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A SURVEY OF ALASKA, 1743-1799

In this paper an attempt will be made to give a brief sketch of the history and conditions of Alaska¹ from the time of its discovery to the organization of the Russian American Company. Berch calls this period the "Chronological History of the Discovery of the Aleutian Islands." "Discovery" is hardly the proper term in this connection, because all these islands had already been discovered by Bering and Chirikof. Their successors merely charted and exploited them. One must also disagree with this writer when he refers to these years as the time of "colonization." Those who went to Alaska in the eighteenth century did not do so with the intention of making permanent homes there. At present it is gold which attracts the white man, formerly it was the pelt of the sea-otter.²

When the Russians came to Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands they found the otter, but they hunted it so hard that after 1750 it was no more seen on the shores of the peninsula. A few were still left on the Kuril Islands, where they were hunted off and on until 1780.³ With the decrease of the supply the price went up, and this stimulated the hunters

¹The word "Alaska" is probably of Aleutian origin and referred to the Alaska Peninsula. Even today when the Aleut of the Shumagin Islands goes to the peninsula he says, "I am going to Alaska." Until the time of Cook the peninsula was represented on the maps as an island by the name of "Aliaska."

²The sea-otter is a very interesting animal. Hunters never tire of comparing it with man in point of view of intelligence. The otter is, in many respects, unlike the other animals about him: it has no special breeding season, and it is more devoted to its young than the seal, probably because the young otter is helpless for a longer period. When full grown an otter measures from three to five feet from tip to tip, and it has a beautiful silky black fur, occasionally silver-tipped, which enhances its value. A good otter skin commands today a large sum of money; it has always been comparatively high priced and much desired by the Chinese. Muller (Sammlung Russischer Geschichte, III, 529) states that about the middle of the eighteenth century sea-otter skins sold in Kamchatka from ten to fifteen rubles, in Yakutsk from thirty to forty rubles, and on the Chinese frontier, at Kiakta, from sixty to eighty rubles.

³The otters of Kamchatka and the Kurils had thicker fur and were more silver-tipped than those of the Aleutians, and were more in demand.

⁴Scientifically speaking, the Aleutian Islands are those south of the Alaska Peninsula (except Bering and Copper Islands); generally speaking, they include the Aleutian Islands just mentioned, with the addition of the Shumagin group east of the peninsula. From their formation and position one might suppose that at one time all those islands were part of the mainland and become broken up by volcanic action. They stretch out for hundreds of miles, displaying their rocky coast and high snow-covered peaks, with here and there a volcano. Few of these islands have good harbors: most of them are inaccessible to large boats and at times even to small ones. On account of their comparatively mild climate, numerous

to go to newly discovered islands⁴ from which the crews of Bering and Chirikof⁵ brought hundreds of pelts.

While skin-covered boats called "baidaras" did well enough for hunting the coast of Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands, the hunters realized, from the fate of the vessels of Bering and Chirikof, that strong wooden vessels were needed to go to the far and little known islands. Few of these Siberians understood either the building or the navigating of a ship. Lack of material was another drawback. Iron had to be brought from the interior, and it sold at Okhotsk for a half ruble the pound. But these men were not easily discouraged. Either at Okhotsk, Bolshaja Reka, or Lower Kamchatka timber was cut, and out of this unseasoned material ships were made. Since no iron nails were to be had, or only at a very great expense, wooden pegs were generally used, at least until about 1760, and the frame was "sewed" together with rope or leather. From this last operation the boats received the name of "shitki," sewed. Most shitki were from forty to fifty feet long. When in 1760 a galliot⁶ with a sixty-two foot keel was constructed⁷ it attracted attention. What was lacking in length was made up in height in order to accommodate a fifty-ton cargo, provisions, and a crew of about fifty men. If the vessel proved too small a few feet in height were added⁷. Another peculiar thing about these crafts was the rudder-blade, which was unusually long—about ten feet. According to the ideas of these navigators the speed of the boat depended in some measure on the size of the rudder-blade, and in order to increase the speed additions were made to the blade.⁸ There was but one short mast and, for the sake of economy, the sails were narrow. What speed may one expect from such a structure? In fair weather two or three miles an hour, very seldom as high as five. The seaworthiness of these crafts may be judged from the fact that of all the boats which left the Siberian ports for America about twenty per cent never returned to the home ports,⁹ and this does not include boats wrecked and repaired.

rocks and reefs, and abundance of shell fish, sea-animals, and in particular the sea-otter, resorted here in great numbers. These islands are sometimes spoken of as the "Nearer" and "Farther" Aleutians. The former term applies to the islands near Kamchatka, such as Attu, and the latter to those in the neighborhood of Unalaska Island. The "Fox" Islands are the same as the "Farther" Islands, and they were so named because of the large number of foxes found there at one time. "Adreanofsky" has reference to a group of islands of which Atka is the best known.

