

Crosscutting Narratives : Legacies of Religious Repression and Resistance in Soviet Kamchatka

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Crosscutting Narratives: Legacies of Religious Repression and Resistance in Soviet Kamchatka

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ロシア正教会の屋根から十字架を切り取ることについての語り
——ソ連カムチャツカにおける宗教抑圧と抵抗の遺産——

デイビッド・ケスター

In the 1920s and 1930s the Soviet government set out systematically to undermine the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church by converting or destroying churches across the country, including Kamchatka. This paper, written on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Claude Lévi-Strauss, examines Kamchatkan narratives of church destruction from a quasi-structuralist perspective. The built environment provides a basis for narrative different from the natural environment of species and elemental categories on which Lévi-Strauss's analyses typically focused. By considering the social and historical dimensions of the stories and putting them in the wider context of Soviet folklore, the analysis reveals how the power of the church was maintained in the telling of the narratives, while the state attempted to change the meaning of the physical structures. The paper is based both on historical research and the collection of oral narratives during fieldwork under the BOREAS/EUROCORES project NEWREL (New Religious Movements in the Russian North, 2006–2009).

1920年代および1930年代にソ連は、カムチャツカを含む国土全域で改修や教会を破壊することによって、ロシア正教会の影響力を弱体化させることを組織的に開始した。クロード・レヴィ＝ストロース生誕100年記念の機会に執筆した本論文は、カムチャツカの人々による教会破壊の語りを、疑似構造主義者の視点から吟味する。レヴィ＝ストロースの分析がとくに焦点をあてた種お

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Key Words : Kamchatka, Soviet anti-religion, semiotics of architecture, Lévi-Strauss, Russian folklore

キーワード : カムチャツカ, ソ連の反宗教, 建造物の意味論, レヴィ＝ストロース, ロシアのフォークローア

よび要素カテゴリーの自然環境とはことなる建造環境が語りのための基盤を提供する。複数の話の社会的および歴史的次元を考察し、それらの話をソ連のフォークロアのより広い脈絡の中に位置づけることによって、本分析は、国家が物理的構造の意味を改変させようと試みた一方で、教会の権力は話を語る中でいかに維持されてきたかを明らかにする。なお、本論文は、BOREAS/EUROCORESプロジェクトNEWREL（ロシア北方における新しい宗教運動、2006～2009）のもとでフィールドワーク中に行った歴史調査と口承による語りの収集の両方に基づいている。

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Introduction

During the Soviet period in Kamchatka, Russia and especially in the 1930s, Russian Orthodox churches and chapels were either destroyed or converted into secular clubhouses, schools, small factories and even potato storehouses. Indigenous Itelmen elders with whom I have worked remembered the days of the early Soviet Union when churches still existed and their elder relatives still practiced Orthodox Christianity. In 2006 I joined an international collaboration of researchers studying new religious phenomena in the former Soviet Union. This multi-faceted interdisciplinary project fostered study of religious movements across the Russian North. The new phenomena included the resurgence of an old interest in Orthodoxy in small and indigenous communities in rural Kamchatka. After a religious hiatus that was the duration of essentially one lifetime, whole communities were showing up to become baptized and many individuals became full-time church devotees. One of my objectives in the new collaborative project was to understand the legacies of religious traditions and Soviet religious policy in rural Kamchatkan communities. What happened to the Orthodox Church and its followers during the Soviet period? What were the local historical circumstances in which Orthodox revival was taking place? One of my areas of study thus came to be remembrances of churches and “the Church” as they existed in the early Soviet period. Many people were old enough to remember priests, icons, community churches and devout believers. One of the preponderant memories was about the removal and destruction of the physical objects associated with the church, especially crosses, bells and icons. This paper focuses specifically on narratives about the removal of crosses.

