

The Organization of Pomor Hunting Expeditions to Spitsbergen in the 18th Century

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ABSTRACT

The paper is focused on the practical issues connected to the organization of Russian hunting expeditions to Spitsbergen in the 18th century including some administrative regulation of Spitsbergen shipping. Using the wide range of archival materials, the authors study the social status and geographical origin of organizers and participants of Spitsbergen hunting. The hunting expeditions were organized by both private persons and institutions, and the town-dwellers were the most numerous group of the organizers. Among the institutions the monopolistic trade companies established under Peter the Great rule for the colonization of the region.

The organization of expedition required large investment and included a number of mandatory bureaucratic procedures. The core of the hunting teams consisted of professional hunters who mainly were born in several well-defined zones of the White Sea coastal area. The crew was usually recruited from the relatively small part of the population who for different reasons were excluded from the communal economy typical for the Pomor peasantry. From the archival sources it is calculated that the shipping to Spitsbergen was about only 1% of the total commercial shipping in the White and Barents Sea basins excluding foreign vessels.

INTRODUCTION

Descriptions of Russian hunting expeditions to Spitsbergen in both academic and popular literature suffer from being described in too general terms. They are usually mentioned as “numerous”, and results of hunting are described as “very profitable”. However, most of them are not based on solid documentary evidence or quantitative estimations. In these publications figures are either not provided at all, or if provided references are unclear. Even figures on the number of ships involved show basic uncertainty and unreliable exaggerations. Too often references which look reliable stem from unreliable sources published at the end of the 19th or at the very beginning of the 20th century, a period when real history and the mythological

heroic past of Russian presence in the Arctic were interlinked and used as a tool in arguing for better economic development of the Russian North. There were almost no professional historians among the authors of these publications, but scientists, explorers, students of local lore or representatives of local authorities. A typical phrase from this literature is the following: "There is exact historical data on the fact that in the 17th – 18th centuries the [Russian] walrus hunting on Spitsbergen and Medvezhii (Bear Island) reached a large scale".¹ But no data were provided. Thus we fully agree with the diagnosis on "resilience of national historiographical traditions" made by the Norwegian historian Thor Arlov.²

We do not plan in this paper, which is fully devoted to the period of the 18th century, to discuss the hot question "When did the Pomors come to Svalbard?"³ In his classic paper on Russian walrus hunting, Nils Stora cautiously stated that Russian activities on Spitsbergen started "sometime before 1700",⁴ while now the most conventional assumption is to place the Pomor period of Spitsbergen hunting to the 18th – first half of the 19th century.⁵ All the documents we have found fit well into this period. However, we also do not intend to discuss in this paper the decline of Pomor hunting in the first half of the 19th century. Although the 18th century is considered as "a heyday" of Pomor hunting on Spitsbergen,⁶ this period has never been thoroughly researched by historians. It is no easy task because there is no single overarching archival collection on that subject. To find information historians need to search in a large number of very diverse collections in several central and regional archives.

In the framework of the IPY program LASHIPA and financially supported by the Dutch Research Council we got the opportunity to study the documents in the State Archives of the Arkhangelsk region (GAAO); State Archives of Ancient Statements (RGADA, Moscow); Archives of the St. Petersburg Institute for History, Russian Academy of Sciences. Most of them do not contain information on the process or results of Spitsbergen hunting. Instead they provided the names and social status of the people involved in this economy as organizers of the expeditions or members of hunting teams. The database prepared on the basis of archival sources includes information on about 150 hunters who visited Spitsbergen in the period from 1709 to 1800 and additionally about 50 people who participated in marine hunting but for whom it is not possible to confirm whether it was Spitsbergen or Novaya Zemlya.

- 1 Zhilinsky A.A., 1933. Promysel morskogo zveria v Belom more i Ledovitom okeane. Kratkie ocherki sovremennoi promyslovoi tekhniki i tekhnologii severnogo morskogo zveroboinogo promysla, Leningrad – Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe torgovoe izdatelstvo, 33.
- 2 Arlov, Thor B., 2005. 'The Discovery and Early Exploitation of Svalbard. Some Historiographical Notes', *Acta Borealia* 2005, 22 (1), 15.
- 3 Hultgreen, Tora, 2002. When Did the Pomors Come to Svalbard? *Acta Borealia*, 19 (2), 125-145.
- 4 Stora, Nils, 1987. Russian Walrus Hunting in Spitsbergen, *Etudes Inuit Studies*, 11 (2), 119.
- 5 Avango, Dag, Louwrens Hacquebord, Ypie Aalders, Hidde de Haas, Ulf Gustafson, Ulf, and Frigga Kruse, 2011. Between markets and geopolitics: natural resource exploitation on Spitsbergen from 1600 to the present day. *Polar Record* 47(1), 29-39.
- 6 Starkov, V. F. 2007. Review of the Arctic pioneering. Vol. 1. Spitsbergen, Moscow: Scientific world, 83.