⁵Muller (*Sammlung Russischer Geschichte*, III., 248) says that Bering's crew brought with them from the Bering Island nine hundred otter pelts, Steller's individual share being three hundred.

⁶This is the name the English sailors gave to these boats.

⁷Baranof once told Berch that a hunter once came to him complaining that the company's carpenter refused to add at least three feet to the height of his boat.

⁸Ships on meeting would inquire of each other whether the rudder-blade had been lengthened since leaving port.

⁹The figures here given the writer has worked out from the table at the end of the paper. Kruzenstern, *Voyage Autour du Monde* (Paris, 1821, Vol I. II.), says that one-third of the boats were lost.

As there were not enough sailors in Kamchatka and Okhotsk to supply the demand, the traders engaged men from the interior of Siberia and entrusted the ships to their care. These men did not understand navigation, they were not even spoken of as sailors, but as "promyshleniki," hunters, especially hunters of sea-animals.¹⁰

In the matter of food, the hunters lived on the flesh of sea-animals,¹¹ on salt and fresh fish, such edible roots and berries as the islands offered, and black rye bread. Liquor, and in particular "vodka," was consumed in great quantities when it could be had. "Sour-dough," a famous Alaska drink, had its origin probably about this time. From such diet and unsanitary quarters many suffered from scurvy, some of the boats lost as high as fifty per cent of the crew. But privations and disease were accepted as a matter of course. Add to this, however, sufferings from shipwreck, and you have a picture of almost indescribable misery, as in the case of the

¹⁰It may be of interest to follow one of these expeditions in order to get a clear idea of the system of navigation and the "atmosphere" of the voyage, if such a term is permissible. The "Zosimi and Savatya," a galliot, with a crew of about fifty, made up of Russians and natives, was ready to sail from Okhotsk in 1797. All was ready with the exception that a navigator was wanting, as none of the crew knew how to set a course. The port officials were appealed to and they recommended a man. After being out at sea several days, it became quite evident that the so-called navigator was an ordinary sailor, who knew little else than how to trim sails. Fortunately the weather was fair and Bering Island was reached without accident. On Bering and Copper Islands the crew hunted for three years, and at the end of that time decided to go to the Aleutian Islands. But the question was how to reach there. If they had a start they knew not how to use it; it is quite probable that they were altogether without one. After consultation it was decided to sail northeast, then south; for, said the hunters, the Aleutians form a long chain, and the islands are so close together that by first going northeast and then south we cannot miss them. With fair winds they sailed several days north-easterly and then changed the course to southerly. For two months, September and October, they sailed on without seeing any islands. According to one of the stories which a sailor told Berch, the boat ran into a warm current in October, and in November the heat was almost tropical. The crew became excited and quite at a loss to know what to do. Another ship's council was called to discuss the situation. Some were of the opinion that the Aleutians had been passed; others were of a different mind. While they were deliberating an island covered with fur-seal loomed up, but before they had time to take a good look a fog set in and a storm loomed up. The sailors saw in this island the hand of the Evil One and they determined to flee from it as fast as possible. An image of the Virgin was brought on deck and all prayed that She would take charge of the ship and set the course. In answer to their prayer, a strong wind from the south began to blow and forced the boat to go north, and after sailing on this course for about two weeks Afognak Island came in view. So glad were the sailors to see a familiar spot that they dropped the anchor without ascertaining the depth of the water, and the result was that the boat was carried on the rocks, and was saved only by the cutting of the cables. Fortunately all the crews were not as ignorant; but judging from the stories of the English and French seamen who visited the shores of Kamchatka and Alaska towards the end of the eighteenth century, one is forced to believe that very few of the promyshleniki knew very much about navigation. Accounts of this voyage may be found in

Davidof, *Dvukratnoe Puteshestvie, V. Ameriku*. Vol. I.

Berch, in *Sin Otchestva*, 1819.

Zapiski Hydrograficheskovo Departamenta, 1850.

Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, describes these Russian sailors as he saw them in California about 1840.

¹¹During the greater part of the eighteenth century Bering Island was used by the hunters as a wintering ground. While one half of the crew hunted for the otter and the fox the other half killed the sea-cow and sea-lion and other marine animals for their meat, which was put up for future consumption.

Capiton, which went to sea in 1757 with a crew of forty or more and returned with thirteen.¹²

Once on the hunting ground the boat was laid up and the men separated into two or more parties, and either went to different parts of the same island or to different islands for the winter. On the selected camping ground an underground hut was constructed out of drift-wood, grass and dirt. The fall was spent in securing provisions for the winter. When the cold set in traps were put out for the foxes, and the otters were clubbed on the rocks or followed to sea.

