a competing Protestant mission was gaining support before the earthquake, the Russian holidays were shared by all the native community. No other institution touched as many people as deeply, consistently, and thoroughly as the Russian Church.

Although the church is dominant in each of the communities, variations in the intensity of these relationships exist. Before the earthquake, the most remote and isolated communities were the most conservative. Those with the longest period of intensive contact with Protestant missionaries appeared to be the most disorganized. If a continuum were to be constructed with reference to intensity of church pervasiveness, the following arrangement would result (beginning with the most conservative Russian Orthodox community): Chenega, Kaguyak, Old Harbor, Afognak and
Ouzinkie. Interestingly, if a continuum were to be constructed on the basis of "acculturation" or "modernization" of these five villages, the same arrangement would be found, beginning with Chenega as the most traditional and extending to Ouzinkie as the most modern. Physical isolation may also play an important part in this continuum. Chenega is the most distant from a major population center and Ouzinkie is the closest village to a city.

**Pre-disaster**

Let us now turn to a reconstruction of the pre-disaster relationships within each village.

The most remote and most conservative community was Chenega -- or "Intamatiya," meaning "under the mountain" (Birket Smith, 1953). Chenega and Tatitlek were the two Chugachmiut villages of the Prince William Sound area. Of the two, Chenega, the ceremonial center, was located on a strip of land just above a fine sheltered beach. Only about 70 people lived in the community at the time of the earthquake. March was a quiet time of year. Economic activities in the spring were limited to occasional seal hunting, fishing, and clam digging. Social activities mainly involved visiting. It was here the one woman said: "Church is mostly what we do." The time was Lent, a very sacred time; many church services were being held.

Activities in Kaguyak, the small village on southern Kodiak, were about the same. But Kaguyak was particularly busy with the church. For
several years money had been contributed after fishing season for building materials for a new church. In the Spring of 1964, the church was nearly finished, complete with two new flags and a special new ikon for Easter. In this community, 26 of the 36 persons were directly related to one Russian ancestor. Eight other residents were married to his descendants and the three remaining persons were related to people who had married into the community. Kaguyak was clearly dominated by the lay reader who was the grandson of the original Russian settler.

Unlike the conservative villages of Chenega and Kaguyak, the other three villages were larger, more diverse, and "sophisticated." Furthermore, Old Harbor, Afognak and Ouzinkie shared what they considered a "missionary problem."

Old Harbor, on the southern shore of Kodiak Island, was a growing village. This community represents the middle of our continuum. One of the attractions of the village was the Russian Church holidays, but there also was the novelty of a store, a movie house, and a pool hall. Most people were conservative Russian Orthodox; but, they had been exposed to intensive contact with a Protestant missionary for a period of seven years. As a result, some confusion, disagreement, and tension had developed.

Those members of the Russian Orthodox church who attended the Protestant services found fault with the Russian Church's failure to "read the Bible." Actually, the Bible was read, but only during services and only in Russian, which few villagers could completely understand. Also,
the Protestants were opposed to kissing ikons and crosses, an important part of Russian Orthodox ritual. Furthermore, the Protestant sect was committed to a position condemning dancing and drinking at any time. The Russian Church rejected dancing and drinking only on Saturday nights and Sunday and during Lent.

The Russian Orthodox villagers were upset by the way children treated the Sunday School papers given out by the missionary. Pictures of Jesus and other holy people were portrayed on these papers. In the Russian Church children had learned to respect pictures of holy figures. The Sunday School papers of the missionary church were thrown away and even stamped into the mud. Allowing this was interpreted as irreligious and disrespectful behavior by the leaders of the Russian Church.

With the intensive first-hand contact of these contrasting sets of doctrines and practices, conflict developed and many individuals became unsure of the right position. As one of the Protestant villagers said, "They were all mixed up; they didn't know what really to believe." The conflict was particularly upsetting to one strong Russian Orthodox member who became the chief after the earthquake. He had grown up in another community and had watched conflict and disorganization there which he attributed to the intrusion of the Protestant church. Other factors may have been involved, but his own personal theory about what happens when a missionary group comes in was this:

"You know some people like around here, they have nothing to do. Absolutely nothing to do in a small town. They like to enjoy themselves in a bottle of beer, smoke cigarettes
and they love to dance 'cause there's nothing else to do. And this church (missionary) absolutely frowns on it -- it's completely out. So the children that turn to this new religion in their younger stages of life when they get to that age when they want to have fun and dances, this religion is against it. So, they give up this religion so they can go to dancing and stuff. And they heard so much preaching against the old-fashioned stuff in our church, they don't go back (to that either). They are more or less in between. They become atheists. And then, when people drink and they're atheists, you get a mean bunch of characters. And they want to get mad at you. They'll throw you clean overboard, before. A good Christian believer might get mad and give you a little black eye or something, but that's as far as they'll go. But (those others -- atheists) throw the hex at you. That's what happened in Ouzinkie. They had some pretty mean characters there. It started here (in Old Harbor)."

More upsetting to Old Harbor than the contrasting doctrines was the way personal relationships were affected by the presence of the other religion. Formerly, there had been no easily defined factions in Old Harbor, but shortly before the earthquake, two sides had clearly developed: those who attended only the Russian Orthodox Church and those who attended both the Russian Church and the Missionary Chapel; or, in the case of a few individuals, those who attended only the Missionary Chapel. Although only three families regularly attended the Missionary Chapel, many other families related to these three were deeply involved in the new source of conflict.

In contrast to the active factions of Old Harbor, the religious divisions in the two other communities were less open. Afognak was a town of successful fishermen, distinguishable from the other communities by the presence of several permanent white families and by cars and a few miles of road. Afognak, like Old Harbor, had factions but they were less
active. The sides polarized around two large families and may actually have predated Protestant influence. As part of the response to the presence of missionaries, one faction had become "strictly" Russian Orthodox, led by the lay reader and his family, while some members of the other side had joined ranks with the Protestant church. This development apparently served to intensify an old feud; the two sides co-existed, but not always peacefully.

Ouzinkie, located on Spruce Island, was relatively prosperous economically, though highly disorganized. Of the five villages, only Ouzinkie had a local cannery and the opportunity for year-round employment. Ouzinkie also had a Baptist Mission, a Russian Orthodox priest, a store run by the cannery company, and a number of large, privately-owned boats. Recently some of the men had invested in crab gear and had a regular income from salmon fishing in the summer and crab fishing in the winter.

A fundamentalist sect, the same one existing in Old Harbor and Afognak, had been established there in the 1930's when an orphanage was built in the community. After the orphanage was moved to Kodiak, the building was remodeled into a chapel and living quarters for missionaries. For many years the villagers resisted the Mission, but by the time of the earthquake, the sources of conflict had been partially resolved into a relatively peaceful coexistence. No overt hostilities were shown, although the village was informally divided into two areas: the Baptist side and the Russian Orthodox. According to the Russian Orthodox side, the Baptist side drank the most. In comparison with the
other four communities, the Russian Orthodox Church appeared to be weakest and the total community most disorganized at Ouzinkie, despite the fact they were the only village with a monk.