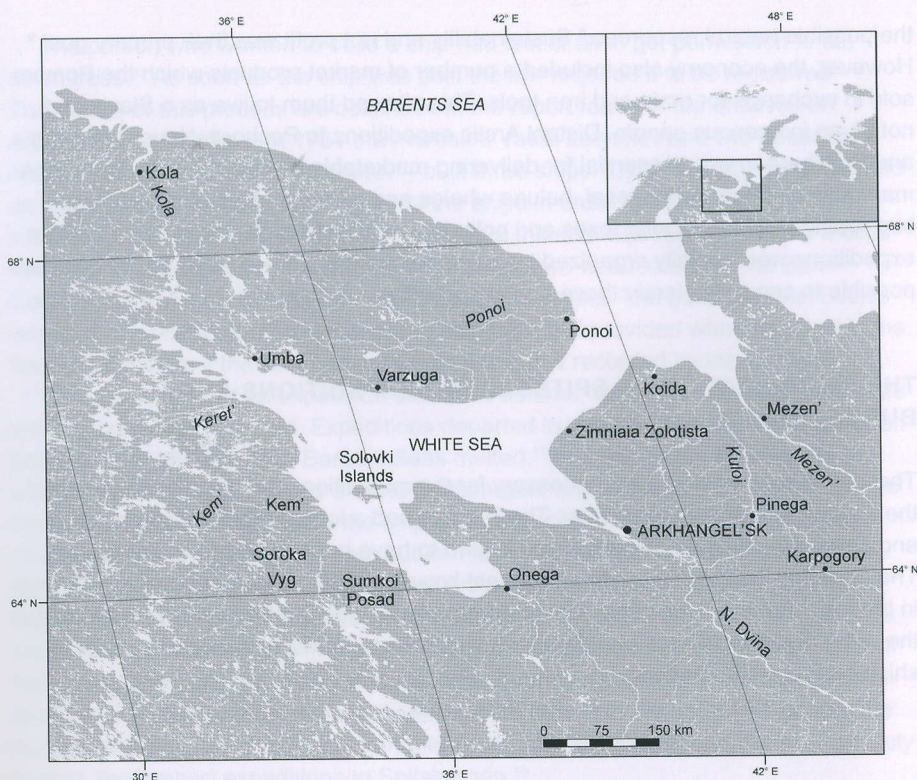


Figure 1. The Russian North of Pomorye.

Information included place of living, age, family relations, sometimes products of hunting, type and name of the vessel, number of people on the vessel etc.

The distinct characteristic of the economy of the Russian North⁷ was its complexity. By the 18th century the Pomors had created a well-developed economic system. As a result of limited agriculture fisheries and hunting were an essential part of the Pomor economy. However, the relative share of these activities varied greatly in different corners of the Pomor world, where the Pomors constituted different ecotypes dependent on the combination of available resources: salmon and herring fisheries at the White Sea, seasonal long-line cod fisheries in the Barents Sea, walrus, seal and beluga whale hunting wherever possible, forest hunting etc. To sustain the harsh and unstable conditions the peasants needed to use fully all

7 The Russian North is a more historical and cultural definition than a geographical one. In a broader sense it is an area which includes the following regions: Karelia, Kola land, Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces. Inside this vast territory the area adjacent to the White Sea coast is known as Pomorye. For details see the map: Moon, D., 2003. *The Russian Peasantry 1600–1930. The World the Peasants Made*, London, New York: Longman, 41.

the possible natural resources.⁸ Sustainability and not profit was their primary goal.⁹ However, the economy also included a number of market products which the Pomors sold in exchange for grain and iron tools. This allowed them to live as a Slavic and not as an indigenous people. Distant Arctic expeditions to Pechora, Novaya Zemlya and Spitsbergen were essential for delivering marketable products,¹⁰ such as marine mammals blubber, walrus, seal, beluga whales and reindeer skins, walrus tusks, bird feather and fur of polar foxes and polar bears. Spitsbergen and Novaya Zemlya expeditions were usually organized by the same people, thus in many cases it is not possible to separate clearly these hunting activities.

THE ORGANIZATION OF SPITSBERGEN EXPEDITIONS AND BUREAUCRACY

The vessel was the first thing necessary for the expedition, and usually the owner of the ship was its primary organizer. The Pomors had a long tradition of shipbuilding and several local types of vessels are known to have been used on distant travels. The *Koch* (or *Kochmara*) is one of the best known traditional Pomor vessels for travel in the ice.¹¹ Another type of traditional Pomor vessel was the *Lodia*.¹² In obedience to the will of Peter the Great the inhabitants of the Russian North were forced to build ships on European models.