During the first part of the period the owner of the boat and the hunters shared the profits of the voyage on a basis something like the following. A boat that had a crew of forty-six men, including officers, would agree to divide the catch into forty-six shares: three to the navigator, two to the chief hunter, one to the church or school. Of the remaining forty shares half was claimed by the owner of the boat and the other half was divided among the men by lot. Nearly always two or three shares were set aside to be distributed among the best hunters. At times these men rolled in wealth, but it was also not uncommon to find them at the end of the voyage in debt for their outfits.

It would seem that toward the end of the century, when the trade centered in fewer hands and the supply of labor equaled the demand, the hunters were paid so much a trip or so much a year, making the best bargains they could. Their wages, although high, had to be taken out in trade at exorbitant prices.¹³ In this way the companies kept the men in debt all the time.

¹²"They had not long sailed", says Coxe, "before they were driven back to the shore of Kamchatka by stress of weather, and the vessel stranded; by which accident they lost the rudder and one of the crew. The misfortune prevented them from putting to sea again until the following year, with thirty-nine of the original crew, several persons being left behind on account of sickness. They made directly to Bering Island, where they took up two of Krasinikof's crew, who had been shipwrecked. They again set sail in August of the same year, and touched at the nearest of the Aleutian Isles, after suffering greatly from storms. They then continued their course to the remoter islands lying between East and Southeast. They anchored off one of the islands and sent a boat ashore which was forced to return, being attacked by the natives. They had no sooner got aboard than a violent gale of wind blowing from the shore broke the cable and drove them out to sea. The weather became suddenly thick and foggy; and under these circumstances the vessel was forced upon a small island and at no great distance from the other, and shipwrecked. The crew got to shore with difficulty, and were able to save nothing but firearms and ammunition. * * * From the 6th of September to the 23rd of April they underwent all the extremities of famine: during that period their best fare was shell fish and roots, and they were even at times reduced to still the cravings of their appetites with the leather which the waves washed ashore from the wreck. Seventeen died of hunger and the rest would soon have followed their companions, if they had not fortunately discovered a dead whale which the sea had cast ashore. They remained upon this island another winter, where they killed 230 sea-otters; and having built a small vessel out of the remains of the wreck, they put to sea in the beginning of the year 1760. They had scarcely reached one of the Aleutian Islands, where Serebranikof's vessel lay at anchor, when they were again shipwrecked and lost all the remaining tackle and furs. Only thirteen of the crew now remained who returned on board the above men-

There existed also the old-fashioned stock companies. In 1790 the George went out hunting, and the "catch" was to be divided as follows:

1	share to the church	2	navigator
1	school at Okhotsk	4½	best hunters
3	chief hunter		
Merchants Interested			
13	shares to Shelikof	1	share to Pocholkof
6	Jigaref	2	Manchurin
2	Bechtln	2	Koslef
11	Rochzelof	2	Shapkin
1	Kuznezof	1	Lenjoy
3	Protopof	1	Budishzef
1	Sibriakof	37	Lastochkin, owner of the
1	Sharapof		boat.
2	Sizof		

There is no special reason for speaking in detail of all these hunting expeditions, and therefore only those have been selected for this paper which in any way throw light on the period. Bering's crew returned to Kamchatka in 1742, and the year following Emilion Basof, in partnership with a merchant from Moscow, fitted out a small vessel, the *Capiton*, and set sail for Bering Island. The result of the voyage is unknown, but it must have been profitable, for before his death Basof made three other ventures, in 1745, 1747, and 1749. He hunted principally on Bering and Copper Islands.¹⁴

Other men followed Basof's example. In 1745, the *Evdokia*, in charge of Michael Nevodchikof, sailed as far as the Nearer Aleutians.¹⁵ The crew and the natives got into a fight, and several of the latter were killed. On the homeward voyage the boat was wrecked, but no lives were lost.

According to Coxe, Emilion Yugof obtained from the government the exclusive privilege of hunting on Bering and Copper Islands for the price of one-third of his catch. Yugof sailed in 1750 on the *St. John* with a crew of twenty-seven men, but was forced back by storm and thereby lost a whole year. Yugof died on Bering Island, and the boat on her return was seized by the government because Yugof failed to live up to certain clauses in his contract. Later part of the cargo was restored to his heirs.