**Day of the Earthquake**

The villages have been placed on a continuum with respect to the pervasiveness of their church relationships. On the one hand, Chenega and Kaguyak were small communities, unified by their Church, and unaffected by an outside religion. On the other hand, Ouzinkie and Afognak had long contact with Protestant missionaries and were co-existing with them. Old Harbor was caught in the middle. Having had a strong Russian Orthodox Church and having felt proud of its traditions, the village perhaps was experiencing a type of conflict which Afognak and Ouzinkie had resolved many years ago, at the time of their first intensive contact with Protestantism. At least Afognak and Ouzinkie had resolved the problem; Old Harbor had not.

Let us now turn to the happenings on the day of the Great "Ahaluk" and seismic waves.

At Chenega on the day of the earthquake, a number of men went hunting. Others were playing pool in the smoke house, which reportedly belonged to the church. The women were busy working in their homes and visiting. Some people in Chenega had respect for what may be called "superstitions." A number reported that on the day of the earthquake things had not been just right. One older man felt an earthquake early in the
morning. In his house two scarfs, a black one and a red one, were hanging over an ironing board. He reported to his wife that during the morning of the earthquake day only one, the black scarf, was swinging; the red one was not, a bad omen. A number of other persons reported that they had premonitions that something was going to happen.

One young woman was visited by an elderly friend, the wife of the man who saw the black scarf swing ominously. The younger woman reported:

"She was talking to me. She says that she feel there's something going to happen. You know her and (her husband) stay by themselves quite a bit. And that kind of made me wondering, too. That's why I never want her to come over. Seems like whatever she says, seem like it come true. Something about the way she said, like something was going to happen. She said there was too much drinking going on."

The wife of a man who later became a lay deacon, stated that she "felt blue all day," and she reported that others did too.

When the earthquake began at Chenega, people opened the doors to their homes, turned off their oil stoves, and began to round up their children. Then many of the families began to go toward the church:

"We started over (toward) the main part of the village, heading for the church, where there was more people.... Then we looked and there wasn't any more houses left. Nothing but debris and the tide was starting to run out."

The first seismic wave struck Chenega before the ground had stopped shaking. The water caught and carried out 23 of the 76 residents, their homes, and their church.
Of the survivors, several who were near the Church in the center of the village referred to seeing the church crack, bow and come down. No other building was mentioned. One person, watching from a higher point south of the village, said:

"By the time the third one (wave) came up and I seen the church going down on the other side of the village, I told (my wife), I said, 'I guess that's the end. We'll all go now.' So we just keep going up the hill."

On the hill back of the former village the survivors remained safely throughout the night. When referring to people who were lost, people described their house in relation to the church, such as "they lived just a little below the church."

No one mentioned saving any of their own belongings, but several mentioned that a Holy Bible and cross of the Church had been found the next day.

Several people said if the church had stood they would have stayed in Chenega; but, since it was gone, they were willing to be evacuated to Cordova.

At Tatitlek, the only other Eskimo village in Prince William Sound, some people reported they heard the church bell ringing. As in Chenega, people started almost immediately moving toward their church. But Tatitlek, unlike Chenega, was located high enough to be spared the destructive seismic waves. The villagers held a service in their church within the first ten minutes after the earthquake, "while the walls were still shaking."
Three hundred miles away on Kodiak Island, most of the adult men of Kaguyak had worked all day on the new church. Immediately after the earthquake, one of their first concerns was the new building. Nearly all the men gathered there to check the damages and to begin cleaning. Two of the men stayed and worked about twenty minutes. Meanwhile, the first seismic wave was travelling rapidly up Kaguyak Bay. The two men looked out a church window just in time to see the first surge of water coming over the bank. They ran to join the other villagers who were already scrambling for the small hill back of the village. The first wave did no damage. One man sent word via radio to Old Harbor to watch for high water. From there, apparently, news of the tidal wave action spread across Kodiak and Afognak Islands.

After the first hurried trip to the hill, the people of Kaguyak made many trips back to the village for such items as diapers, baby bottles, milk, food, sleeping bags, tents, and camp stoves. Even a 300-pound transmitter was carried up the hill so the people would be able to maintain contact with other communities and with ships throughout the night. Also, they took with them private icons and the lay reader made a special trip to the church for a particular Bible.

After the second wave, one of the young men was sent across the village to the far hillside to check on a geologist and his wife. Flares were seen from that direction and the villagers were concerned. The young man ran through the village, but before continuing his trip, he stopped at the church for a prayer.
After the third wave, four young men went down the hill in an attempt to locate and secure two dories which they thought they might need for evacuation to nearby crab boats. While they were in the village, standing by a dory and a skiff, the fourth and largest wave swept through the village. The men scrambled into the boats, pulled in the geologist and his wife, and the villager who had been persuaded to guide them back to the village. The wave picked up the boats and shot them across the lake in back of the village. Houses were pulled up and drifted into the lake. The villagers on the hill watched the tragedy. The first building to go was their new church. This, perhaps more than anything up to that point, upset the people:

"When I see that church, I was crying all over the place. After I had worked with it a year and a half. Pictures inside just ready, nice and clean inside. And the wave took it away from us. Nothing left in that village. Everything all gone."

Actually, three houses were left standing; but with the church gone, the soul of the village was gone.

At the point when the wave lifted the church and moved it temporarily to the base of the hill where the people stood watching, the youngest daughter of the lay reader asked her father to have a service:

"We are Russian Orthodox and you know we do that. It was important we have one. We had a big holy picture and I told my father to have service. We had holy pictures. We set them in the front. We sat down. We were praying for it not to reach us. Not to come higher and we were praying to take it easy. To people, us sinners that never listen. We pray to God to forgive us, that we never listen. And when we start praying, we kiss the holy picture. We sang. Our hearts
were hurt, but we sang as loud as we could. Just like, you know, it filled our hearts when we sang. We cry inside and we were still singing. That was when we see the wave go back. You should have seen those waves go back when we start singing! Shooosh! Just big noise. Big wave, it went out from the lake and from the land. When it went back it took our houses along, too."

Three men were lost. Kaguyak, "number one place" in the lives of its residents, was gone.

In nearby Old Harbor, the recently developed factions between the Missionary Chapel and the Russian Orthodox intensified in the period before the earthquake. In fact, during Protestant Holy Week, just before the earthquake, ill feelings had risen to a peak. Two additional Protestant missionaries had arrived to hold special services. Rumors suggested that a certain family was going to be formally baptized into the Church on "American" Good Friday.

The day before the earthquake, the chief of the village had a verbal fight with the elderly lay reader of the Russian Church. Apparently, children had been throwing rocks at the Protestant Chapel. The chief, who had been attending the services, felt obliged to do something about it. In the encounter with the lay reader, he threatened to call the state patrolman, a drastic step for anyone in a village to even suggest. Thus, on the one hand, the chief was angry that parents were allowing their children to throw rocks at the Chapel; and, on the other hand, the lay reader, who had perhaps more control over this behavior than the chief, was not about to do anything about it. The attendance in his church was threatened. The lay reader said "we might as well close the doors to our Church," if the
missionaries are allowed to stay. But the chief maintained Old Harbor could have two churches. Tension such as this pervaded the community.

On the day of the earthquake one young woman who had been faithfully attending the Protestant services all week, spent the day on the second floor of her modern home, reading her Bible, feeling discouraged. In her words:

"I just feel real bad. I just can't explain those feelings. ... See I'm a Christian, a converted Christian. We just knew something was bound to happen with the way things were going on in the village. There was just so much hatred for one another. Just people couldn't get along with one another. See, we have a missionary down there. Most of the people were all against her, saying that she was teaching the wrong religion. So we just kept on saying 'this can't go on.' It's been building up for years and this is the worst it was ever! We weren't really surprised when it (the earthquake) happened."