My portion of the larger collaborative research was based on three seasons of fieldwork in villages of west central Kamchatka in which I have been working for over 15 years. One day in the summer of 2007, in the small Russian fishing town of Ust Khairiuzovo, I was discussing memories of small village churches with an Itelmen friend. My friend insisted that I had to talk to an elder woman in a nearby Itelmen village. The woman, apparently, remembered the story of the cutting of the cross from the roof of the church in the village of Verkhne Khairiuzovo (see map, Figure 1). I had known this woman since the days when she was the last teacher

Map Showing Itelmen Villages and Principal Rivers of Itelmen Inhabitation in the 20th Century

- closed village

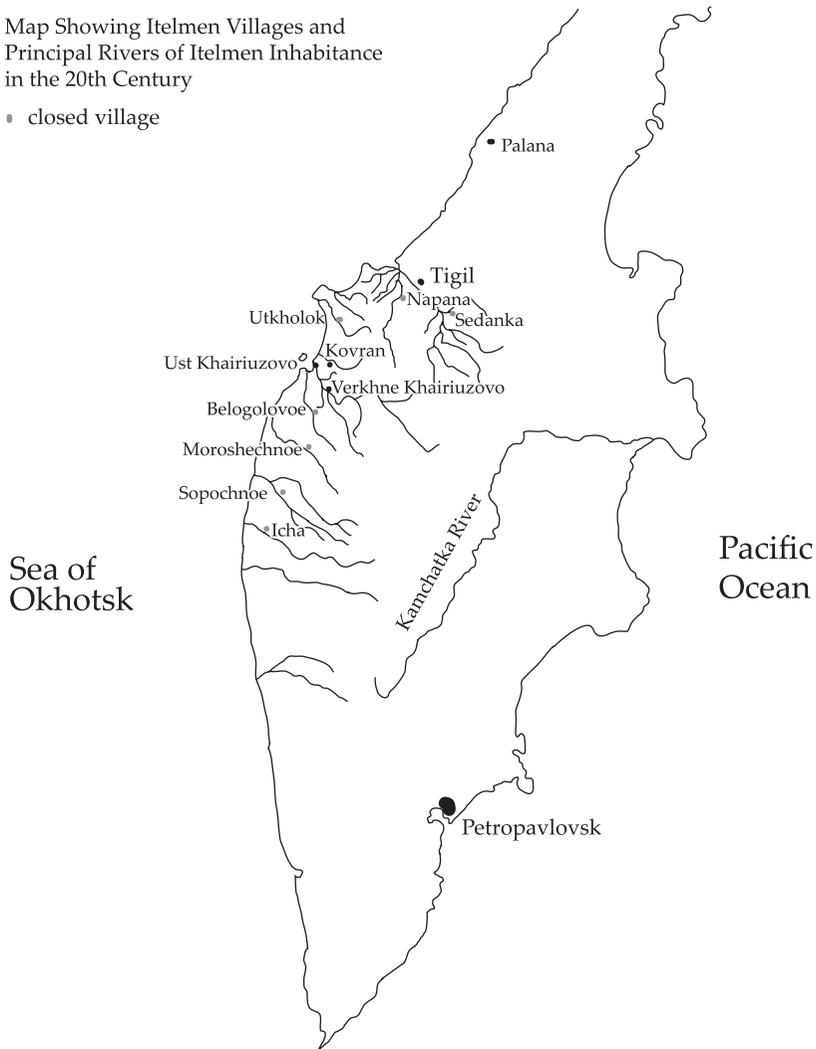


Figure 1 Map of Twentieth-Century Itelmen Settlements.

of the Itelmen language who had been raised in an Itelmen-speaking community. She was then retired and lived at home as an invalid, rarely able to go out and with even rarer opportunities to speak the Itelmen language. In the 1920s and 1930s, Verkhne Khairuzovo was one of the largest villages in Kamchatka and was considered the main village in Itelmen territory. It thus had considerable political cultural significance and the church was an essential part of Itelmen cultural identity¹⁾. She remembered that the whole village turned out to watch when the church's cross was to be brought down. As she tells the story, two men took to the task of climbing to the roof of the church. In the process of trying to see the cross from the roof, each, in turn, fell off. One injured his leg so severely that eventually it had to be amputated and he walked with crutches for the rest of his life. The other one was sent to Khabarovsk where they made an artificial limb for him. She even remembers that he showed the artificial leg to her and her family when he returned²⁾. This was clearly an important story for her understanding of the place of the church building in village life. After its desanctification it became a local community center, the village's *klub*. Such village clubhouses, under the Soviet government, were places for secular entertainment (and socialist agitation). What is particularly significant in this story is that the narrative sustains the previous social position and power of the Church. While villagers could no longer go to the church to fulfill their religious needs, they maintained the legacy of the church's power in the community by the retelling of this compelling story.