- 8 Free peasants formed the core of the population of the Russian North, because serfdom never existed here. The land formally belonged to the tsar and for that reason the peasants were forced to pay taxes. The northern peasants actively participated in different resource-use, craft activities and trade. Like all Russian peasants, they formed rural communities (*mir*, *volost*) that regulated the use of land and adjacent waters which were considered as being in common use; however, the buildings with adjacent land as well as the right to get a share of the communal resources were inherited from one generation to another.
- 9 For a detailed description of Russian peasant strategies for sustaining economy see Moon, D. *ibid*, 143–146.
- 10 In most places around the White Sea this role traditionally was played by salmon, so the peasants from the places rich with salmon did not participate in distant marine expeditions.
- 11 The big Grumant Koch has been recently reconstructed, see Chernosvitov, P.Yu., 2006. The Pomor's Grumant Koch reconstruction based on archaeological Spitsbergen materials. In: Starkov V.F. (Ed). *Spitsbergen in the History Research Works*, Moscow: Nauchnyi mir, 135–148.
- 12 'Vedomost o sudakh, zaregistrirovannyh arhangelogorodskim gorodovym magistratom v 1782 godu', in Kuratov, A.A. (Ed.), 2004. *Arkhangelskii sever v dokumentakh istorii (s drevneishih vremen do 1917 goda)*, Arkhangelsk: Izdatelstvo GAOO, 192–195. It is also mentioned in the sources as a means of transportation for the Pomor Spitsbergen expeditions: for example, in 1788 merchant Ivan Diakov sent to Spitsbergen two lodjas, and merchant Andrei Agapitov 1 lodja, see: State Archives of Arkhangelsk Region (GAAR), 54 inventory: 6 (1), file 152, list 75.

The person who wanted to build a ship had first of all to get permission to cut down trees.¹³ As soon as the ship was built the law required it to be registered. The details of this process are described in the report found in the archives of Archangelsk port office. In 1764 the merchant Vasilii Latyshev and two peasants – Aleksei Kotlov and Artemei Kuroptev – built three ships. The Admiralty code required an inspection of the hulls and rigging of the ships in order to check if they were suitable for the open sea.¹⁴ After this procedure the ship was recorded in the official list under a certain number and the mark with the two-headed eagle (the State Court of the Arms of Russia) was stamped on the vessel. The governmental bodies issued a certificate that the owner of the ship kept and provided when required in the future.¹⁵ But even if the ship had no stamp it was still recorded by the authorities.¹⁶

The preparation of an expedition started in autumn, when the ships were repaired and the crew was recruited. Expeditions departed in spring, when the ice in the strait between the White and the Barents Seas melted.¹⁷ In summer the Pomors hunted walruses and seals in the sea around Spitsbergen, and in winter they left one or two hunters in the base camp near the ship and dispersed to small huts situated 20 to 100 km from the main camp. From autumn to spring the hunters killed polar foxes, polar bears and reindeer. In spring, after Annunciation Day, the hunters gathered together in the base camp. As soon as the decided to return, they loaded their bags and departed back to the home port. Thus, the hunters had to take on board a lot of food, including grain, fat, butter and also cloudberry as an anti-scorbutic remedy, and also firewood and sometimes disassembled huts.¹⁸ In the early 19th century the hunters reported that there were summer (from June to August) and winter (from July to next September) expeditions to Spitsbergen.¹⁹

- 13 For example in 1783 the merchant from Kola Filipp Golodnyi asked for permission to cut down trees for a fishing vessel. Such permission was granted, however he was allowed to take only timber of a low quality that could not be used for the construction of battle ships by the state, see GAAO, coll. 1, inv 1 (8), file 314, list 1–2; see also GAAO, coll. 4, inv. 9, file 78.
- 14 GAAO coll. 1, inv.1, file 13982, list 3.
- 15 Amos Kornilov, a well-known Spitsbergen hunter, reported in 1748 that he had three ships “of a new manner” (i.e. European construction), that have been “inspected and marked with the proper stamps ... and had certificates issued by the administration”, see GAAO, coll. 1, inv. 1, f. 4160, l. 1.
- 16 For example in 1782 the Archangelsk town magistrate recorded in the official list 7 stamped ships (*korabl'*), 57 stamped vessels (*sudno*) and 27 vessels without stamps, see Kuratov A.A. (Ed.), 2004. *Arkhangelskii sever v dokumentah istorii (s drevneishih vremen do 1917 goda)*, Arkhangelsk: Izdatelstvo GAOO, 194–195; the above-mentioned Latyshev, Kotlov and Kuroptev did not present their vessels for inspection and stamping (GAAO coll. 1, inv. 1, f. 13982, l. 3).
- 17 For example in 1748 Spitsbergen expedition left Archangelsk port on May 11, see GAAO, coll. 1, inv. 1, f. 4160, l. 1–1 rev.
- 18 Belov, M.J., 1956. *Istoria otkrytia i osvoenia Severnogo Morskogo puti*. Moscow, Morskoi Transport, 61.
- 19 Droprosy Russiki promyshlennikov o Shpitsbergene. Dukh Zhurnalov. 1818, Part 27, Book 21: 635–636.

