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February 11, 1988 - Thursday  
ANS 401

note-taker - Eric Kuntz

Elder - Alfred Stepetin

Topic - Women and their influence on Aleut Culture and Society

The Aleut women seem to have had a very strong influence on their men. Archaeologists have found many articles pertaining to use by women: NEEDLE CRAFT, WEAVING, WATERPROOF SEWING,

Q - Did Aleuts have tattoos?

A - Yes, but the women were tattooed, on faces and hands. The Church was against it. Most likely, the tattoos were for beauty and to denote possession (to someone)

Some of <sup>the</sup> women's clothing were elaborate, apparently, even nicer than the men's [based on old pictures; possibly these were pictures of higher-status women]

Most men and women only wore parkas; men wore pants when out hunting.

Even today some women continue to weave very fine basketwork. Women in old days were responsible for preparation of food for winter storage. Present day Aleut women have much influence. Women do much of the background work in the

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Church. "Our Church is run by the Sisterhood."  
There are many Aleut women on the village boards.  
Some women have gone to college and then came back to  
work for the people (corporation). "The man stays at home and  
runs the corporation" [Women appear to be the "cement"  
that holds the culture together and the "unsung heroes" ]

St. Herman's Theological Seminary is in Kodiak. Women can  
not be ordained as a priest; highest position a woman  
can hold is a layman's reader. Alfred is tortured, women  
can not be tortured. Torture - A rite; Bishop cuts off  
a lock of hair and this is person's gift to God; as his servant  
I am giving him a gift and then I must promise to work for  
Christ. You only get tortured once.

In Aleut legends, women had much influence.

[BREAK]

Alfred then told a story of a man, his wife, his daughter and the  
woman on the mountain. Also included a little bird saying "he's not  
doing what he said" Basically, the story of a man who faked his  
death so he could be with the old woman on the mountain.

Eliza said there was a similar story in Athapascan culture.

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Alfred's uncle was a storyteller. Most of Alfred's stories are family stories, not tribal stories.

Discussion on women and marriage. A girl had to be 18 or 19 to be married but could borrow some years from her husband-to-be if he was much older (e.g. - in his 40's). This later confused the Social Security records for some women.

People usually go out of village to marry now.

Some of the family stories handed down were "X-rated", not for public telling. Generally, the family stories were told over and over, maybe 15 in all in his family.

7 chiefs in all, one was a "chief of chiefs". Purpose of meetings was often to learn how problems were handled in other villages. Chiefs were always men.