1 Semiotics and the Built Environment

I open with this story because I want to consider the relationship between physical structures of the world and the socially constructed, culturally shared semiotic structures of the kind analyzed by Lévi-Strauss³⁾. Lévi-Strauss himself delved in great depth into the Durkheimian question of the relationship between mental forms (schematic, structural) and the physical and social world. For both Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss the relationship was described primarily in terms of analogies between the social and the natural world (Durkheim and Mauss 1963; Lévi-Strauss 1975). Lévi-Strauss devoted most of his attention to myth, social organization, representations of the natural world and art. In my analysis I present another realm that he explored only secondarily, that of the built environment. I would like to pose the question of the utility of structuralist analytical tools for the study of the social and cultural meaning of physical structures. The physical structures we inhabit, even more than utensils, implements and other objects of material culture that we employ, are examples of "objectified thought" about social relations. They express actual and expected relations among individuals and groups. In Lévi-Strauss's analyses mythological tales are founded on an ideational structure that emerges from the experience of the natural and social world. Yet, he argues, myths are a particularly good

source for study of the human mind because they constitute a working of the mind on objects it has created (Lévi-Strauss 1975: 10). The study of the built environment offers a natural, logical extension of his program because semiotically/socially significant built structures can be seen as analogous to the world-founded structures used in myth. Once we start to consider the semiotic aspects of architectural forms we find them also to be fertile ground for study of the working of the mind.

In Umberto Eco's oft-cited article on the semiotics of architecture and the built environment, he comes to the conclusion that architecture is a special kind of semiotic system (Eco 1980). He argues that the semiotics of architecture is comprised of a code or set of codes but that they are established by a set of pre-existing functions. For example, a staircase is a diagonal structure with horizontal and vertical components of human-leg dimension that offers the function of going up or down. A staircase may come in a variety of connotatively different forms and its structure may be stretched and twisted, but in the main, its semiotic expressiveness, as an architectural sign is linked to its function. Thus, from the perspective of semiotics in general, Eco's architectural sign is less arbitrary than the linguistic sign. Form and function do not, however, exhaust the semiotics of architecture. There is also a rich source of meaning in architecture that Eco calls "the anthropological system," and it is the temporal extent and social consequences of that system that I will consider in this paper. Eco cites Lévi-Strauss's chapters on social organization in *Structural Anthropology I* where he presents diagrams of Bororo and Winnebago villages to illustrate the socio-logic of each village's structure. The diagrams represent examples of structural analyses of the social organization of spatial relations and the built environment and describe how the structure itself reflects the nature and structure of the community. Eco additionally fine-tunes his analysis of meaning in terms of the culturally coded semiotics of spatial relations as outlined in Edward T. Hall's system of proxemics (Hall 1974). Here, I want to focus on the temporal rather than the spatial component of the so-called anthropological system of the built environment.

With church architecture we have at least two ways of looking at its meaning. From the believers' point of view the plane of architectural functionality is projected and expanded in the spiritual dimension. It is not simply that church adornments and ornamentation symbolize religious narrative and relations with the divine. They are effective instruments in the making of spiritual connections. Church decoration, symbolically expressing spiritual beliefs, ideas and sentiments, ranges from icons, crosses and ritual objects to shapes and the physical orientation of the structure. All of these aspects can be seen to have spiritual significance. They not only mark the church as sacred space but serve the function of focusing, enabling and maintaining contact with the divine (Humphrey and Vitebsky 1997: 60). On the other hand, even from a non-religious perspective, church architecture organizes the religious community. A cross, high atop a church or chapel serves to orient local consciousness collectively by being widely visible and having at least some measure of shared

meaning across a community. A church's continual presence, with such distinct visible symbols, provides an enduring focus of shared social meaning that is expected to last beyond the life of any particular individual. How, phenomenologically, or better, ethnographically speaking, is this durability perceived? What happened in small communities in remote areas of Russia when the churches came under attack? And what was left in the community of the church's influence once the religious function was symbolically and forcibly stripped, while the architectural structure remained?