To prevent the illegal trade of grain the government created a complicated system of permissions required to leave a port.²⁰ This procedure was mandatory not only for the Spitsbergen expeditions, but for every ship that left the port with a significant consignment of grain on board. First of all the ship-owner had to submit a petition addressed to the Emperor in order to get a pass.²¹ Of course this address was symbolic, and the decision was made by the Governor. When the ship-owner was a merchant, he dealt with the Provincial administration (*Gubernskoe pravlenie*) and Provincial Magistrate (*Gubernskii Magistrat*) the peasants had to contact another juridical body – *Nizhniaia Rasprava*.²² The Administration issued an order to the customs office to allow the ship-owner to take on board a certain quantity of grain. This practice existed throughout the 18th century: petitions are known from 1711, 1728, 1729, 1740, 1748 and 1795.²³ Before departing the head of an expedition had to sign an obligation to avoid any commercial activities during the trip²⁴ and was issued with the document from the authorities which allowed him to pass Novodvinskaia fortress in the Dvina River downstream.²⁵ When the vessel returned from Spitsbergen the ship-owner had to provide a report proving that his vessel had spent a certain amount of time on Spitsbergen, not in another place. If his report was not provided in time or was not satisfactory he was forced to pay 150% taxes for the grain he had exported.²⁶

Expeditions to Spitsbergen were organized by private persons as well as by government and non-government institutions. The major role belonged to the merchants, both rich and well-known, like the families of Starostins or Bazhenins, and more ordinary ones. Many expeditions were organized by monopolistic companies, which under reforms by Peter the Great formed an important instrument of government projects for the modernization of marine resource use.²⁷ With this aim for

20 For example in 1790 the Archangelsk Governmental Prosecutor accused the customs office of Archangelsk port of criminal negligence. He came to the conclusion that the custom officials let the fishermen and hunters take too much bread on board, and this bread was transported abroad and sold. The customs office director K. K. Lang was forced to provide several explanatory notes, and even Count A. R. Vorontsov, a head of the College of Commerce, had to take part in the conflict, see GAAO, coll. 1367, inv. 2, f. 1158, l. 1 – 2.

21 This document was called *chelobitnaia*, later – *proshenie*

22 Shidlovsky, A.F., 1912. *Shpitsbergen v russkoi istorii i literature: kratkii ocherk russkikh plavanii i promyslov na Shpitsbergene i podrobnyi ukazatel literatury i arhivnykh del, otnosiaschikhsia k etim voprosam*. St. Petersburg: Tipografia Morskogo ministerstva, 6.

23 GAAO coll. 1, inv. 1, f. 3, 529H, 545a, 2638, 4160; coll. 58, inv. 16, f. 174.

24 We found an example of such a document in the archives of Solovetsky monastery and it was signed by the monastic agent who led the fishing team to the island Kildin. See: Kraikovski, A.V., 2004. *Promysel treski i paltusa na o. Kildin v XVIII–XX v. In: Ushakovskie chteniia*, Murmansk: Murmanskoe oblastnoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo, 67.

25 Example of such a document see GAAO coll. 1, inv. 1, f. 9820; We could not find such documents for Spitsbergen expeditions, but anyway it looks like a normal bureaucratic practice.

26 For example in 1798 Afanasii Amosov was forced to pay 150% of taxes for grain used during the expedition to the island of Kolguev, see GAAO coll. 47, inv. 2, f. 59, p. 5 rev – 6.

27 For details see Laius. Julia. Alexei Kraikovski. and Alexei Yurchenko, 2009. *Sea Fisheries*

instance the development of whaling near Spitsbergen coasts was envisioned.²⁸ The model of organization was taken from the joint-stock companies of the Netherlands and Britain. The first company (1703 to 1721) was organized for Aleksandr Menshikov, one of the closest servitors of Peter the Great and a rich magnate. Then the state organized the Treasury Company for Kola Whaling (1723-1731). Then again the rich merchants and noblemen took these activities into their own hands: in 1731-1735 – the Evreinov brothers then from 1732-1741 Baron P. Shafirov and only for one year – Baron P. Schemberg. In 1742-1749 the company was returned to the Treasury, and finally for almost twenty years (1749-1768) it was in the possession of Count Pavel Shuvalov. The principle on which the activity of these companies was based on was the following: the company took responsibility before the government for developing new types of marine exploration, first of all whaling, in exchange for subsidies and privileges which included a trade monopoly on the products of traditional Pomor fishing and hunting.