Nikifor, a Moscow merchant, built a galliot, the *Julian*, which he put in the care of the navigator Stephen Golotof with instructions to sail eastwardly to some of the new islands. Golotof entered on his work in 1758, but on account of stormy weather he could go that season no farther than Bering Island. In the summer of 1759 (?) he sailed away once more and after thirty days came to the island of Umnak and later to Unalaska.

tioned vessel to Kamchatka. (Coxe, W. *An Account of the Russian Discoveries*, London, 1787, 63-66).

¹³Billing's Voyage, Chapter XII.

¹⁴Basof in 1747 picked up on Copper Island objects made by civilized people. The crew of the *St. Nicholas* found in 1754 on one of the Aleutian Islands, three copper plates with engraving on them. Similar objects were discovered on the Pribilofs.

¹⁵Pallas, *Neue Nordische Beytrage*, 3, 279.

Here he found so many black and other foxes (no blue foxes) that he gave to these places the name of Fox Islands.

Tolstich in command of the *Adrean* and *Natalie* left Kamchatka in 1760 for the Aleutian Islands. With him were two Cossacks, Peter Vassutin, and Maxim Lazareef. The boat anchored in the neighborhood of Adach Island, and while here the three men charted, described, and made an estimate of the population of the islands of Kanago, Chetchina, Tagalach, Atka, Amlia, and Adach. In honor of the boat the islands are known as *Adreanofsky*.

This same year (1760) Bechevin, a wealthy Irkutsk trader, sent out the *Gabriel*, at the time the largest boat, having a sixty foot keel. Her crew was made up of forty-two Russians and twenty Kamchadels. There was also on board a tribute gatherer by the name of Pizaref. After several stops the vessel reached Umnak and from there came to the Alaska Peninsula, although at the time it was thought to be an island. This voyage is also noteworthy on account of the cruelties committed by the crew on the natives.

Golotof, who was the first to locate Umnak and Unalaska, was sent by several merchants in the *Adrean* and *Natalie* to find new hunting grounds. He left Kamchatka in 1762, wintered on Copper Island, proceeded the next summer to Umnak, from there sailed eastward, passing the Shumagin Islands, and finally reached Kodiak Island, where he wintered. During his stay the natives made several ineffectual attempts on his boat.

The seal islands were discovered by Pribilof in 1785. Berch claims that Shelikof's crews had hunted on these islands before this date, when the islands were known as the "Zubof Islands." These, in brief, are all the hunting voyages during this period that deserve special mention. For more details the table at the end of the paper should be consulted.

Fortunately for the Russians the first people with whom they came in contact in America were the Aleuts, a fish-eating, inoffensive, and unwarlike race.¹⁶ The origin of the Aleut, even his name¹⁷ is shrouded in mystery. Of medium height, with dark skin, black wiry hair, and black eyes the Aleut might be called handsome. He differs from the Kolosh to the east of him and the Eskimo to the west of him, and at first glance one is struck by his resemblance to the Japanese. The lower part of the Aleut's body is not so well developed as the upper, due to the cramped position of

¹⁶The Russians made no headway against the natives of the mainland of Alaska, at least not during this period. They did not venture north of Kodiak Island until they had seen Cook's charts.

¹⁷The word Aleut is probably of Chukchi origin. In the early eighteenth century the Chukchi referred to the people of America as "Kitschin Elaet." From this it would be easy enough to make Aleut. See Wrangell, *Sibera and Polar Sea* (London, 1840), 414.

his limbs in the boat. In building and in handling his skin boat, "baidarka," he has no equal, and he is greatly superior to his neighbors in the hunting of sea-animals. Calling him unwarlike is meant in comparison with the meat-eating natives of the mainland and the plains. Among themselves the Aleuts have always warred, and their sworn enemy was the native of Kodiak Islands. The first white men among them were made welcome. It may have been due, as Veniaminof suggests, to their expectation of a white Messiah. But there is no need to look for deep, mysterious reasons. The Aleut is naturally hospitable, and he tried to make the new-comer feel at home. The Russian was on his best behavior because he feared the Aleut, whose kindness was unexpected. The result was that at the beginning the two races were at peace; but the illusion was soon dispelled, and trouble commenced. As a general thing the Aleut is not of a jealous disposition, and in his eagerness to make his guest welcome he went so far as to give up his share of the bed. This was more than the hunters had anticipated. They went one step farther and made themselves entirely at home, and masters of all the female relatives of the Aleut. The children were kept for ransom and their fathers had to exchange them for otter and fox skins. When it became necessary to go farther east to secure otter skins the Aleuts were forced to go along.¹⁸ Another source of trouble was the tribute. This institution was incomprehensible to the free and independent native and he rebelled against it. All these impositions and insults the Aleut endured for a time and then decided to throw off the yoke by killing the Russians. The attempt as a whole failed; and the punishment which the Russians inflicted has broken the spirit of the Aleut and has made of him a cowardly creature.