In a sense, this paper is about communities' relations with their sacred structures and about the growth of narrative. In particular it is about narratives constructed on the basis of the clash of sacred and profane played out in social life and collective memory as a structure's status and meaning—in this case, its social and spiritual function—is changed. The relationship between symbolic significance and the origin of stories comes to the fore in examining their myth-like or “folkloristic” commonalities. I will present what appear to be variants of the story from Verkhne Khairiuzovo. Each presents a particular way in which the event described was and continues to be perceived and narrated. Each, in turn, contributes not only to understanding the social position of the Church in Kamchatkan communities but also to understanding how objectified thought expressed in narrative and physical structures is rooted in collective experience.

2 The Russian Orthodox Church in Itelmen History

Before beginning the analysis, however, some background needs to be given about the social and historical setting of the events to be described. When Russians first arrived in Kamchatka around 1650, Itelmen people were settled across much of the peninsula and Koryak people lived both settled and as nomadic reindeer herders, primarily in the north. The first detailed accounts of Itelmen life, written almost a century later, described a period of intense change in Itelmen political standing, society and culture. What we know of Itelmen life and worldview comes largely after decades of substantial contact with Europeans. Fortunately, the researchers who arrived as members of the Second Kamchatka Expedition, became deeply interested in Itelmen customs and beliefs and even conducted what amounted to basic ethnographic surveys. Though they did not speak the Itelmen language, they nevertheless made detailed observations of rituals and religious life and posed questions that led to deeply revealing answers.

The two explorers, Stepan Krasheninnikov (1711–1755) and Georg Wilhelm Steller (1709–1746), wrote extensive accounts of Itelmen social life, recent history and religiosity from the early contact period. Krasheninnikov recounted that when Kamchatka was conquered there were less than one hundred Christians among the native population (Krasheninnikov 1972:321). In the period just before his arrival

Orthodox missionaries engaged in a marked effort to bring in new followers. The Eparchy in Tobolsk dispatched the priest Ermolai Ivanov to Kamchatka in 1728 and he arrived in 1732. He subsequently was instructed to travel around Kamchatka to check on the various churches and chapels and the work of the priests at Lower Kamchatsk and Bolsheretsk, on the east and west coasts, respectively. The priests died, however, in 1736, before Ermolai could visit them and he was left as the only priest in all of Kamchatka (Gromov 1857: 26). Thus, just before Krasheninnikov's arrival in 1737, the Church had been making an effort to proselytize, but it was hampered by social conditions made difficult by the tense and often violent relations between Cossacks and native peoples, the harsh environment and lack of Church personnel.

Both Steller and Krasheninnikov reported that Itelmens had fantastic beliefs about various gods and demons and especially about "their god Kutka" (now Kutkh). As the progenitor of Kamchatka's inhabitants, this demiurge was accounted the principal god of the Itelmens by both researchers. Yet despite the seeming disparity between the raucous and earthy Kutka and the heavenly Christian father as gods, and between Itelmen and Christian beliefs in the efficacy of ritual, Itelmens were quick to adopt Russian Orthodoxy once earnest and sometimes forceful missionizing began. Antonio Manuel de Vieira, commander of the Okhotsk port which outfitted the Second Bering Expedition, reported to the Irkutsk Bishop Innokentii "that the Kamchadals not only want to be Christianized, but also want to give their children over for education, but there is no one to Christianize or educate them" (Gromov 1857: 21). Steller, who arrived in Kamchatka with the Bering Expedition in 1740, three years after Krasheninnikov, reported that Christianity had become so popular that it was difficult to find godfathers for baptisms because of overwhelming demand and prohibitively high expenses incurred. Ermolai was replaced as principal missionary in 1742 by a priest-monk (hieromonk) who later became known as the Christianizer of Kamchatka, Ioasaf Khotuntsevskii (Artem'ev 2005: 90–91; Gromov 1857: 39).

The intense Christianization that followed coincided with the devastating spread of smallpox. This illness brought tremendous loss of life among the indigenous population (Volodin 2002: 111) and increased the demographic pressures that were already intertwining Russian and Itelmen ways of life. The tsarist administration provided incentives for native peoples across northern Russian to belong to the church. Not only could they get some protection from overly exploitative government officials, but church membership freed a household from having to pay the fur tax. Thus, while the Itelmen population declined, membership in the Church increased to a high proportion, if not the 100% claimed by Khotuntsevskii in 1746 (Volodin 2002: 94). The widespread adoption of Russian Orthodoxy across Itelmen society was noted by explorers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Dobbell 1830: 82; Bergman 1923). Writing in the 1930s, Soviet ethnographer, Elizaveta