The village had developed into an unhappy, tense community when the rumbling earthquake began.

Soon after the earthquake, one of the women who had been attending the missionary services was approached by a brother: "He said that we were the cause of it." Then her sister came over:

"And she, too, thought it was because I had turned away from the Russian Church (and) had caused it. And I told her, 'No, it isn't that that caused the quake. You should think of the children that have been throwing rocks at the hut, the chapel. We had services there all during Easter Week, you know, and many of the children would throw rocks at the chapel. And I told her that. I was putting it back to her that she was not a saint herself."

Later that evening, up on the hill back of what was left of the village, this woman was approached by her brother-in-law.
"He blamed us, you know. He was one of the ones that blamed us for that earthquake. He was quite scared himself, I think. He'd go down and look at the water and when it would start to come up, he'd come back and tell the children, or anybody, that 'You should not have gone to missionaries! You are making the water come up!' He'd tell them like that."

Another young woman who had been attending the missionary services was also accused. She was approached by a villager who said:

"I wonder who made this big mistake ... I knew she meant me."

Perhaps one reason blame was so readily placed on those attending missionary services was because villagers recalled that a small earthquake occurred on the night a former lay reader turned away from his Russian Orthodoxy and joined the new religion. This happened about a year before the 1964 earthquake. Since the 1964 earthquake occurred on the day when it was rumored a family was going to join the new church, people easily associated the two events.

Significant in the subsequent events at Old Harbor was the fact that the Russian church withstood all four seismic waves. This was a major topic of conversation during the long night on the mountain side after the houses were washed out. Some later reported only the church remained. Actually, the school house and the missionary's home also remained, but few mentioned this fact. If anything, an informant would add that the missionary's chapel was gone. Some villagers consider the fact the Russian church was not washed away, a miracle. They report three feet of water pushed up against its side, yet not a drop of water was on the floor and not an ikon fell from the walls.
To the North of Old Harbor and Kaguyak in the village of Afognak, the movie "King of Kings" was to be shown Good Friday evening. A new community hall had just been built, and a projector was being purchased by the village. A white man had started movies and dances on Saturday night, which, as already noted, was a night of abstention for the Russian Orthodox. Also, the time was Lent and movies and dances were taboo. Yet many people in this village had been attending the dances on Saturday night and now, on Protestant Good Friday, they were preparing to go to the movie. Some were even on their way when the earthquake began.

The immediate response was similar to each of the other communities: open the doors, turn off the stove, check on the children, get out of the house, and watch the tides. Concern was shown for the church. The lay reader instructed his eldest son to check on the building. When he reached the church, he was amazed to find that no oil had been spilled from the altar vessels and only one old icon had fallen. Soon other people began to gather by the church, "to watch the tides," they said. When word was received by radio that high water could be expected, most people moved from the beach to the lay reader's house which was located on higher ground than the rest of the village. A few families with cars drove to a sawmill several miles away and then used the logging roads to gain altitude. But the lay reader's house became the major center of activity throughout the night. Most of the people camped on the mountain above, but someone was always at this house making coffee, listening to the radio, and checking on the general situation. Even three white families congregated at the lay
reader's home before the highest waters came.

One native man in his fifties wrote a narrative he calls "The Strangest Attractions God Given, but We Don't Understand." In this he tells of watching the tide recede until the bay was dry and then return to rush through the village: "Man oh! Man. After that the next one came up pretty fast and that's the one showed us what God can do." He, like people in all the affected villages, took his "traveling Holy picture" with him up on the hill.

The church in Afognak, like the church in Old Harbor, withstood the seismic wave unusually well. Houses near the church were washed off their foundations and pushed into the trees, but the church held. Some water came in and the floor was slightly damaged; but, many individuals expressed surprise that the structure held together so well. The day following the earthquake, the lay reader and his wife went to the church to pick up the church money "that was all over the floor." No services were held until April 6, which was a special village holiday.

Unlike Chenega, Kaguyak and Old Harbor, when interviewed the people of Afognak did not constantly and spontaneously refer to their church, nor did they blame the missionaries for the disaster. But one woman is reported to have said: "The reason that we are having the earthquake is because it was Good Friday and they were showing a movie and God was mad."

At Ouzinkie, the local cannery had closed a few days before the earthquake and the post-cannery-season drinking had begun. In spite of
this, the Protestant mission had a large attendance for their 2 p.m. Good Friday service.

The community appeared prepared to celebrate two Easters, as they had for a number of years. Not only had the villagers become accustomed to the presence of the missionaries and their various services, but also the missionaries had accepted some of the Russian customs of the village. At the time of the earthquake, the missionary family was decorating "kolache," a Russian Easter bread, which suggests their acceptance of Russian Orthodox influence. Similarly, the rest of the community generally recognized and accepted the presence of the second religion.

In this community, the only one with a resident priest, people responded to the earthquake by checking the tides and saving their boats. Unlike the other communities, no one went to check on the church and no one helped clean up the mess. The monk worked alone.

That night most people went either to the lay reader's house on the hill just above the church or farther up the mountain. Fourteen of the villagers from the Protestant part of the village spent the first night in the Protestant mission.

At one point the priest and one of the village men went into one of the homes to try to save money which had been left in a drawer. While they were searching for the cash, a seismic wave came in, bringing water first to their waists and then higher. The monk first climbed a chair and then finally the kitchen table, saying "good-by to Russia" and his friends; "I'm already prayed and tell good-bye," he said. But the water receded and they escaped.
Evidence of the continuation of Russian Orthodox influence in some segments of Ouzinkie is found in the statement of one older woman who claimed that her holy pictures protected her home:

"When Father left this house, he told me 'your house is always under protection.' Seems like it is. It seems like it is, since it was blessed and had St. Nicholas' holy picture in it."

Russian Orthodox services were resumed on Saturday night, the day after the earthquake, but the old monk had to use his books for he had forgotten the words to the services.

The mission had a well-attended Protestant Easter Sunrise Service on Sunday morning, but just after Easter breakfast a rumor reached Ouzinkie that a 90-foot wave was expected. Everyone rushed to the mountain, including those who had stayed the first night at the Baptist mission.

Thus, in each of the villages the response to the disaster had some common elements: the sequential pattern of opening doors, turning off oil stoves, picking up children and getting out of the house was widespread. In all the villages people moved to higher ground and among the items taken with them were their holy pictures. Yet there was considerable variation in relation to concern for the church. Both Chenega and Kaguyak lost their churches, and people in both communities felt their village was gone without the church; they were willing to be evacuated. In Old Harbor and Afognak some reference to the church surviving the waves was made, but there was a subtle difference: in Old Harbor it was regarded much more openly as a possible "miracle"; in Afognak, people talked more of it being
"interesting" or "amazing." In Ouzinkie, the one community with a priest and with the longest intensive contact with missionaries, the least amount of concern was expressed for the church building itself.

**Explanations for the Disaster**

Many explanations or "causes" for the earthquake were given. Recurrent themes include: drinking too much, not praying enough, not "listening" to God; and, particularly in Old Harbor, the "missionary problem."