In the year 1762, the natives of Umnak and Unalaska agreed to fall on the Russians while they were scattered in hunting parties. During the winter three vessels were destroyed and many hunters were killed and the survivors had thrilling and narrow escapes. Reports of this uprising came to the ears of Ivan Solovief and he determined to teach the natives a lesson which they would long remember. He went about it systematically, and if Davidof's figures are to be believed, he killed as many as three thousand Aleuts. He attacked them openly, and when they fled to cover he blew them up with powder. Many of the murdered were quite innocent. Vaniaminof says that Solovief tied the natives breast to back in order to learn through how many bodies a bullet could penetrate.

¹⁸In 1778 a party of natives from the Fox Islands were taken to Kodiak, but so strong was the feud between the natives of these islands that the Kodiak people would not allow the Aleuts to be landed. Hunting parties of Aleuts worked for the Russians on Prince William's Sound, Yakutat, and Sitka. In 1802 a hundred Aleuts were killed by the natives of Sitka, and many others lost their lives in going and coming. (*Chronologicheskaja Istorija Otkritija Aleutskich Ostrovoŭ, St. Petersburg, 1823, 149-50.*)

There were many other cases of cruelty, and the cries of the natives reached the ears of Catherine II., who ordered an investigation; but very little was done. The Empress was sincerely grieved at the condition of affairs. In a letter to the Siberian governor she asks him to use his influence with the hunters to secure for the islanders more merciful treatment.¹⁹

For reasons, chiefly financial, the Russian government encouraged these hunting expeditions. When Basof's voyage became known in the capital, the Senate requested the Admiralty College to draw up charts of the new regions from the best sources, principally after the journals of Bering, Chirikof, and Basof. Later Synd, Krenitzin and Lavashef, and Billings were commissioned to go into the Alaskan waters and to chart the new possessions.²⁰

Medals and presents in money were now and then given as an encouragement. Talstich, Vassautin and Lazariet were rewarded for their full and detailed report of the Adreanof Islands.²¹

Of the various sources of revenue, the smallest and least satisfactory was the tribute.²² The tribute gatherer made trouble and the traders were

¹⁹Berch, C. I. O. A. O., 57. The term of "Russian cruelty" does not altogether explain these inhuman acts. The causes are deeper. These crimes should not be laid at the door of the Russian people as a whole, but to this particular class of Russians, who were influenced by their occupation, lack of home influences, and gloomy climate. Those who have spent winters in the Arctic regions know how quickly the white man, no matter what his race, degenerates and is brutalized, under the conditions just given. The occupation of the hunter, the shedding of blood, has a tendency to cheapen life, even human life, in his sight. All these acts of bestiality charged to the Russian hunters were, as a rule, perpetrated in the winter when there is little to do, the stomach full, the sun out of sight, and the mind filled with no other thoughts than those furnished by one's abnormal passions. It is also worth noting that these Siberians had several generations of this kind of life behind them.

²⁰The hunters were hedged in with regulations. Before they could sail they had to secure permission from the officers of the port. All boats were required to make Okhotsk on the return from the islands; but if the season was far advanced they were forbidden to navigate in the Okhotsk Sea, which had a bad reputation, and were forced to pass the winter in Kamchatka.

²¹In 1761 the Julian returned from the Fox Islands with a cargo of beautiful fox skins, and a number of them were sent to the Empress. She in return, in 1764, presented gold medals to the six merchants (Orechof, Snigiref, Kulkof, Shapkin, Panof, and Nikifrof) interested in the voyage, freed them from certain civil and military duties and from the payment of six thousand rubles they owed the government, and at the same time requested that some one acquainted with the islands and conditions there be sent to her at public expense. A merchant by the name of Shilof was ordered to go. On his arrival the Empress asked him to draw up a chart of the islands which she sent to the Admiralty College, and by way of reward she requested the Senate to bestow medals on Shilof and his partners and to grant them the same privileges that the six merchants just mentioned enjoyed. Three or four years later Shilof and his partners (Lapin and Orechof) presented the Empress one hundred and twenty very fine black fox skins. Shilof, who brought them in person, was received by the Empress and thanked, and his company was excused from paying nine thousand rubles. In 1779 the same company gave her Majesty three hundred black fox skins. This time Lapin and Orechof carried them. They, too, were presented to the Empress, were shown about the palace and breakfasted, and before leaving were notified that the twenty-one thousand five hundred rubles which the government had charged to their account had been wiped off the books. Twelve other merchants were given medals at the same time (Berch in his C. I. gives the details).

²²Tribute gatherers were sent out for the first time in 1746.

unwilling to take them along. Berch says that the Empress abolished that tax in 1779 when she heard of the hardships of the natives; but it seems that it was collected just the same, because Billings speaks of meeting tribute gatherers at Kodiak in 1790.