Orlova noted that there were still many non-Christian beliefs held by the nominally Orthodox Itelmen people with whom she worked (Orlova 1999: 91). She argued that Christianity's roots were deep but at the same time that the fundamental religion of Itelmens had not changed from primitive animism. The descriptions that she gives of "superstitious beliefs," however, do not seem substantially more deviant from Orthodox Christianity than those of even contemporary rural Russian villagers (Paxson 2005). Thus, by the time that the Soviet Union began to repress religious activity and denounce Orthodox belief in Kamchatka, Russian Orthodox religion was as much a part of Itelmen history as it was of the history of much of rural Russia. The stories told in villages like the one from Khairiuzovo help to portray the Church's position in the community as the Soviet government moved to dismantle it as both physical structure and a political entity.

3 Twentieth Century Narratives

Returning to the Khairiuzovo story, the narrative of the cutting of the cross from the church can be represented in Lévi-Straussian oppositional terms. The most obvious conceptual opposition was well understood as the political statement being made by the government agitators who took action against the churches.

venerating the cross : sawing or destroying the cross

This idea is captured in an anti-religious poster from the late 1920s (see Figure 2). Here we see an evil babushka (grandmother) attempting to force her granddaughter toward the Church as the young girl hears the trumpeted call of future progress through Soviet schooling. Note the toppling cross at the top of the image indicates this shared, artistically objectified idea. Now, if we go from the concept to the narrative of events, we have the following *sequential* opposition.

cross in place : cross destroyed

Historically this preceded the replacement of the Church with a secular institution.

church : clubhouse, school

And in the narrative leads to lifelong consequences for the perpetrators.

healthy : visibly injured for life

All of this expressing the more basic opposition of sacred and profane.

sacred : profane

If we consider the crux of the story to be the demonstrated life-long injuries, the temporal dimension can be expressed in the simplest of terms, with each term being associated with all the terms above on its side of the equation.

before : after

The political consequence is clear: a past and a future society.

[Orthodox society] : [secular (atheist) society]

Curiously, though, the Itelmen teacher's story about Khairiuzovo contained no emotional evaluation or moral condemnation. The cutting of the cross and its con-

sequences are described neutrally as she would have told the story during Soviet times. The denouement of the story comes with injuries to the participants. That event carries the message of the sacrilege, without having to implicate the storyteller in religious activity or invoke the public opinion of those who witnessed the event.

When crosses were cut from church buildings, the buildings remained present in the community and were given a new secular function. The church, as church,