The judgment on who were the main organizers of Spitsbergen expeditions at the beginning of the eighteenth century is closely related to the question when these expeditions actually began. We do not intend here to discuss the archeological material and early anecdotal data, the reliability of which is very difficult to assess. We aim to discuss the documents only. The Norwegian historian Tore Hultgreen stated that the earliest document is a document cited by M.I. Belov in the first volume of his comprehensive work "History of discovery and exploration of the Northern Sea Route".²⁹ This document mentions the ship "St. Ioann Zlatoust", which was sent to Spitsbergen on 28 June 1710. The owner of the ship was the merchant Fedor Bazhenin. Based on this evidence Hultgreen built a story of the prominent role of the Bazhenin family in the exploration of Spitsbergen.³⁰ Although the story sounds very probable, it is not possible to assess the role of the Bazhenins in Grumant hunting expeditions, primarily because our attempt to find the original document cited by Belov and then by Hultgreen was unsuccessful. Belov referred to collection 10 – Arkhangelsk governor's office – which is kept in the archives of the St. Petersburg Institute for History.³¹ This collection has four inventories, though Belov did not mention the number of the inventory at all. Folder 21 cited by Belov from any of these four inventories does not contain information about Bazhenin's ship. Thus without seeing the document it is not possible to confirm or reject the story provided by Belov and Hultgreen.

in the Russian North c. 1400-1850. In Starkey, David J., Jon Th. Thor, and Ingo Heidbrink (Eds), *A History of the North Atlantic Fisheries: Volume 1, From Early Times to the mid-Nineteenth Century*, Bremerhaven: Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum, 56 – 59.

28 See Kraikovski, A. 2010. The governmental projects of whaling development in 18th century. Russia. In: Ringstad, J. E. (Ed.) *Whaling and History III. Sandefjord*, 171 – 176.

29 Hultgreen 2002, 139; Belov 2005, 68.

30 Hultgreen 2002, 140–141.

31 Former LOII archive. The reference in Belov's book is as follows: LOII. DAGK. №21.

Our archival search revealed documents for the same period of time. The earliest so far is a letter from 1709 sent to Baron Shafirov, one of the shareholders of Menshikov's monopoly, by the agent of this company in Arkhangelsk. The letter writes about the ship which left the port of Arkhangelsk on course for Grumant.³² Thus, it is certain that the monopolistic companies were important actors on Spitsbergen at least from 1709 and maybe they were even the initiators of Spitsbergen hunting.

The town-dwellers³³ were obviously the main group of private organizers of and participants in Spitsbergen expeditions. Thus, for instance, in 1710 Archangelsk citizens Asei Kirov, Luka Barabaskov, Filipp Dorofeev and Terentii Lebenin asked Peter the Great to provide them with the protection charter which could open the way to Grumant for them. Such a charter was granted.³⁴

Other organizers of the expeditions were the representatives of religious organizations: the Orthodox Church, especially the Solovetsky monastery³⁵ and the communities of the Old Believers.³⁶ One of the best known names belonging to the latter group was Amos Kornilov – a member of the Vyg commune.³⁷ His expeditions

32 Grumant is the contemporary Russian name for Spitsbergen. See SPB II RAN, coll. 83, f. 3111, l.1-2 rev.

33 The urban settlements were not so numerous in the Russian North. Archangelsk founded in the sixteenth century was the biggest one, while Kola, Mezen' and Onega were significant centers for adjacent territories. Posadskie liudi at that time referred to the social status of ordinary merchants or craftsmen who did not belong to the privileged corporations, they formed the most numerous part of the urban population.

34 See State Archives of Ancient Documents (RGADA) coll. 159, inv. 2, f. 5111, l. 1 – 3. This request might be caused by an unsafe situation in the waters near the archipelago: in the materials of the Office of Peter the Great there is a letter from the Archangelsk governor Golitsyn from 1710 in which he wrote that unknown pirate ships (one was under the Dutch flag) had robbed two Russian vessels, which were going to Spitsbergen to hunt. It seems that the hunters believed that the name of the Russian Tsar who had recently defeated Swedish troops near Poltava (1709) could be formidable enough to provide them protection even in the Arctic.

35 GAAO coll. 1, inv. 2, f. 520, l. 67, 114 rev.

36 The term "Old Believers" refers to the Russian citizens who did not accept the Church reform undertaken in 1653-58 by Patriarch Nikon. Old Believers later divided into several groups. One of the most numerous and powerful was Pomorskoe soglasie, the proponents of which, both openly and in secret, constituted a large part of the population in the Russian North. One of the main centers of Old Believers was Vygoreskoe obschezitelstvo – a large and prosperous commune located in the forests along the rivers Vyg and Leksa, see Crummey, Robert O., 1970. *The Old Believers and the world of Antichrist: the Vyg community & the Russian State, 1694-1855*, Madison; London: University of Wisconsin Press. Peter the Great gave permission for the official existence of this commune on condition that double taxes would be taken from it. During one and a half centuries from this time this commune became one of the leading religious, cultural and economic centers of Old Believers in Russia. Its members actively participated in different industries and trade. Marine hunting provided a large share to their economy.

