



# NORTHERN CLIMES: FR. JOHN VENIAMINOV'S AKUN DIARY

Excerpts from Fr. John's 1828 pastoral visit to Akun, Tigalda, Avotonok, and Akutan Islands

12. Thurs. morn. At 9 o'clock, setting out in a three-holed baidarka [kayak], accompanied by four smaller double-holed – crossed three straits between the islands, at 8 o'clock arrived safely at the village Artelenovskoye on Akun Island, lying not less than 120 *versts* north-east of Unalashka.<sup>x</sup> Beyond the islands of Unalgoi and Akustan, leaving the former behind on the right and the latter on the left, I saw neither big waves nor opposing currents, only small ones from a light head wind.
- 13 Fri. 10, 11 and 12 The inhabitants of all three villages of Akun had come together and were waiting for me. I gathered them in the tent to instruct them at length through my translator Ivan Pan'kov<sup>xx</sup> – the *toion* of the island of Tigalda.
- In the afternoon I visited people's homes, finding them rather clean.
- 14 Sat. Chrismated 46 people of both genders and different ages, heard confessions of 53 people from the other two villages, leaving the inhabitants of this village to confess on my way back; as for children under 9, I only instructed them.
- 15 Sun. 6. 7. After reading the rule, I served Liturgy in the tent and gave Communion to everyone, including 15 minors.
- At 8 o'clock I set out in an 8-oar baidarka in bright, quiet weather and in 4.5 hours arrived

<sup>x</sup> Judging from when the baidarka left, it can cover 10 *versts* [about 10 kilometers] per hour and even more with a favorable current.

<sup>xx</sup> He is a type of administrator here.

- safely at the island of Tigalda, a village lying in the north-east of the island, at a distance of not less than 65 *versts* from the main village of Akun. Crossed three windy straits (especially the last one), without the slightest trouble because the sea was perfectly quiet and still.
- 16 Mon. 8, 9 and 10 Gathering all the local people and those from the island of Umnaka<sup>xxx</sup> (about 15 *versts* from here) into the tent, I instructed them at length through the same translator, Pan'kov – the *toion*. 1.5 degrees of frost in the morning.
11. 12. Chrismated 37 people of both genders and different ages.
- 5 - 10 Served vespers and matins in the stockade,<sup>x</sup> hearing confessions of 43 people... and instructing the minors in lieu of confession.
- 17 Tues. 9, 10 After reading the rule I served Liturgy in the tent and gave Communion to those who confessed and the minors – 63 people. 2 degrees of frost
5. Performed 9 marriages and visited people's rather clean homes.
- At this time, the local people have all been chrismated, confessed, received the Holy Mysteries and (except 2 couples for whom it was impossible<sup>xx</sup>) married.
- 18 Wed. morn. At 5 o'clock set out with a quiet afternoon wind from Tigalda back to Akun. Arrived at 10 o'clock at Avatonok Island, lying close to Akun and Tigalda. Came ashore near a village in the north, having safely sailed at least 45 *versts* along the Derben Strait. 2 degrees of frost
- 11, 12 Gathering the local people in the tent, I instructed them at length through the same translator, Pan'kov, in the afternoon chrismated 16 people and performed 5 marriages. After the vigil heard 14 confessions and instructed the minors instead of confessing.
- 19 Thurs. 6, 7 After reading the rule, I served Liturgy in the tent, gave Communion to all who had confessed and also the minors – 30 people. 1.5 degrees Holy of frost
- Now all of the local people have been chrismated, have confessed, received the Holy Mysteries, and been married.
- At 8 o'clock set out to Akun against a quiet wind across Avataninsky strait... Was in a no small danger when water began pouring into the baidarka; arrived at 11 back at the main village of Akun, Artelenovskoye. Found a baidarka here that had come the day before to pick me up.
- 20 Fri. Due to a strong wind it was impossible to put up a tent.

XXX They have moved here this spring because life there was difficult.

X Strong north wind did not allow us to put up tents.

XX One because he was unwilling to take a blind wife with her children, and the other because his wife was ill. [Trans. note: The first was possibly living with the woman, but unwilling to wed.]

- 21 Sat. 6, 7  
8, 9 Served the vigil, listened to confessions of 29 local people.
- 22 Sun. 7, 8, 9 After reading the rule I served Liturgy in the tent and gave Communion to those who had confessed and the minors. Afterwards served a moleben to St. Alexandra instead of yesterday because the wind didn't allow tents to be put up.
- 11, 12 Performed 12 marriages
- Now all the local people have been anointed, have confessed, received the Holy Mysteries and been married (except one old woman who wasn't here).
- 23 Fri. Wanted to visit and instruct the above-mentioned old woman in a village about 10 *versts* from here, when a sudden illness in translator Pan'kov's foot prevented this. The Aleuts willingly volunteered to bring her here.
- 5 They brought her, and after a short instruction<sup>x</sup> I heard her confession and served her Communion.
- In the evening I had a talk with one of the local old men called Ivan Smirennikov who is considered to be a sorcerer here: but I found quite the contrary. (And to prove this I enclose my talk with him).
24. Tues. morn. At 5 o'clock I set out in a 16-oar canoe which had been sent from the harbor to pick me up,

stopping on the way at the island of Akutan, in Golovskoye, a village in the north. There are only 5 people living here. ✦

*Translated by Inna Belov and M. Nectaria McLees from the diary of Fr. John Veniaminov, in Volume II. Supplement to the Thesis, "Holy Hierarch Innocent Veniaminov (1797-1879) and his Epistolary Heritage" by Job Zamborsky, Leningrad Orthodox Spiritual Academy (1980). (From the collection of the Moscow Patriarchal Synodal Library, Andreevsky Monastery, Moscow.)*

X I could hardly give her the necessary knowledge because of her very old age.