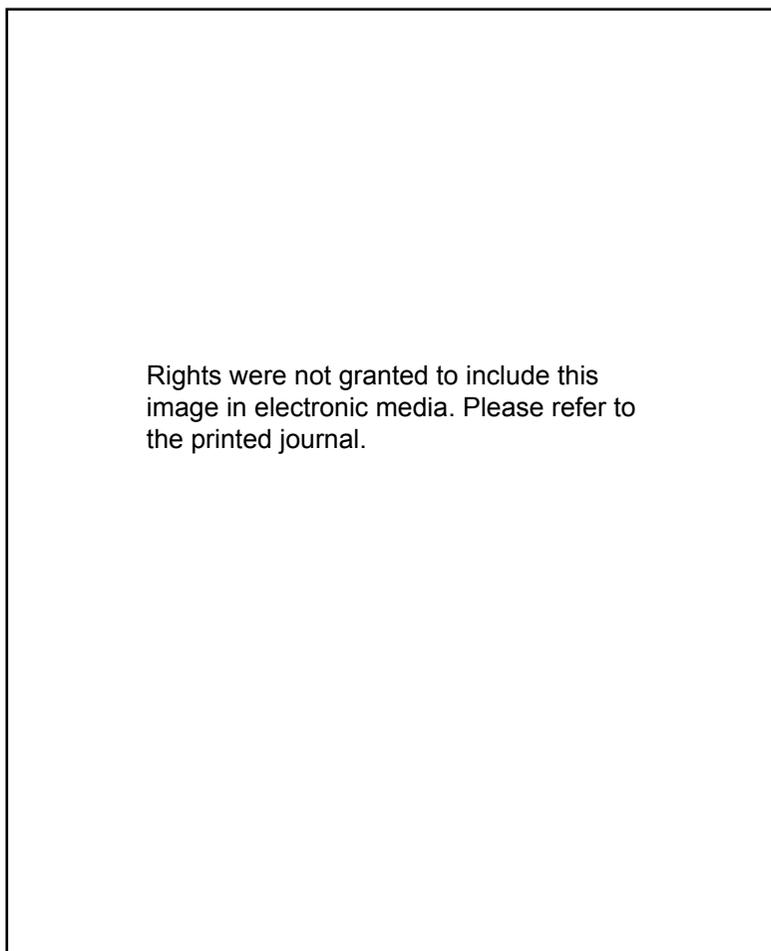


Figure 2 Soviet anti-religious poster, "Religion is poison, protect your children". (Source: <http://soviethistory.org>; Hoover Institution Political Poster Database, SU 650)

was remembered by all, and the building remained a stark reminder of the sacrilege that had brought about its change of status. As the event became a part of collective memory, the sacred power of the church was transformed into a narrative and the durability of that power maintained in the process of retellings of the story. People could retell the story as fact without expressing regret or blaming the government for destroying the church. The lifelong consequences to the two men could stand in for the onlookers' reactions or the storyteller's opinion. By implication, the secular society, clubhouse and long-lasting injuries on the right side of the list of oppositions resonate together in a shared vision of the overall meaning. These implications are borne out by similar stories that were repeated in other places across Siberia and the Russian North.

Russian anthropologist Sergei Shtyrkov has published a fascinating set of narratives collected in Novgorod oblast about such legacies (Shtyrkov 2006). The stories present some form of sacrilege associated with the transformation or destruction of a local church. A common story is of the consequences that befell people who danced in the church after it was transformed into a community clubhouse. Many of them, according to the legends, sustained permanent injuries, especially to their legs. For more serious transgressions, two men, who tore down a chapel and reused some of it for building materials, were said to have died. The destruction of church icons was also widespread and in one story the man who took and burned the icons of a church became a hunchback. In another, the transgressor fell under a tractor (Shtyrkov 2006: 214, 216). Other icon burners became ill and died. Many stories tell of the removal of the church bell. Paralysis or injury typically resulted from this transgression. Shtyrkov points out that these stories could, on the one hand be considered oral historical sources for the general history of the region and the fate of the Orthodox church in the Soviet period. On the other hand, he also notes that the regularity and form of the stories suggests that they belong to the genre of folklore or legend and that they can be studied in this regard as well. Many could even be classified in the framework of the Stith Thompson motif index as category C940 "Sickness or weakness from breaking taboo." The tale from Khairiuzovo fits under the very specific category of "Limbs affected by breaking tabu" (C946) (Thompson 1989). Yet, the more general and applicable category seems to be "consequences or retribution for transgression" or more specifically for sacrilege. Whether or not they contribute to the more general categories of folklorists' catalogs, there are clear similarities among the stories in the Soviet sphere.

One of the questions that arises from such similarities in folklore studies is how such widespread traditions are generated. In the case of the Soviet Union, it is understandable that there were stories nationwide about the destruction and transformation of the churches because there was a national policy to carry out the destruction. With the implementation of the policy it is inevitable that there would be similarities across the regions. At the same time, it is important to understand

how the stories are generated locally. What can we know of the motivations that lie behind such stories? The two other Kamchatkan variants of the story from Khairiuzovo present different perspectives on the underlying motivations. These stories from nearby villages about the transformation of local churches will help to illuminate the common motivations that transcend ethnic and geographical boundaries and give impetus to legendary forms of narrative.

4 Stories from Sedanka and Tigil

A second variant of the story from a nearby village demonstrates the emotional basis that underlies the generation of these stories. The legacy of sacrilege against the church and against the community's place of worship seemed to be the fundamental motivational basis of the narrative. This at least was part of the story in one Itelmen elder's remembrances of her grandfather's profound religiosity. Agrafena Danilovna recalled that her grandfather was deeply disturbed when he spoke about the sawing of the cross from the chapel in the village of Sedanka.

Some people came from the GPU – [state security services]. And they began right away to saw the cross on that chapel. And Grandfather says: “Oi, how easy it would have been to pick them off. We should have shot them (nado bylo zastrelit’) so that they wouldn't have cut off the crosses (Koester, Petrasheva, and Degai 2010: 31).