Explanations were seldom spontaneously volunteered by the Chnegans, the people most severely affected. Even when asked specifically, informants usually changed the subject or quietly commented, "I don't know." One person said: "There was something evil down there or something." One older woman stated:

"I guess they were saying the world was almost coming to and end. We were getting too bad, this generation I think. The world is changing. All the older people used to always say that some of the people get scared later on if they don't mind, if they don't listen to God's laws. Now I'm always scared."

Explanations offered regarding the disaster in Kaguyak were frequent, spontaneous, elaborate, and church-oriented. For example, the Russian ancestor of 25 of the 36 persons in the community was remembered for having said:

"'It is going to happen some day,' but he didn't say when. He always tell me the people stop praying to God and don't listen to a priest, like they do right now back home -- you don't see very much people praying. They turn away from their religion and go to the other religions. Some people
just don't have any religion any more. He said, if that happen, 'you people have some punishment. Before the Judgement Day, you will see what it is going to look like.' That is what my great grandfather used to say. Yes, he always said we would have punishment, 'either,' he said, 'you will get punishment by fire, by flood or by earthquake'; but, he never did say which disaster (we) was going to get."

The youngest daughter of the current lay reader said:

"God punish us because we didn't listen. The old people said, in Russian Orthodox sayings, we should more pray to God. They told us, 'be doing this doing that.' They told us not to forget about God." 

The old lay reader himself stated:

"If we don't listen, it can be worse than that. Things going to be settled up, you know. We believe Jesus Christ was for all the people all the world. No make a difference -- white man, Injun, Norwegian. They all come from the Jesus Christ."

"God, He hold the hand all over this world. Just make a little shake. God, He make all the world see. He says 'be nice. Must not drink on Saturday and Sunday.' All pray to God.' Now, all the young boys forgot Jesus Christ, you know. God think 'I might as well make the earthquake and something and straighten out the people.' He holded all the world in His hand, you know. If we don't listen, it can be worse than that. If we don't listen, just might gonna be a bad one. Gonna be a bad one."

Explanations for the earthquake at Old Harbor centered on the presence and influence of the missionary, but also included statements such as: "God is punishing us, 'cause we didn't go to church"; or, "The world is changing and the action of people are changing." Or, as one man, 84 years old, thoughtfully put it:

"I think we are getting a little too far (away) from the church, I think He wants to give us a lesson, just like there, people don't pray, He just has to shake people up a little, so the people will remember that He is the one who is keeping this world going. God wants us to live the way He wants us to."
There are a lot of things that Christians don't live up to. The young people they think they know more than the old people. Don't listen to the old people when they tell. Just start to bawl the old people out -- (as if) they know more about it themselves. 'Old people don't know nothing.' That is the way the people are getting. In our own religion we haven't got much use for a missionary. We have our own church. Some people they think they doing better than our religion. But we want to believe in our religion. I haven't got no use for missionaries. That oldest daughter of mine she don't go to our church no more, just go to missionary. Got no use for her own religion. Same as (that other family). We heard they took the cross off all his kids. Won't let them go to church no more.'

People of Afognak and Ouzinkie rarely offered comment as to why the disaster occurred. One person attempted a "scientific" explanation, but others simply stated they did not know. However, at Afognak, where the movie was about to be shown, one person reportedly said that "God was mad." Significantly, during Lent the following year, movies were cancelled because so few would attend.

In Ouzinkie, five informants gave the same kind of explanation as the old monk, who stated:

"I tell you, we must remember that God punish unbelievers. Look at the people now. Worse and worse. Worse and worse. Not only in Alaska, but the whole place. Girls drinking, twelve years old. Men make good money and spend it for booze. New generation is too selfish. You can't tell them nothing. Young people not go to church much."

This explanation of the disaster -- that it was caused by the failure of individuals to believe according to the Church's doctrines -- was consistently given. Of course, there were again village differences.

In Chenega, perhaps the reason no explanations were offered was that it was too disturbing a question to which to respond, especially to an
"outsider." An aura of fear was clearly indicated. In Kaguyak, also a conservative community, but not as greatly affected by loss of life as Chenega, where the predisaster tensions were the most pronounced, the religious factions were the focus of the explanations. Afognak and Ouzinkie offered the fewest and least precise explanations. Ouzinkie was distinctive in its concern with drinking behavior. Thus it is demonstrated that with respect to explanations, the response varied consistently with the predisaster situation in each of the villages.

Evaluation

As already stated, the Chenegans were willing to be evacuated. Their village was destroyed, but the primary reason they gave for their willingness to leave was that their church was gone.

So also the people of Kaguyak were resigned to leaving. On the morning after the earthquake, as they were being evacuated by boats, they saw their new church wrecked against the rocks at the bottom of a cliff about a mile from the village. Two of the young men rowed through the debris to the church, climbed in through a window, and salvaged the two new flags, a cross, and the [object 37] the church’s most precious ikon. These items were taken to Kodiak and entrusted to the local Russian Orthodox priest there until such time as the Kaguyak people wished to call for them.

The people of both southern Kodiak Island villages, Kaguyak and Old Harbor, were evacuated to Anchorage where they stayed from five to six
weeks before being relocated. In Anchorage, one of the first actions the villagers found necessary was to emphasize to the Red Cross shelter leaders that they were "all" Russian Orthodox and did not want to be "visited" by people from other religious groups.

Once in the shelter in Anchorage, the people of Old Harbor noticeably felt they were "one" again. As one man said: "Now we are more friendly, talking to each other." This comment was made most frequently by extended members of the families who had been "turning away" from their traditional Russian Orthodox. Although a feeling of unity and togetherness is common response to disaster, it is particularly significant that this occurred to the people of Old Harbor since the tensions just prior to the disaster had been intense.

An example of a change in personal animosities occurred when one of the strongest advocates of the Protestant religion agreed to live in the shelter in the same room with the Russian Orthodox lay reader. The Protestant's husband had a life-long friend who was married to the lay reader's granddaughter. The two young husbands decided the families should share the room, an action symbolic of the reestablished unity.

While the two communities were in Anchorage, numerous Russian church services were held. At one point, the Russian Bishop of Alaska came to the school where the villagers were living. He held services in the gymnasium and confession in one of the class rooms. Needless to say, the attendance was impressive.

The Bishop also visited the Chenega people. They had been evacuated
to Cordova where they spent about six weeks in the basement of a community (Protestant) church. One of the young Chenegans was officially ordained a lay reader at this time. This was an important development in the maintenance of the Church when the village was finally permanently relocated.

The stay in Cordova was an unhappy time for the Chenegans. Fear of the approaching Russian Orthodox Good Friday, three weeks after the Protestant Good Friday, was expressed:

"Oh, my gosh, for a long time before the Russian Good Friday, I was scared. I was afraid if there was an earthquake then, it would really be the end. They all seem to be a nervous wreck, scared, in Cordova."

One of the Chenegans' requests was that they be allowed to attend Easter services at the village of Tatitlek, the only remaining Eskimo village in Prince William Sound. But arrangements were not made and they did not go. Apparently no one in charge of the evacuees understood how much it meant to them.

Every villager had lost immediate relatives in the disaster. Each time a body was found and brought to Cordova, the Chenegans met for a memorial service. The newly ordained lay reader, who himself had lost two young daughters in the seismic waves, tells of holding a memorial service:

"It was pretty hard for me to hold the service. Everybody made rice for the dead. I just read the part that a reader is supposed to read. Said three songs, chants and two refrains, and of course I had to name all that was lost. And that was kind of hard for me when I come to my girls' names, you know.