37 Vize (Wiese) V.Iu., 1948. *Russkie poliarnye morekhody is promyshlennykh, torgovykh i zhivitelnykh liudi 17-18 vv.: Biograficheskii slovar*. Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Glavsevf-

to Spitsbergen are widely known because he met with the leading Russian scientist of his time Mikhail Lomonosov, who included information about Kornilov's expeditions in his works.³⁸

THE TEAM

The traditional hunting team (*artel'*) in both Spitsbergen and Novaya Zemlya hunting was much larger than the traditional fisheries team of 4 people and consisted of 12–20 team members. It was led by a skipper – *kormschik*, who had a deputy – *polukormschik*. Sometimes the leader had two deputies. Two harpooners – *nososhniki* – had had two assistants – *zaboreshniki*, thus these four conducted a hunting. If the ship owner was on board – he was the main harpooner, and *nososhniki* had to help him. Other team members who manned the oars were known as oarsmen – *veselschiki*. Sometimes the team also had one or several “pupils”.³⁹ The team members were hired on the basis of a particularly ancient economic system known as *pokrut*.⁴⁰

In contrast to the seasonal marine fisheries which were open to everybody and were not professionalized, marine hunting expeditions to both Novaya Zemlya and Spitsbergen demanded some professionalization. Hunters like fishermen usually became involved in this business in their youth (at 15 – 17 years old) when they went to the expeditions as “pupils” usually together with older relatives. Members of particular families formed the core of the expeditions.⁴¹

Most hunters either did not have a family, being relatively young (younger than 30 - 40 years old) or widowed (45 – 60 years old), or had a very small family (only a wife or a wife with 1-2 children).⁴² They did not have a plot of land and thus were not involved in the peasant economy. In Russian this category of peasants was called

morputi, 33–34.

38 Lomonosov M.V., 1952. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* vol. 6. Trudy po Russkoi istorii, obschestvenno-ekonomicheskim voprosam i geografii, 1747–1765, Moscow–Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk CCCP, 462-463.

39 Efimenko, A.Ya., 1873. *Arteli Arhangel'skoi gubernii. Sbornik materialov ob arteliakh v Rossii*. Vol. I. St., Petersburg: Topigrafiia Maikova, 13-14.

40 In its initial meaning *pokrut* is lend (money, food, implements) , (comma) subsequently paying it back by work. This system was known in Novgorod lands from the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries at least. In the North it was most probably inherited from Novgorodian colonizers who settled in these lands about the same time. Later this word was issued for describing the economic relations between the host and the seasonal workers in fisheries and marine hunting. The main principles of the system were the following. The workers who agreed to be hired into the team got some money in advance from the organizer of the expedition, which was later calculated out of their profit. The size of these payments depended directly on the status of the team member because every member had his own share in the overall profit.

41 This can be seen for example in the lists of the young Pomors recruited for the Navy by Lieutenant Siniavin in 1714–1715, see SPb II RAN coll. 10, inv. 3, f. 621.

42 GAAO coll. 1. inv. 2. f. 520.

"bobyli", some of them had their own houses in the village, but some did not, living instead within larger families of their relatives.⁴³

The recruiting of a team was also connected to a certain bureaucratic procedure. According to Peter the Great's decrees issued from 1719-1724 everybody in Russia who left his permanent place of residence had to get a passport – a special document combining proof of identity and permission to travel. Such a document was issued by the local authority (or by the feudal lord for the serfs) and was valid for one year.⁴⁴ Spitsbergen obviously was considered to be outside Russian rule, thus the law required that only those hunters who had valid passports were recruited to go there. The organizer of the expedition had to collect the passports, present them to the local administration and in turn obtain special documents called "hunting tickets". When back from Spitsbergen the hunters provided their tickets and got their passports back. Private organizers did not always bother themselves with this burdensome procedure. They often left collected passports not in the office of the local authorities but at home, or did not collect passports at all. In 1794 Arkhangelsk Court (*Arkhangelsky Nadvornyi Sud*) discussed the case of the merchant Fedor Dolgoshein, who was accused of hiring for his expedition several hunters without valid passports.⁴⁵ Three peasants – Ustin Filippov from the Vologda region, Afanasii Pigin from the vicinity of Kargopol' and Ivan Amrerov from the vicinity of Shenkursk (all places situated far from the sea) – were absent from their home places for one to three years being involved in different temporary jobs. They were hired by Dolgoshein to go to Spitsbergen at a time when their passports were expiring. According to the version which Dolgoshein provided to the Court he left the passports in the house of his father Petr Dolgoshein,⁴⁶ where they were destroyed by fire. Such cases cast light on the circumstances that led to gaps in the official documents which should list all the ships and team members who went to Spitsbergen.