She told me this story twice and emphasized her grandfather's anguish. Of the stories that her grandfather had recounted this one was emotionally prominent in her memories of childhood. He said that he wished he had had a rifle when that man was cutting the cross. Shooting would have prevented him from cutting off the cross and the man who did the deed deserved to be shot, he said. She made a point of saying that she remembered the man's name, Kharlampi. As in the Itelmen teacher's story, identification by name of the person responsible was an important component of the veracity of the tale. In this case, though, the bodily injury has been replaced by *the wish for* bodily injury. In the absence of lasting consequences like those from Khairiuzovo, we hear the sentiments that seem to underlie the compelling nature of the actual, physical consequences. In Lévi-Straussian fashion, we discover this emotional foundation of the story from a nearby, parallel variant. This emotional perception becomes the powerful source of narrative, a mythmaking machine that has a widespread foundation because of a uniformly executed policy across the Soviet Union.

A third story, which could also be seen as a variant reveals the underlying diachronic dimension of the meaning of church desanctification. This story was told to me about the church in the village of Tigil, where there had been a church since the 18th century. Located at the administrative center of the region, the church served the people of Tigil, surrounding villages and the nomadic indigenous population of the

entire central Kamchatkan region. The story begins with some background knowledge that I had of both the church's history and the village's attempts to reconstruct it. As in many places across the Soviet Union, the church in Tigil was converted into a clubhouse in the 1930s. One man I interviewed remembered that in 1934 the priest told him and his friends that they could take home various sacred objects from the church. Soon thereafter it had become a secularized clubhouse which showed films, hosted public performances and gatherings into the 1960s. It was then replaced by a small factory, the roof of which collapsed, leading to the site's abandonment. In the mid 1990s, villagers began discussions of resurrecting it on the original site (Figure 3). A former resident, Yuri, arrived from the city with an offer to help. He was an engineer and was willing to direct the construction. But, with all volunteer labor and donated materials, progress was slow and today the project is still uncompleted. The story that I want to tell links the rebuilding of the church to its desanctification in the 1930s.

One day, when talking about the construction of the church, Olga, the director of the local museum told me that she had seen (and kept somewhere) a newspaper clipping from the 1930s. She could not find the clipping but she remembered that the story reported the cutting of the cross from the church. The man who was named was, according to Olga's recollection, the father of Yuri, the engineer who had returned to Tigil to help with the rebuilding of the church. Olga believed that the son had returned to pay recompense for the guilt of his family in the desecration of the original church. Olga had never asked Yuri if this was indeed his motivation. So she told the story as something she thought was plausible and it has now circulated, unconfirmed within the religious community. In this story, the same powerful, durable, emotional foundation created yet another narrative of the consequences for



Figure 3 Tigil Church 2003. (Photo by the author)

those who participated in the desanctification. In this case, it was not an enduring, lifelong physical injury but a stain on the reputation of a family. The story suggests that the enduring component of family reputation was equivalent or at least analogous to the enduring physical sign of permanent injury.

With that we have the following relationships among the stories (see Table 1).

Table 1 Table Showing Contrasts Among Stories of Cross Removal from Churches in Kamchatka.

| Location | Immediate Emotional reaction | Enduring Physical consequence | Enduring Social consequence |
|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Khairiuzovo | – | + | – |
| Sedanka | + | – | – |
| Tigil | – | – | + |

The first story expressed no emotional reaction to the cutting of the cross. The sacrilege of the act was recognized in the enduring physical consequences to the participants. The perpetrators were not, however, socially isolated. At least the one returned and showed the artificial limb to community members. There seemed to be no enduring social stigma except for that associated with the artificial limb as a sign of the act. The second story filled in the emotional reaction by suggesting a desire for serious physical consequence. The story does not tell of any physical or social consequences, but does express the sentiment that a physical consequence would be appropriate. Finally, the third involved a social rather than a physical consequence, the family legacy of sacrilege that was passed from father to son.

We can now return to the question posed at the outset of the theoretical relationship between the physical structures and the symbolic structures of the world. Physical structures can endure beyond their original meanings: with desanctification, the church building still stands but its sacred associations are removed. In terms of the semiotics of architecture outlined by Umberto Eco, the three different accounts seem to confirm that for the church, architectural functionality was projected in the spiritual dimension. The church lost its sacred function, but it retained its power, at least in memory, in the generating and enlivening of stories told and retold.