"An experience I don't like to remember, the funeral. I can't remember which bodies were there, but by that time I broke."
I had to leave the church. I looked at the rice. It was just as plain as it could be. I could see the faces of my little girls. Same pained expressions they had when I tried to reach for them, and couldn't reach them. Every time I have to hold or attend a service in commemoration for the dead, that particular time comes back to me. I see very plainly the face of my girl, in place of that rice on the table there. And it's pretty hard, and I have to leave the church."

Relocation

The problems associated with relocation also involved the Church. Some years earlier the Government, in an effort to consolidate schools, attempted to entice the people of Chenega to move to Tatitlek. But the Chenegans would not move, their reasons being they had the Church at Chenega. Once the Church was gone this reason was lost and the people were willing to be relocated. Had the Church been left standing, the new lay reader stated emphatically, "there was no question that we would go back."

In spite of their willingness to be relocated, the Chenegans wished to maintain their separate identity. Not until the foundations of the new houses were actually started did they realize fully that they were being relocated right at the site of the village of Tatitlek. Due to the lack of communication and understanding between the people and the agencies, the Chenegans thought they were going to have a separate village, with their own church, a few miles from Tatitlek. One of the reasons offered by a Chenegan as to why she thought they were not allowed to have a separate village in the direction of the old copper mine, Ellamar, four miles away, was "the missionaries owned half the property and would not sell."
Like the Chenegans, the people of Kaguyak no longer had a reason for returning to the site of their former village. Their church, too, was gone. But unlike the Chenegans they did not, initially, wish to establish a new village by themselves. What they wanted most of all was to be in a community that had a church and a school, so during the period immediately following the disaster, they agreed to combine their village with Old Harbor. But Old Harbor was a more sophisticated town and it soon became apparent it was too large for the likings of the smaller village. Food from the natural environment was not as easily obtained in the Old Harbor area. Furthermore, combining the two villages in the emergency shelter in Anchorage created a number of personal and inter-village political problems. About four weeks after the disaster the Kaguyak people, with the exception of one family and one single man, moved to pick, a small village of 90 persons located near old Kaguyak, on the southern tip of Kodiak Island. There they found a nice church up on a hill -- and, as it developed, some unanticipated problems.

Where to relocate was a particularly difficult problem for the people of Old Harbor. On the one hand, their church was still standing. The villagers saw it as a symbol of the recently revived village unity. On the other hand, the rest of the buildings with the exception of the new school and the missionary house, had been destroyed. Debris was scattered throughout and wastes from the outhouses unpleasantly exposed. Furthermore, the land was low, only a few feet above high water mark. Rumors persisted that the area had sunk during the earthquake. The women
particularly were afraid to return.

The traditional Eskimo reaction to a disaster was to leave the area and relocate on their own initiative at another suitable place. Kodiak Island has many abandoned living sites indicating movements from one location to another by former populations. Old Harbor itself had moved previously from a number of locations. But now there was the Church to consider. The Old Harbor people were pulled by the Church to return (some also mentioned the school) and yet at the same time many wished to find a new site and rebuild everything from the start. Even disregarding the complexity of government agency involvement, friction between villagers developed. For example, about ten families, including the lay reader's granddaughter and her family, wished to relocate at nearby Barling Bay. But the lay reader, who was living with his granddaughter, wished to stay with the Church in Old Harbor. Finally, he agreed to go with the young family. Then this was used as an argument to encourage other families to join with the group going to Barling Bay. The argument was that the villagers would be without a lay reader if they stayed at Old Harbor. After much unhappiness and uncertainty all families finally agreed to return to Old Harbor. Apparently, the split threatened to be too expensive -- for the government agencies involved in terms of money and for the people in terms of intravillage personal relationships.

The two families most involved in the predisaster religious controversy expressed their intention to leave the village. Both had been considering moving before the earthquake. After the disaster and the
subsequent accusations of their responsibility for it, they tried to work out some way to relocate in Anchorage or Kodiak. However, ultimately both families returned to Old Harbor and the men and children in both families returned to the Russian Church.

Interestingly, the only person in the village ill with tuberculosis, whose case was discovered after the disaster, was the former lay reader who had "turned away from his religion." He was hospitalized and returned to Old Harbor, where he now faithfully attends the Russian Church.

As Russian Easter time in 1964 neared, the Old Harbor people were most anxious to return home for services in their church. After innumerable delays, a boat load of women and children arrived at the old site, late on Russian Good Friday. The tents were not ready for their temporary housing, nor was the area cleared of debris. Confusion reigned. Yet, the villagers gathered together in the church for the traditional midnight service. The old lay reader had an extra long service then. Throughout the weekend he conducted services. It was his last Easter and some say he knew this. He died the following summer, leaving Old Harbor temporarily without a lay reader to take his place.

Afognak was the fourth village faced with the problem of relocating and rebuilding. The Church was still standing but it did not have the attraction that it held for those in the other villages. More important to the Afognak people was that their wells had been contaminated and their roads were washing away with the tides that now came up into the village. Only one of the questions asked in meeting with the Lions Club and the Bureau of
Indian Affairs representatives, who helped the village move and rebuild, concerned the building of a new church. As far as can be reconstructed, the moving of Afognak was not unduly complicated by the fact the church had survived the tsunami waves.

However, the choice of lots, the location of houses, and the preferences of exactly where families were to live in the new village did reflect the continuing importance of the Russian Church. Building sites in the new village, to be named Port Lions, were to be chosen by lottery. Space was allowed for the Russian Church and the missionary church and after the lottery, sites were traded until two choice lots near the highest point of the planned village were reserved for the Russian Church. The lot just below the Church's was assigned to the lay reader. Just below the lay reader's house, now live the lay reader's eldest daughter and her husband, who, at the time of the building of the new village, was the chief.

Referring again to the continuum for the five villages, the loss of the Church structure in the conservative villages of Chenega and Kaguyak figured importantly in their willingness to be relocated. In Old Harbor, the "miraculous" survival at the old site inhibited whole-hearted support for a complete move away. In contrast, the relocation of Afognak was not deterred by the "interesting" survival of their Church. Also, even though concern for the church structure varied in the four villages, the location of houses in the three villages which were relocated frequently had a Church-oriented referent.
Further Problems

In addition to numerous technical difficulties involved in rebuilding the four villages, other problems developed during the year following the disaster. Often the areas of conflict were related to Church matters. Old Harbor seemed unusually burdened with these problems, particularly with respect to the conflict between the missionary and the Russian Church. Upon returning to the village site in May and finding the missionary still on the scene, one young man, whose extended family had been split by the religious factions before the earthquake, went to the woman and inquired about her plans. When she indicated that she intended to stay, he recalls that he said to her:

"I don't think you should. Don't you think that you have caused enough trouble already?" She started to cry. I got that off my chest. It made me feel kinda funny though."

The villagers say the missionary left, "crying with a broken heart."

Reportedly, she took all her groceries and goods with her, not selling them nor giving them to the villagers as they had expected. She left the fate of her home, known as the "Pink House," undetermined. What to do with the "Pink House" was a topic at many council meetings and of many letters.

As late as six months after the earthquake, and thus several months after the missionary had left, the council sent the following letter to a government agency, reflecting their continuing concern:

"We are anxious to remove the Pink house which was abandoned by the missionary after the earthquake. This person was never asked to come to our village. Her presence here is unwelcomed. When she left the village she took out food supplies instead of giving or selling them.
to hungry people here. She has made a mockery of our
religion to our children. We don't want her back or anyone
else from her church."