WHERE THE POMOR HUNTERS CAME FROM?

We can discern three main regions for which the tradition of Spitsbergen hunting can be traced on the basis of personal documents.

The first one is the region of Mezen on the north-east coast of the White Sea. The best known settlements from where the majority of the hunters originated were Okladnikova slobodka, Kuznetsova slobodka, Dolgoschel'e and Lampozhenskaia slobodka. Here inside the same families of hereditary hunters several specializations existed:

43 See the "List of inhabitants of Lampozhenskaia settlement", prepared in 1785 in GAAO coll. 1, inv. 2, f. 193.

44 See: Chernukha V.G., 2007. Passport v Rossii 1719–1917, St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo "Liki Rossii", 17-55.

45 GAAO coll. 1, inv. 2 (1), f. 520.

46 He is mentioned in a Customs book of 1763 as a merchant who sent food to Murman for artel's, see GAAO coll. 1, inv. 1, f. 6094.

- Representatives of the first group organized the expeditions. They provided the capital, owned ships and equipment. Most probably they obtained the capital from their previous successful hunting activities.

- The second group was mostly responsible for the trade of the hunting products.

- The third one consisted of ordinary hunters who could be experienced skippers or just poor beginners.

The second region was the area near the town of Onega, on the southern coast of the White Sea. Part of the settlements there in the 16th-17th centuries belonged to the Solovetsky monastery. During the period 1730–1760 this monastery had at least one ship destined for Spitsbergen expeditions.⁴⁷ We can assume that the monastery recruited people to participate in these expeditions from the region of Onega and thus instigated a tradition for them to go to Spitsbergen. Even after the secularization of 1764 when the monastery lost most of its lands and economic power, this tradition remained. It is interesting however, that the peasants from the south-western, Pomorsky, coast which was also colonized by the Solovetsky monastery did not participate in Spitsbergen hunting. As it is seen on the basis of passport data, in 1750 most of its male population (more than 560 men) went instead to seasonal Murman fisheries.⁴⁸

The third region, which was formed later, by the middle of the 18th century, consisted of the vicinity of the city of Archangelsk, including Kholmogory and Kurostrovskaja volost. The White Sea Company which organized Spitsbergen expeditions in 1803-1813 hired its team members mostly from this region. In addition peasants from the inner parts of the country who went to towns in search of money for the payment of state taxes or for payments to their landlords also came to Kholmogory or Archangelsk, where there was a greater likelihood of finding jobs in the timber or other industries. Some of them might be found among the hunters who went to Spitsbergen.

However, among Archangelsk merchants very few stated that they were specialized in organizing Spitsbergen expeditions, for most of them hunting activities on both Novaya Zemlya and Spitsbergen were additional to fishing and hunting activities along the Murman coast and the fishing trade. Evidently merchants from Onega (the families of Turygin, Diakov, Lytkin) and Mezen (the families of Varaksin, Rogachev, In'kov) were more interested in going to Spitsbergen than merchants from Archangelsk. But even they did not specialize in Spitsbergen hunting but went to both regions – Spitsbergen and Novaya Zemlya, because hunting in both these places required quite similar skills. Moreover, hunting on Novaya Zemlya was less dangerous, because hunters usually did not stay over the winter. There is no evidence of going to both places during one trip, the scheme which was proposed by Belov.⁴⁹

47 «Opis Grulanskomu sudnu za 1760 god» (Description of Spitsbergen vessel) in RGADA coll. 1201, inv. 5, file 3964.

48 These types of passports allowed peasants to leave their villages for the limited period of time. The name, place of leaving and place of seasonal job were listed in these documents, see RGADA coll 1201, inv. 2, f. 81, l. 2–24 rev.

49 Belov 1956: 68–69.

As is seen from contemporary documents the organizers of the expeditions preferred to hire a hunting team from the dwellers of their own region. Probably the main team members also served as recruiters for others, bringing into the team their family members and neighbors. Thus, people from the vicinity of the town of Onega went to the expeditions on the ships equipped by Onega town merchants – the families of Lytkins, D'iakovs and Turygins.⁵⁰ This can be traced on the basis of the documents of the White Sea Joint Stock Company (1803 - 1813): for instance out of 23 team members of the master Akim Starostin, seven came from the vicinity of the town of Kholmogory which was the home town of one of the leaders of the team, Nestor Dobytyin.⁵¹ The most qualified team members could be brought in from other regions, particularly from the Mezen 'region, but ordinary members were usually from the home town of the merchants. They all knew each other and this might be important as the severe conditions of Spitsbergen wintering demanded good cooperation and trust.

HOW MANY SHIPS WERE SENT TO SPITSBERGEN?