5 Conclusion

Unlike the natural environment of landscape or recurring natural species, the built environment's durability is dependent on social maintenance and highly subject to social manipulation. In this case the temporal dimension of collective religiosity is represented in the church building—the change in status of the building through time is recognized differently in each of the three stories. In the first story we have an example of many such similar stories in which the transgression of a sacred domain leads to lasting personal consequences. In this case destroying a

token of the focal symbol of the Orthodox Church, the cross, leads to lifelong, visible physical injury. For the time that these individuals remained in the community, their injury was a physical sign of the event and a symbol of the continuing power of the church. This story, whether apocryphal or not, was told both during and after the Soviet period. In order to be an effective tale of the power of the Orthodox Church, it did not require that the storyteller express his or her attitude toward the event. Nor did it even require an account of the feelings of the witnesses to the event. Those who repeated such stories could, within the Soviet anti-religious context, tell a tale of the power of the Orthodox Church without having to personally express their or others' belief in that power.

The second story is fascinating because it brings us back to the moment of the event to find out what people, at least some people, were thinking as the desecration was taking place. Agrafena Danilovna's grandfather was a deeply religious individual who prayed many times a day with great seriousness. The story thus tells us of the pain associated with the witnessing of transgression and the intention of retribution. It suggests how a member of the community experienced the sacredness of the church and the consequences he felt to be appropriate when sacrilege took place.

Finally, the third story again emphasizes the perceived effect on the community and the long lasting consequences as transmitted along familial lines. Whether true or not, the story suggests the belief that a son could bear responsibility for the actions of his father, or at least in some way compensate for the transgression. The suggestion is, in other words, that narratives of church destruction create a line of durability within society, which is maintained and lengthened each time such stories are retold. The story of the son, attempting to right the wrong of the father, makes this thread visible even in the absence of other stories about the fate of the Tigil church.

We can now return to the question raised at the beginning of how objectified thought is rooted in collective experience. Greg Urban, in his discourse-centered critique of Lévi-Strauss's analytical approach to myth, argued that Lévi-Strauss attempted to "look through myth" to the concrete world of hot/cold, raw/cooked, north/south and other oppositions that myth encoded as mythical logic (Urban 1991: 29). The shortcoming, Urban points out, is that Lévi-Strauss's approach fails to take into account how "actually occurring discourse publicly embodies collective 'thought'" (Urban 1991: 29). Urban goes on to examine and describe the linguistic and dialogic processes that contribute to the public encoding of collective thought. In this paper I have sought, along similar lines, to illuminate the political, emotional and sociotemporal dimensions that emerge in the telling—and not just the text—of these tales. These dimensions are revealed in the speaker's neutrality in describing injurious consequences, in the anger and desire to shoot, and the legacies of injury to body and honor that are implied and invoked in the stories. The production and reproduction of such stories in various places in Kamchatka and Russia is founded

on the collective nature of the experience as a public event. The second and third stories help to see the motivations that lie behind the models or schemas of narrative production. Each narrative represents an objectified, durable version of a socially constructed, culturally configured, historically situated moment. In a recent essay, Stoler has suggested that in examining the destruction wrought by former empires and colonies, we should be attentive to living legacies in the ruins (Stoler 2008). In other words, instead of venerating or denigrating the ruins as distant and fixed past, we should pay attention to the effects that live on. The Soviet government called for the destruction of Orthodox churches and their icons and other objects all over Russia. Out of the ruins came a myriad of stories that bore with them the idea of the power of the church and the durable effectiveness of narratives told and retold.

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Notes

- 1) Most authors consider Tigil's church to have been the principal church for the whole of central Kamchatka in the early 20th century (Bergman 1923; Volodin 1995). Khairuzovo's church was no doubt second in importance and of particular significance to Itelmen because it was located in the largest Itelmen village.
- 2) Recorded Interview, Khan – Recording 14 June 2007, Vera Innokentevna Khan, Kovran, Kamchatka, with the assistance of Tatiana Degai.
- 3) An earlier version of the paper was given at a special session at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association in honor of the 100th birthday of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

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