Towards the support of the Okhotsk port the government demanded one-tenth of all the furs landed. The greatest amount of money came, however, from the export and import duties. All the furs from the newly discovered islands found their way sooner or later to Okhotsk. From here they were sent on horses, by way of Jakutsk and Irkutsk—a distance of two thousand five hundred and fifty-five miles—to Kiakta, a small town on the Russo-Chinese frontier. According to the treaty of 1728, this town was designated by the two powers as one of the places where the merchants of the two empires might trade. Less than a quarter of a mile from Kiakta was the Chinese town of Maimatschin, where the Chinese merchants dwelt. February was the principal month of trade, and it was important that one should be there on time.²³ Pallas gives the price of furs at Kiakta during the years 1770, 1771 and 1772, taken from the official reports. The writer has been unable to find a complete list of the prices of furs in Kamchatka for the same time, but gives such as he found.²⁴

Prices in Kiakta		Prices in Kamchatka
Black foxes, up to	100 rubles	
Red	3.50	1.20
Cross	6.	2.50
Blue	2.	
White	2.	
Black, silver-tipped, up to	180.	
Sea-otter	90. to 40.	
Sea-otter, tails,	2. to 40.	1st quality 60.
Sea-otter, young,	30. to 7.	2nd quality 40.
Fur-seal	1.50 to 6.	3rd quality 25.

Taking these figures as the average annual price, it is possible to compute the revenue of the government from the Alaska fur trade.

Duties paid at Kiakta on the export of the fur.....	23%
For deepening the river.....	1%
Towards the support of the custom-house.....	7%
<hr/>	
Total.....	31%

²³Since the traders of the two nations could not either of them speak the others language, they had recourse to a common tongue, the Mongol. As the Russians were forbidden to export coin and the Chinese had nothing but silver bullion to offer, which the Russians refused because of its depreciation, it resulted that the whole trade was carried on by means of barter. This permitted the Russian government to levy both an export and an import duty. A trade was consummated in the following manner. The Chinaman came over to Kiakta, examined the furs he needed, and over a cup of tea the buyer and seller agreed on the price of the purchase. When this point had been settled, the two merchants walked over to Maimatschin, where the Russian picked out his goods,—cloth, silk, tea, tobacco, beads, etc. Leaving some one in charge of the goods, so that the Chinaman would not exchange them for an inferior quality, the Russian went to fetch the bundle of fur which the Chinaman had selected and sealed before leaving Kiakta.

²⁴For an interesting account of the trade consult Pallas' Voyage, Vol. I., Chapter XII. The Kamchatka prices are taken from Berch's C. I. O. A. O. 84.

In 1770 there was taken out from the Aleutian Islands

463,331 rubles worth of fur, valued at Kamchatka,
46,333 rubles, or one-tenth, duty paid at Okhotsk,
416,998, value of furs when they left Okhotsk,
833,996, value of furs at Kiakta (double Kamchatka prices), and 31%
of this equals 258,339 rubles.

In addition to the revenue from the exports, the government raised also a large sum of money from the imports which the Russian traders got from the Chinaman in exchange for fur.

A question naturally suggests itself: Was the trade a profitable one from the point of view of the Russian merchant? Shelikof started at the bottom, and when he died he was regarded as wealthy, this was also true of Lebedef Lastachkin and, no doubt, others. On the other hand, Trapeznikof, who was active in the business at the beginning, dropped out about the middle of the sixties, principally because about that time he lost several boats. Before the furs were disposed of at Kiakta much money was needed in order to provide for the outfit, wages, transportation, commission, custom duties, and, with many, interest on their working capital. Of the invoice the government alone received forty per cent, thirty per cent of the balance probably defrayed the other expenses, this left a profit of about thirty per cent. If there were no shipwrecks, and the cargoes were large there was money to be gained. Chance played an unusually important part in this trade. It is not clear whether the merchants disposed of their importations directly or indirectly, but in either case there must have been a profit.

On Bering Island where the crew of the wrecked *St. Peter* wintered in 1741-2 there were hundreds, if not thousands of otters, and on the other islands condition were about the same. The blue foxes were in equally great abundance. Steller complains that the stay of the men on the island was made very unpleasant by these animals. They could neither be scared, killed, nor driven off; but remained near camp night and day stealing what they could eat and destroying the things they could not eat.²⁵ But the numerous hunting parties killed off thousands of otters and drove the others eastward. They were pursued from one island to another, along the mainland, and at the end of the century hunting crews of Russians were found in Cook's Inlet, Prince William's Sound, Yakutat, Sitka, and a little later (1810) in California. After Cook's voyage to the North Pacific, trading vessels from England, Flanders, France, the United States, California, appeared in these waters and departed for China with cargoes of fur. Leaving out of account the traders from the countries just mentioned, one finds that the Russians alone from 1743 to 1799 took out of Alaska one hundred eighty-six thousand seven hundred fifty-four (186,754) otter skins, an average of three thousand three hundred thirty-nine (3,339) skins a year. It would not be at all surprising to know that many pelts were never recorded on the books of the custom house.

