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# **THE TRAIL OF THE SABLE: new evidence on the fur-hunters of Siberia in the seventeenth century**

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In the seventeenth century Russia acquired Siberia and became an Asian as well as a European Empire. That remarkable movement is known only in bare outline, and has been presented largely from a national or nationalistic viewpoint, though it is of world-historical significance. A vast amount of data on it exists, though almost solely in Russia: in contemporary records, later collations and commentaries. Much of this has remained for centuries unworked, much even untouched; but is beginning to be increasingly sifted and presented by Soviet scholars. Their work and comments should be followed and utilized in other countries.

The Russian conquest of Siberia was a major event in world history. It created a great land-bridge all across Asia from Europe to the Pacific, causing a more extensive — and locally more continuous — contact of West with East than did the incursions of the Westerners by sea, which were more sporadic and heterogeneous. The West European predators — as a modern Asian nationalist might express it — fell at different times on different selected localities in Asia, usually in rivalry among themselves, but the Russians moved as a single military force in one single swoop all across northern Asia. The result is the largest confrontation in the world today, along all the frontiers of Siberia.

In form and character, the conquest of Siberia had many broad similarities — and equally significant differences — with and from the (not far from contemporary) conquests of Middle and South America by the south-west Europeans (principally the Spaniards) and of North America by the north-west Europeans (British and French). There are three great unknowns, in respect of the Siberian conquest, which must be answered, for a more complete understanding of this important event in world history. namely: (x) what exactly was done? (y) by whom? and (z) why? The following lines, reporting some recent Soviet work, give some indications, for discussion, on just one part of this problem area.

The (x), the actual course of events, is comparatively well known; but only comparatively so, to a minority of specialists, nearly all of them Russians. General historians outside Russia have more detailed knowledge of the conquests of Mexico, Peru and the American West than of the incorporation of Siberia into the Russian Empire.

However, the broad outline is familiar: small bands of Russians, using firearms, made extraordinarily rapid advances beyond the Urals right through to the Pacific Ocean, mainly within the second third of the seventeenth century. They met with little opposition, the indigenous peoples being few, scattered, fighting among themselves and less well-armed than the Russians; until the Russians came up against China, which barred their progress at the Amur River and for two centuries diverted them towards the north-east. This course can be charted 'arithmetically', by dates, such as the establishment of outposts, the claiming of territories and the issue of government papers.

The next question, (y), who were the classes and kinds of people concerned, is more 'algebraical', the human element being much more complex than the geographical, more variable, less fixed and harder to classify. Persons were mobile, not only geographically but socially and functionally. The Russian military forces in this penetration were 'Cossacks'; by which name they have gone down to fame, or sometimes ill-fame, in history. The impression held by a wide public throughout the world that this is a term of ethnic, tribal or quasi-national significance is however broadly erroneous. Certainly there were such special groups, notably the Cossacks of Zaporozhe, the Don and the Yaik (later known as the Ural River) with their own heredity, but they were bands formed in constant change by open recruitment of rebellious, dissident, displaced or oppressed persons, of any origin in the Russian or Tatar lands. Personal leaders stood out among them; such as Yermak, Poyarkov, Khabarov, Moskvitin and others, as did Cortes, Pizarro and others in the Americas.

'Cossack' denoted also a variety of functions. Of necessity, the members of the advancing groups had to do everything: fight, explore, survey, build forts and dwellings, deal with opposing or subjected peoples, get food by hunting (or growing it if possible), conduct the rudiments of administration, and keep records for a central government that was distant but exacting. Most of them did most of these things most of the time, with little division of labour or specialization. They are therefore broadly recorded as 'serving people' (*sluzhilye lyudi*) in the categorization of the times; not serving exclusively in the military sense.

Of course some specialist functionaries are recorded also; such as clerical personnel (*diaks* or others). Increasingly, as the *osvoyenie* of Siberia proceeded, there were traders, peasant settlers, artisans, churchmen and others, free immigrants or exiles. The word *osvoyenie* is deliberately used here, as it is of special Russian meaning beyond and around the equivalents in translation into other languages—such as 'acquisition', 'appropriation' or 'absorption'. To these it adds, by its Russian etymology, the sense of 'making (the thing) one's own', a part of oneself. It is so used by Tsarist and Soviet patriots alike.

