

"The most celebrated of these burial caves was situated on the island of Kaga'mil, one of the group known as the Islands of Four Mountains, or Four Craters. This group is not at present inhabited, except for a short period during the hunting season of each year.

"I visited these islands in 1873, but as the shores are precipitous, and as there are no harbors, the weather was too boisterous to permit us to remain in the vicinity. Even if we had landed, it is probable that we could have done little without a guide.

"The traders in the islands were aware of the existence of this cave and its contents, and one of them, Capt. E. Hennig, of the Alaska Commercial Company's service, had several times attempted to reach it unsuccessfully. In 1874, however, the weather being quite calm, and the presence of a hunting party, which he was taking away from the island, enabling him to find the cave without delay, he visited it and removed all the contents, so far as is known. On their arrival at San Francisco, the Company, who had instructed their agents to procure such material for scientific purposes when compatible with the execution of their regular employment, with commendable liberality, forwarded them to the National Museum at Washington. Two of the mummies were given to the California Academy of Sciences, but all the rest were received by the Smithsonian Institution. It is unfortunate that but few details were obtained as to the exact disposition of the bodies, or mummies, in the cave; the situation and form of the latter, and other particulars which would have had great interest. From accounts received from Father Innokenti Shayesnikoff, previously, I am led to infer that the cave is situated near the shore at a point where the coast is precipitous and without a beach, the landing being on large, irregularly broken fragments of rock, the tables from the cliffs above. The island contains active volcanoes, as I am informed, and in the immediate vicinity of the cave are solfataras, from which steam constantly arises, and the soil is said to be warm to the touch. The rock is of a whitish and ferruginous color and sharp grain. Specimens examined by Dr. Endlich, of the Smithsonian Institution, prove to be a silicious sinter, containing a little alumina and soda, and some hydrous sesquioxide of iron. In the spectroscope traces of lithium and potassium and possibly a trace of lime were seen.

"From this, and from the fact that the atmosphere of the cave is said to have been quite hot, rendering it uncomfortable to remain in, it is possible that the cave itself may be the crater of a small extinct solfataras.

"With regard to the age of these mummies, as they may be styled, I was informed, in 1871, by several of the more intelligent natives, that they fixed the date of the earliest interment in the following manner: It occurred in the autumn or winter. During the following spring the first Russians ever seen by the natives of the Four Craters, arrived in the vicinity. These may have been Trapeanikoff's party, which left Kamschatka in 1758, but did not reach Umnak until 1760; or they may have been that of the infamous Pushkareff; or possibly of Maxim Lazeroff; but in any case, they can hardly have been the expedition