²⁵Steller, in Pallas' *Neye Nordische Beytrage* V. 236.

The migration of the otter eastward affected the hunters in several ways. In the first place it took a longer time to make the voyage; where at the beginning one or two years were sufficient, towards the end of the century five to seven years were required. Secondly, more capital was needed for the costly and distant expeditions. A merchant with a small capital could not stand the strain, and he either went out of business or combined with others in the same situation as himself. By 1795 there were practically but three companies doing business in Alaska. Lebedef's company, which had posts along the mainland and Prince William's Sound; Kiselef's company, interested chiefly in the Aleutian Islands; and Shelikof's company, on Kodiak Island.²⁶

It was to be foreseen that these companies, hunting so close to each other and selling in the same market, would sooner or later unite to avoid costly competition, unnecessary expense in administration, and conflicts between hunting crews. In 1798 such a combination was organized, and a year later it received a charter authorizing it to do business under the name of the Russian American Company.

In conclusion it should be said that the aim of this paper has not been so much to make a learned study of the period, as to bring out in a brief and clear way the characteristic features, the points of interest and historic importance. Any one desiring more information may work it out from the table here given. Black, red, and cross-foxes were not found on the Nearer, Adreanofsky, and Rat Islands, nor were blue foxes seen on the Farther Aleutians. Fur seals were found on nearly all the Aleutian Islands. The chronological table of the voyage together with the invoice of the cargo as given indicate at a glance just where the hunting season was passed. Other voyages than those of the Russians have been merely mentioned and not discussed, since it is a topic that deserves special attention.

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²⁶More is known of the last mentioned company since it is the nucleus of the Russian American Company. Shelikof's company was organized by Gregory Shelikof, a Riisk merchant. From glimpses here and there the impression is left that he was a man of large ideas, that he had a hand and was leader in every scheme which promised large profits, and that he did much business with a little capital. On humanitarian principles his treatment of the natives was not always based. Sauer relates that during his stay in Alaska (in the time of Shelikof) he heard "very unfavorable accounts of Gregory Shelikof." The official name of the company was the "Shelikof-Golokof Company." It was organized in 1781 with a capital of sixty-six thousand five hundred rubles (66,500), subscribed by I. Golikof thirty thousand (30,000), M. Golikof twenty thousand (20,000), G. Shelikof fifteen thousand (15,000), and Yudin fifteen hundred (1,500). Shelikof was the leader of the organization, and it was generally known as "Shelikof's Company." About the first thing Shelikof did on arriving in Kodiak was to surprise "their women collecting berries, carried them prisoners to his habitation, and kept them as hostages for the peaceful behavior of the men, only returning wives for daughters, and the youngest children of the chiefs." In 1790 about two hundred daughters of the chiefs were kept as hostages. Twelve hundred of the men were sent out to hunt, and others were engaged in various occupations for the company. For a good sea otter skin the native received a "string of beads four feet long; for other furs in proportion." (For a good account of the workings of the company read Billings's Voyage, Chapter XII.)