A year after the disaster, Old Harbor felt threatened by unannounced
visits from a missionary. By then the community had in effect boycotted the
man by refusing him housing; but they still remembered the first time he
came after the new Russian lay reader had arrived. The new reader had
allowed the missionary to stay in the Russian Orthodox church house,

"There was nothing we could say to them 'cause if we went
and kick him out of there, he had no place to go and no way
to get out of here. So we just let it go, but then after he
left, we made it clear to this reader that he was not to take
that guy in the house again, so the next time he came he had no
place to go and so he wound up staying in the Public Health
Service for a while. And then he made a remark about one
church not being good for the village, but from past experience
we found out that two churches was worse."

During the fall, one of the church committee members wrote an
unauthorized check against the church account and went on a "toot" in
Kodiak. This had never happened before. Rather than call in any state
officials, the council decided to handle the situation themselves. They
asked the man to repay the money and he was removed from the church
committee.

Another problem which developed in Old Harbor had to do with a
Russian Orthodox church member in another state who insisted on sending
some tools to help rebuild the communities and then wrote long letters
demanding information as to their distribution and use. One village leader
said the man accused the priest in Kodiak of selling them and making a
profit. Apparently these letters were interpreted as attacking the church
in Alaska:
"He wrote a lot of letters to people saying how the priests were crooks and everything. All the time he was corresponding with the missionary. I wonder if they're kinda working together, trying to corrupt the churches or something."

The other communities were having their problems. In Aiohnak, an early action taken after the council was reorganized following the earthquake was to petition for the removal of their village trouble-makers. In this case it was the school teacher and his wife who, allegedly, were advocates of free love, in the eyes of the villagers. The petition was recognized and the teachers were removed.

A more lasting problem in Aiohnak centered around the lumber left after the major building period. Here the traditional factions came into play.

One white man advocated use of the materials to finish the inside of the houses. The chief advocated the equal distribution of the lumber to the two churches. The controversy continued during the winter following the earthquake. Finally, tensions became so strained, the chief and his whole council resigned and a new chief was elected. The new chief was a member of the Russian Orthodox side, but his sister had been converted to the Protestant side, which put the chief in a neutral position as anyone in the community. Still the problem was not resolved. One side, led by the white man, whose wife was a faithful member of the missionary church, continued to insist the materials be used for the houses. Caught in the battle, even the new chief could take no action. Finally, in the spring of 1965, the head school teacher resolved the problem by instructing
the new chief exactly what to do: get a party of men, distribute the materials and carry them to the church lots. Here again, the source of a highly charged emotional situation was church related.

In Ouzinkie where the Mission and the Russian Orthodox Church had a status quo relationship, hostilities immediately following the disaster were like Afognak, not directed to the missionaries or school teachers, but to cannery personnel. For years the people had been offended by the manner of the storekeeper's wife which they interpreted as blatantly condescending. One of the first council actions after being reorganized following the disaster was to draw up a petition requesting the Company remove the storekeeper and his wife. Furthermore, the villagers refused to help the cannery salvage its goods. This was an outright revolt from the long dependency relationship many had for years with the Company for housing, food and credit. The real leaders in this revolt were successful fishermen who owned their own boats and could afford the action.

Thus, the problem of the building period following the disaster reflected the different degrees of church orientation in the communities. In Old Harbor the difficulties were directly related to the Church. In Afognak, the traditional factions came into intense conflict, not over doctrine but over building materials. In Ouzinkie, the least church-related village, the problem had an economic focus: the cannery was the source of controversy.
Perseverance of Change

One year after the disaster the relationship of the Church to the communities suggest different amounts of permanent change. In the three villages on the conservative end of the continuum there was pronounced change and in the remaining two lesser, but noticeable, alterations were observed.

More than any other community, the combined village of Chenega and Tatitlek experienced a revitalization of church activities. The Chenega people were known as good singers. The Tatitlek choir had not been faring well in recent years. The combination of choirs inspired both. One of the younger men of Chenega who had become active as a leader in the village before the disaster was ordained as a lay reader by the Bishop shortly following the disaster. This new lay reader initiated numerous changes. He started a group of small boys in Russian lessons. Choir rehearsals were held four times a week. Parts of the service were conducted in English; the parts in Russian were briefly explained in English for the younger people.

Church attendance increased. The tempo of the songs speeded up. The services were kept short. During the first week of Lent in 1965, eleven services were held and well attended. Both Chenega and Tatitlek people consistently stated they had attended church more frequently since the disaster.

When writing letters of thanks to people of Cordova for their help, the new lay reader signed his name as "ordained Leader of the Russian Church," not "vice-president of the council," which was his other new position.
Furthermore, this reader claims a change in his drinking patterns:

"I used to drink quite a lot myself before I was ordained. The priest kind of talked to me. Said I shouldn't drink too much, to set an example for people to follow, in order to be a leader in the Church."

One year after the disaster, the church leader reported he drank only "moderately" and rarely. Generally, the people in this combined community agreed there was less drinking following the disaster, although the school teachers, like most white people in each of the other communities, claimed the drinking had never been worse.

The Tatitlek people were particularly pleased with the customs introduced during the Christmas holidays. "Starring" (taking a home-made star to each house) was more enjoyable with more houses to visit. Masking after Christmas was reintroduced by the Chenegans. Giving a certain category of gifts on each day was part of this practice. On the first day of masking, pastry was given at each house. On the second day, canned goods were the gifts. On the third day -- and most surprising to the Tatitlek people -- cash was handed out by the Chenegan people. In one house a group spent two hours trying to get off the ceiling a ten dollar bill which had been fastened there by heavy-duty tape.

Further evidence of renewed interest in the Church by the Tatitlek people, partly as a result of the vigorous stimulation by the conservative Chenegans, was reflected in their plans to build a new church. Other developments, such as a community hall and increased tourist trade were mentioned, but the building of the new church was always listed first.
For some years, Tatitlek people had been saving occasionally for the new church. Several thousand dollars had been saved. With the arrival of the Chenegans, the villagers were inspired to start building.

Consistent with the conservative, traditional aspects of Chenega, the older people were concerned about the earthquake and impending doom. This, as in the other communities, generalized to a new awareness of disasters in other parts of the world and a new interest in world events. One older woman, susceptible to premonitions and fears before the earthquake, continued to be fearful, and included a new category of events in her fears. She contemplated:

"Why are they trying to get to the moon? What if they let the moon disappear. It would be dark all the time at night. I sure wouldn't like that. When the world first began, it was dark. I wouldn't want it like that again. I sure don't like the idea of trying to get to the moon. I think if God wanted us to do that, the moon would be closer, don't you?"

"I've been thinking a lot about things in this world. I never used to, but I think a lot now. I feel like I'm just waiting for something. I don't know what."

After the final memorial service, one year after the disaster, most Chenegans reported that they felt better, but some said they still felt as if their relatives whose bodies were never found had just gone away and were still coming back. But generally, most persons coped with their loss in a typical Eskimo fashion: by not dwelling on it and by preferring not to talk about it.