It is possible to estimate the place of Spitsbergen expeditions in the general structure of shipping in the Russian North on the basis of customs materials and petitions by ship-owners concerning passes to the open sea. Table 1 shows the number of petitions found in the archives. As is shown in the table the intensity of shipping fluctuated significantly, but Spitsbergen occupied a rather modest place in this process. For the late 18th century we can get a more complex picture due to the reports sent from the port customs offices to the administration (Table 2). In total, during the navigation period of 1790 the biggest ports of the Russian North (without Onega) let out about 950 vessels and received about 510 vessels. The Spitsbergen shipping looks quite insignificant on this background – about 1% of both outgoing and ingoing shipping.

Table 1. Structure of the Arkhangelsk port shipping in the 18th century on the basis of petitions on departure.

Year	Period	Murman and Kola	Solovetsky mon.	Novaya Zemlia	Spitsbergen	Other	In all	Source
1711	2 — 8.06	9	4	1		7	21	GAAO-1-1-3
1728	14.05 — 8.10	17	17			34	68	1-1-529H
1729	19.06 — 19.09	9	9			18	36	1-1-545a
1740	14.03 — 26.09		12			22	34	1-1-2638
1748	11.05 — 31.08		3		1	1	5	1-1-4160
1795	01.05 - 31.10	56	19	2	1	256	334	58-16-174, 176, 177, 178

Table 2. Shipping in the Russian North, 1790. GAAO 1367-2-1223.

Port	Arkhandelsk. departure	Arkhangelsk, arrival	Kola departure	Kola arrival	Mezen' departure	Mezen' arrival
Kola and vicinity	90	66				
Onega and vic.	57	21				
Mezen' and vic	5	14				
Kem' and vic.	71	30			1	
Povenetc vic.	75	17				
Arkhangelsk vic	347	54	3	14	5	5
Nenoksa						2
Solovki monastery	52	4				
Murman	80	178	141	88		
Spitsbergen	9	6				1
Novaya Zemlya	1	3			5	5
Kolguev island					1	
Total	787	393	144	102	12	13

Table 3. Departures of Spitsbergen expeditions in the late 18th century on the basis of customs reports (sources for tables 3 and 4 - RGADA coll. 1261, inv. 6, f. 848, 849, 856, 871, 886, 891, 898, 904, 905).

Year	Port	Destination	Vessels	People
1784	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	4	
1785	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	5	69
1786	Onega	Spitsbergen	2	32
1786	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen and Novaia Zemlia	6	97
1786	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	5	77
1787	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	3	51
1787	Onega	Spitsbergen	1	19
1788	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	4	20
1789	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	4	69
1789	Kola	Spitsbergen	3	43
1790	Arkhangelsk	Spitsbergen	9	135
1790	Onega	Spitsbergen	4	44

Table 4. Arrivals of Spitsbergen expeditions in the late 18th century on the basis of customs reports.

Year	Port	Vessels	People
1785	Arkhangelsk	6	83
1787	Arkhangelsk	2	29
1787	Arkhangelsk	3	50
1788	Arkhangelsk	2	35
1788	Arkhangelsk	1 lodia, 5 karbases	Dash in the document
1789	Arkhangelsk	9	119
1790	Arkhangelsk	6	90
1790	Mezen'	1	10

Some more or less reliable data on the number of ships going to Spitsbergen exist only for 1784-1791, when reports from the customs offices of Arkhangelsk, Kola and Mezen' were sent to Count Alexander Romanovich Vorontsov, the head of the College of Commerce. The data show that Arkhangelsk was obviously the main port for Spitsbergen expeditions. During the 7 years under study only Arkhangelsk is mentioned annually as a place of departure to Spitsbergen. Onega is mentioned three times and Kola only once. The data are most probably incomplete, but still the minor role of these ports is evident.

As is clear from the documents, on average five to six ships annually departed from Arkhangelsk to Spitsbergen with a maximum of nine ships in 1790. The total numbers of people in the expeditions fluctuated from 20 to 135 hunters. From Onega one to four vessels departed and from Kola 3. Thus the maximum of the data we have is for 13 vessels and 179 hunters departing from different ports to Spitsbergen in 1790.

CONCLUSION

Historical documents studied in several archives demonstrate that Spitsbergen expeditions took place regularly in 18th century Russia and were an integral part of the social and economic life of the Russian North. The first document pointing to a Spitsbergen expedition known so far dates from 1709. However, Spitsbergen shipping represented only around 1% of all shipping in the area. Not big, but rather stable strata of the population were involved in this activity. Among them it is possible to distinguish three main groups of people on the basis of the place they lived: vicinities of towns of Mezen', Onega and Arkhangelsk. The organization of an expedition required significant financial resources as well as literacy and a knowledge of bureaucratic procedures. The main organizers were local merchants private or government monopolistic companies.

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