Names of Navigators, Owners and Boats, 1743-1799

Invoice of Cargo

Year Boat Ret'd	Name of Boat	Name of Navigator	Names of Owners	Tribute		Otters	Otters Tails	Fur Seal	Whale bone	Land Otters	Silver	Foxes			Wal- rus	Value of Cargo in Rubles	
				Otters	Foxes							Cross	Red	Blue			
1745	Kapiton	E. Basof	Basof & Serebrenikof	.....	.....	1,670	1,780	1,990	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,240	.....	112,220
1746	Kapiton	E. Basof	Basof & N. Trapesnikof	.....	.....	320	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	19,200
1747	Evdokia	M. Nevochikof	Chebaiskoi & Trapesnikof	.....	.....	352	321	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,481	23,024
1748	St. John	A. Tolstich	Trapesnikof, Balin & Jukof	.....	.....	58	58	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	650	4,780
1749	Perkup & Sandt	Bachof	Jilkin & Novikof	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1749	.....	.....	Vsevidof	.....	.....	1,040	860	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,110	.....	52,590
1749	John	.....	Ribinskoi & Tirin	.....	.....	522	63	300	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,080	.....	39,376
1750	Peter	Basof	Basov & Trapesnikof	.....	.....	820	700	7,010	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,900	.....	61,520
1752	St Simeon & Anna	Borobief	Ribinskoi & Tirin	.....	.....	15	1,520	1,590	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	105,730
1753	Boris & Gleb	M. Nevodchi	Trapesnikof	.....	.....	790	755	2,222	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	7,044	.....	65,429
1754	John	.....kof	E. Yugof	.....	.....	1,600	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	17	80,000
1755	.....	.....	F. Cholodilof	.....	.....	6	.....	250	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,222	.....	3,474
1755	Boris & Gleb	A. Drujinin	Trapesnikof	.....	.....	1,260	680	.....	140	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	65,000
1755	Jeremiah	.....	Ribinskoi & Tirin	.....	.....	49	1,644	1,370	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	82	.....	95,000
1755	John	A. Tolstich	Trapesnikof & Balin	.....	.....	.....	3,117	2,800	10	11	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	189,268
1757	St. Nicholas	Durnef	Trapesnikof	.....	.....	122	4,573	2,700	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	354,900
1757	Fish	.....	Trapesnikof	.....	.....	.....	169	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,149	.....	14,438
1758	.....	.....	Krasilnikof	.....	.....	5	1,819	1,710	840	.....	.....	.....	.....	720	.....	109,355
1758	John	.....	Balin, Jukof & Trapesnikof	.....	.....	.....	990	540	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	50,355
1758	Peter & Paul	.....	Ribinskoi & Tirin	.....	.....	.....	292	240	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	17,330
1759	Capiton	Studenzo	Jilkin	.....	.....	92	5,300	3,710	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,813	.....	317,541
1759	Adrean & Natalia	Tolstich	Trapesnikof, Balin & Jukof	.....	.....	42	2,444	1,870	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	150,277
1761	Peter & Paul	Serebrinikof	Ribinskoi & Tirin	.....	.....	.....	1,750	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	101,430
1762	Zacharias & Eliza- beth	Cherepanof	Posnikof, Krasilnikof & Kulof	11	26	1,465	280	.....	.....	1,002	1,100	400	58	22	.....	130,450
1762	Julian	S. Golotof	Nikiforof	.....	.....	.....	928	965	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	58,170
1762	Nicholas	Trapesnikof	2	914	390	1	18	20	39	349	40	23	52,570
1762	Gabriel	.....	Bechevin	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1762	Adrian	.....	Chebaiskof	.....	.....	.....	1,485	827	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	78,304
1763	Vladimir	Paikof	Kraselnikof. & Trapesnikof	.....	.....	91	1,766	510	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	109	.....	104,218
1763	.....	.....	Chebaiskof & Trapesnikof	.....	.....	.....	301	153	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	10	.....	17,040
1763	Peter & Paul	.....	Ribinskoi & Tirin	.....	.....	.....	567	279	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	67	.....	31,817
1763	.....	.....	Popof	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	68,000
1766	Adrean & Natalia	Bootof	Chebaiskof, V&I Popof & S. Lapin	.....	.....	35	340	70	.....	569	513	170	.....	.....	.....	42,280
1766	Peter & Paul	Delarof	Gregoroi & P. Popof	.....	.....	.....	143	9	.....	61	130	7	.....	.....	.....	10,524
1766	Nicholas	.....	Trapesnikof	.....	.....	100	3,036	2,220	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	582	.....	120,000
1764	Adrean & Natalia	Tolstich	A. Tolstich	.....	.....	8	1,867	395	.....	70	393	561	420	68	1	132,806
1764	.....	.....	V. Popof	.....	.....	.....	383	338	3,370	.....	70	393	56	1,733	8	32,574
1768	Peter & Paul	.....	Trapesnikof	.....	.....	40	1,272	678	.....	.....	681	802	425	1,054	.....	98,740
1768	John Ustuiski	.....	Panof	.....	.....	84	1,440	896	1,845	60	.....	.....	.....	1,045	.....	83,387
1769	Vladimir	Sapojnikof	S. Krasilnikof	.....	.....	23	78	600	.....	.....	960	1,018	10	.....	.....	68,520
1770	Paul	A. Ocherion	Orechof, Lapin & Shilof	.....	.....	154	.....	5,128	3,991	.....	1	.....	.....	1,093	.....	284,868
1770	Peter & Paul	Delarof	Panof	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1770	Adrean	.....	Peloponesof & V. Popof	.....	.....	14	150	1,107	151	.....	996	1,419	593	38	2	109,943
1772	John Ustuijski	.....	Popof	.....	.....	14	47	1,107	151	.....	1,102	1,427	600	38	1	111,889