The Kaguyak people at Ahkiok, more than the Chenegans at Tatitlek, maintained their separate identity. A year after they moved to Ahkiok, many
wished they had gone elsewhere, built a new church and started their own village. They had chosen to accept the invitation to move to Ahkiok because of differences with Old Harbor; once relocated, they found the Ahkiok community was not much to their liking either. Sources of contention were many. The Kaguyak people claimed the people of Ahkiok drank too much, although it should be noted the people of Ahkiok have had for some time a reputation for "parties" and fights. The Kaguyak people were unhappy, too, because they found they were participating in more drinking than they had before. But they still maintained they drank less and attended church more than did the Ahkiok villagers.

On the other hand, the Ahkiok people reported that their drinking and church attendance had not changed. They complained that the Kaguyak people remained by themselves all the time. Apparently the Ahkiok people had not made any formal attempts to incorporate the new residents. No Kaguyak representative was on the Ahkiok council; however, this was not important since the council rarely met. More significant was the fact that the Kaguyak people still had no representative on the Church Committee; yet, it was the Kaguyak lay reader who took over the services when the Ahkiok lay reader, age 84, became ill. Furthermore, in their own village the Kaguyak people knew exactly how much money the church had, but in Ahkiok no information about the church finances was shared. The Kaguyak newcomers remained unhappy about the church situation.

Despite the differences and conflicts between the two segments of the community, the Church served as an integrating institution. Everyone
attended together and the building was not large enough to contain the
combined community on church holidays. Also, the members of the
combined community did recognize and share, along with Old Harbor,
concern with the recurring visits of the missionary. He was not allowed
to hold services and the Kaguyak people made a point of instructing the
chief of Ahkiok to prevent the missionary from trying to set up a chapel in
one of the old, unused buildings, should he ever request it.

"We got one church right here. That's enough. We don't
want another Church."

Certainly no noticeably inroads by the missionary had been made in
this village. The Russian church continued to be an on-going, viable
institution in the disorganized, unhappy and otherwise divided community
of Kaguyak-Ahkiok.

Further information on Kaguyak discontent in Ahkiok reflects the importance
of the church in the southern Kodiak region. The conflicts between Kaguyak
and Ahkiok were so serious in the spring of 1965, two Kaguyak families
expressed a wish they had chosen to relocate near the old site of Kaguyak.
Had they done that, they thought, the Kaguyak family which had gone to
Old Harbor would have stayed with them, and perhaps other families which
had ultimately become unhappy with developments in Old Harbor would
have joined ranks with the more conservative community of Kaguyak.
Perhaps even the old lay reader of Old Harbor would have come. After all,
it was pointed out, his granddaughter had married a man who was raised in
Kaguyak. The post-earthquake chief of Kaguyak, who lost all political
power when he moved to Ahkiok, comments:
'"If I had to do it all over again, I'd prefer going back at least to Kaguyak or some other place, even if we did have to start a new church and a new school... I do think myself now that if we'd went to Kaguyak the BIA and the Red Cross would have furnished us with a school and maybe a small church to start with, or maybe it would have been just the same size as we had before."

Old Harbor, the community which had been split by religious factions before the earthquake and which had experienced constant problems following the disaster, resolved many of its internal church-related problems. In addition, some villagers believed the earthquake was a good thing in that it led to the resolution of the problem of the resident missionary. One man who had been particularly troubled by her presence stated: "You don't even hear people arguing about it anymore or anything."

Church attendance increased during this period. Before the earthquake, the villagers report few attended the Russian Church services except on holidays. After the earthquake, many more attended regularly, holiday or no holiday. Most Old Harbor informants stated that there was definitely more church going and less drinking after the earthquake.

Other examples can be cited reflecting the resolution of internal religious frictions. The former lay reader, who had been attracted to the missionary church, returned to the Russian Church. His wife still stayed home, but he and his children attended regularly. In the case of the other family intensively involved in the missionary controversy, again the husband (the son of a Church Committee member) regularly took his children to Church. Hope was expressed that his wife, too, would soon return.
One family did send for Protestant religious reading material for their children to supplement Russian Church instruction. Another family listened regularly to a missionary religious program on the radio. Other than this, the Protestant influence had all but ceased in Old Harbor.

On the northern end of Kodiak Island, Protestant influence continued, though comparisons between pre- and post-disaster conditions were more difficult to elicit. At Port Lions, attendance at both the missionary and Russian churches continued to be about the same. No new converts had been made to the Protestant sect. Services of the Russian Orthodox church were being led, as usual, by the old lay reader. On the other hand, Russian Lent was more strictly observed the year following the earthquake. Attendance at the movies had dropped to so low a point that the weekly picture was cancelled. And in 1965, in contrast to the year before, no dances were conducted on Saturday night during Russian Lent.

In Ouzinkie, like Port Lions, less obvious changes occurred in church relationships. The general disorganization of the community continued and the former religious split intensified. Communication between the two extremes of the village which had been socially inhibited before the disaster was further restricted by the lack of easy physical communication. The road connecting the two far ends of the spread-out community was being eroded by the high tides. The lack of a road and thus easy access to the Russian Church was used as a reason why so few people attended the services.
No consensus regarding drinking patterns was reached. The missionaries claimed that drinking had greatly increased. The villagers on the opposite side of the village stated positively that it had decreased -- except for the missionary part of the village. The people living in the middle of the community claim there had been no significant change.

Russian Church attendance, which was reported to have increased noticeably after the earthquake, had slacked off. As one man said: "Just like the priest mentioned. He said 'guess they forget pretty quick'."

Yet, on special church holidays, attendance at the Russian Church was still high and included former villagers who now live in Kodiak.

One year after the disaster, three prominent Ouzinkie families had moved to Kodiak. Others believed the island was sinking and were looking for housing in the town. The three families that had moved to Kodiak were from the more acculturated families, whose men successfully operated their own boats. All three of these families had allowed their children to attend the Mission activities and, on occasion, the adults also had attended.

The morale of Ouzinkie was low. Not only had these important families left, but also the cannery had not been rebuilt. Finally, the Church apparently was not effective in dealing with these problems or with the disorganization of the community.
Religious and Political Leadership

One interesting change which highlights the important relation between the church and the community is in religious and political leadership.

In the two Chugach Eskimo communities, Chenega and Tatitlek, formal division existed before the earthquake. A "chief" was in charge of the Church and a "president" was in charge of secular affairs. In Chenega, the chief was the lay reader and the president was the son of a former chief. When the community moved to Tatitlek, the two roles of chief and president were incorporated in a new council which included a president and vice-president. The elected president was the son of a recently deceased Church Committee member from Tatitlek. The vice-president was the newly ordained Chenegan lay reader. Although the action eliminated the position of "chief" and his connection with the Church, it did not lessen the control of the church in village affairs, since church leaders were placed in new positions of leadership. The highest ranking Chenegan on the new council was the highest ranking in Church leadership.

In three communities new religious leadership appeared shortly after the earthquake. The changes probably would have occurred eventually since old age and illness were relevant in each instance. For example, the Chenegan lay reader was aging, ill, and living in Cordova. When the villagers moved to Tatitlek, they found that community's lay reader barely able to conduct services as he, too, was old and almost blind. Both communities benefited from the enthusiasm of the new, younger Chenegan
lay reader. The disaster served as a catalyst for his appointment.

The Kaguyak people experienced a similar change. When they moved to Ahkiok, they found the lay reader of that community aging and ill. Soon he was sent to a hospital and, subsequently, the Kaguyak lay reader presided over the services. The Kaguyak lay reader was 62, over twenty years younger than the Ahkiok lay reader who was 84 years old. Here, too, the earthquake and its subsequent adjustments led to a younger man taking over the main responsibilities of the Church.

The lay reader of Old Harbor died in the summer of 1964. For a few months the community was without a Church leader but the opening was soon filled. The villagers were able to attract a lay reader from Karluk, a village on the opposite side of the island. This man, too, was a young and active Church leader.

The lay leadership did not change in Port Lions or Ouzinkie. Thus, in the three communities placed on the conservative end of the continuum, new and younger leadership had been obtained for the Church. Religious interest, initially renewed as a result of the earthquake, thereby was stimulated and stabilized. A year after the earthquake, in each community where there was new leadership, the Church tradition continued strong. Evidence of revitalization was particularly noticeable in Chenega-Tatitlek and Old Harbor. In the two communities where there was no change in local lay leadership, the influence of the Church changed little or not at all.
The relationship between the Church and the political structure of the communities sheds further light on the importance of the Church. Persons elected (or appointed) to leadership positions on the councils consistently were related in some way to the current lay reader. For example, in Kaguyak, before the disaster, the "chief" was a young man married to the lay reader's daughter. This chief was lost in the tsunami waves and the man who was automatically moved up to replace him was, again, married to a relative, though more distant, of the lay reader. In both Afognak and Ouzinkie, the two communities which had no formal leadership before the earthquake, the men elected to the position of chief after the disaster were in each case married to the daughter of the local lay reader. Thus, three communities out of five chose men whose fathers-in-law were head of the Church. This apparently reflects a long-standing practice; Birket Smith's report on Prince William Sound states that the leader in the church was "the power behind the throne." (1930:).

Only in Old Harbor did the "chief" before the disaster have no immediate relationship to the Church. Here, instead of being married to the daughter of the Church's lay leader, the chief was married to an "Eskimo" from the Yukon Delta area. Not only was his wife not "Aleut," but also she was Catholic. In addition, the chief and his family had been attending the missionary services and associating with the other families who were sympathetic to the missionary religion. The relationship of the chief to the Russian Church in this community appeared to be a negative one. On the other hand, this chief had been elected only a year before
he started attending missionary services. And he was the nephew (sister's son) of the dynamic lay reader of nearby Kaguyak.

Shortly before the earthquake this man favored allowing the missionary to stay when village opinion was that she should leave. The day before the earthquake he had an argument with the prominent old lay reader regarding what the village should do about the missionary lady. Little wonder then that the chief stayed high and alone on the hill the night after the earthquake.

When the village was evacuated, the chief and his family chose to stay in Kodiak with his wife's relatives rather than continue with the villagers who were evacuated to Anchorage. The villagers claimed their chief "abandoned" them and they were angry about this; but, obviously, his reasons were complex.

Trouble for this former chief of Old Harbor did not end with his "abandoning" the village. While the rest of the villagers were in Anchorage, he returned to Old Harbor to retrieve the Church money ($900) from the school teacher who was holding it for the village. He carefully deposited it all in a Kodiak bank. Later, although he had given the receipt to the lay reader, he was accused of stealing the Church money. Then when he and his family returned to Old Harbor, wishing to rejoin the rest of the village, he was told that it was too late to get a house; it was effectively communicated to him that he and his family were not welcome. Finally, he chose to return to his home village of Ahkiok and join ranks there with the Kaguyak people who were unofficially led by his mother's brother, the lay reader. In Ahkiok, a year after the earthquake, this man who had "strayed"
from Russian Orthodoxy only shortly before the earthquake, was a strong advocate of Russian Church attendance. His daughter sometimes read in English in Church, and he had taken an outspoken position against allowing a missionary in the village.

When this chief "abandoned" the village by staying in Kodiak immediately following the disaster, the person who moved into his position was a young man known as a strong advocate for removal of the missionary by legal means, if necessary. Perhaps part of the reason the young leader took such a strong stand against a second church in Old Harbor was because he grew up in Ouzinkie when that community experienced extensive disorganization. This disruption he believed was caused by the influence of a missionary.

This young chief from Ouzinkie was married to a daughter of a Church Committee member. He was in office about ten months. The next chief elected was an older, more conservative man. The newest chief, like the chief in the other communities, had important "connections" through kinship with Church leadership. He was the nephew (brother's son) of the recently deceased lay reader. In addition, his election reflected an effort of Old Harbor to move toward a more conservative, stable community. He spoke Eskimo fluently; and, as indicative of his conservative position, he declared in the spring of 1965 that when "all this work is done" (building) he was going "to declare a three-month vacation and none of you white people come here no more." Old Harbor, perhaps more than any other community, appeared irritated by the constant intrusion of officials.
representing numerous agencies. The villagers wanted desperately to regain their privacy and to do things their own way. They elected the right man to help communicate this.

Finally, further evidence of the influence of the Church in village political affairs in Old Harbor is found in the timing of elections for the council. They were held at the beginning of Lent, when everybody was home, and sober.

In Afognak, the person appointed to the position of chief immediately following the earthquake, was the husband of the eldest daughter of the lay reader. Also, on the new council was the lay reader's eldest son. Thus, the dominant faction in Afognak, the Russian Orthodox side, was well represented on the council. The two council representatives from the opposite side were relatively ineffective, and the important positions dealing with the care and allocation of food were delegated to the Church faction. The traditional factions seemed to have intensified for a period of five or six months following the disaster. Complaints about the allocation and the distribution of food and materials were still being voiced a year later, particularly by the weaker faction.

In Ouzinkie, the most disorganized, but modernized community, we have noted that the person thought to be the strongest leader in the community was married to the daughter of the lay reader. However, this man worked very closely with the son of a former "chief." Both men were on the Russian Church Committee and had very little to do with the Mission, though they did allow their children to attend some of the mission
activities. Disagreements on secular matters continued to plague the community. As the head of the council stated:

"I would say there would be more interest in the Church than there would be in just our plain council. Yea, we never did have too much trouble getting people to show up for any projects that had to do about the church."

Summary

This study has examined the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in five North Pacific Eskimo villages affected by the March 27, 1964, Earthquake. The five villages are placed on a continuum reflecting the importance of the Russian Church in the communities. The continuum is based on the variations in the intensity and pervasiveness of Church doctrine and practices in everyday life.

Chenega and Kaguyak are small, isolated and conservative villages. Both were relocated at the sites of other small Russian Orthodox communities. The greatest degree of revitalization in Russian Orthodoxy occurred in the Chenega-Tatitlek community. The Kaguyak villagers remained devoted to their Church, but are disillusioned with their new community.

Old Harbor is a larger, less isolated, more diversified community. At the time of the earthquake it was experiencing stress because of the division of the village into Russian Orthodox and missionary factions. In Old Harbor Russian Orthodoxy was revitalized when the religious factionalism was resolved by the withdrawal of the missionary, and the appointment of an active lay reader following the disaster.
Afognak and Ouzinkie are the largest, least isolated and most modernized villages. Missionary influence has existed for a number of years and each village, while predominantly Russian Orthodox, has developed a working coexistence with this influence. In these two villages the conditions existing before the disaster reflected the least amount of Russian Church influence of the five villages. Orthodoxy was, and continues to be, nominal, although even in these two communities leadership is directly related to the Church.

The little known importance of the Russian Church to the Pacific Eskimo was highlighted by the events of the earthquake and the subsequent period. In each village the Church continues to be a viable social institution.
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