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There was however one group of activists who, especially in the early and formative stages, played the key part in the *osvoyenie* of Siberia, i. e. making it a full and intrinsic component of the Russian civilization and outlook, as distinct for its mere *prisoyedinenie*, i. e. its physical and political attachment to or unification with Russia. This group was the *promyshlenniki*; meaning particularly the hunters or trappers, and among those particularly the men who went after furs. These were distinctly on an individual basis. They were not in search of food (except for their own day-to-day subsistence) but were pursuing furs (for the market — not in the modern sense of that term, but for the disposal of the monocratic all-owning State).

The present article summarizes some recent Soviet work on the role and pattern of activity of the seventeenth-century *promyshlenniks* in Siberia (hereafter referred to for short as trappers). The topic sheds some light on the three sets of questions mentioned above, i. e. (x) the course of the movement into Siberia, (y) identification of the participants, and (z) their motives. To what has been said above on (x) and (y) must be added the role of the trappers; and (z) must also be considered as a connection in which the trappers are of some special relevance.

The trappers are the only occupational class, except the traders, who served an *economic* purpose beyond immediate and local defence and subsistence. They served the market for furs; which was the most important and lucrative one for Russia at that time, both at home and for its international trade. Certainly the trappers were of military and general use too; they explored the outlands and interiors, were scouts and contactors-in-depth of native peoples and local conditions. But their *raison d'être* was the acquisition for the Empire of the wealth of Siberia; which then meant, pre-eminently or practically solely, fur-skins; amongst which the sable was the most valuable and widely sought. Furs were, as is well known, the form of tribute (*yasak*). If it was for gold that the Spaniards and others established themselves in the Americas, it was furs that represented the 'Eldorado' of Siberia in the first stage of its development.

In the economic interpretation of history, the fur trade should thus be a basic and prominent topic. It has been so treated, from a more general (if still 'materialist') standpoint, by eminent American scholars (Fisher, Lensen and others). Yet surprisingly, in the Soviet Union where the Marxist view is *de rigueur*, it has not been one of the topics most widely or deeply considered. Possible reasons for this will be considered below; meanwhile it is notable, however, that new work has been done on this subject in the USSR during the last decade, which will be summarized in the following pages.

A broader view of historical causation must consider other motives besides greed: the spirit of adventure and curiosity regarding strange places, 'geopolitical' or State-

power compulsions, missionary zeal, self-assertion or the seeking of personal power, the 'push' of poor conditions in the homeland (political, religious or individual), the 'pull' of greater advantages in the new lands, even some personal or chance factors. The trappers, as the only 'individualistic' group in Siberia at that time (using the term in a relative sense and in quotemarks, within the limits of the setting of the Tsarist Autocracy) may exemplify all of the above-mentioned motivations.

These considerations cannot be taken much further until there is much more detailed information concerning the actual numbers, personal and social character, specific activities and geographical distribution of the trappers of seventeenth-century Siberia. The immense store of archival and other material existing in the Soviet Union has been very little tapped in that country (not to speak of efforts in that direction in other countries); but now, a full three centuries after the conquest of Siberia, useful and indicative work is proceeding in this field in the USSR. There is space only to introduce one key contribution in that respect, which is worthy of wider attention than it has received; though it is only one among others. Namely a paper by P. N. Pavlov<sup>1)</sup> on the effectives of the trappers in Siberia between 1620 and 1690, their locations and movements.

Pavlov's preoccupation is, in large part, to ascribe to the trappers a central role in the *osvoyenie*, as well as the initial opening up, of Siberia; particularly to refute an impression that they were mere 'camp-followers', or alternatively in only a reconnaissance role, in any case just auxiliaries not intrinsic to the process of settlement, or in the residual category of 'wandering people' (*gulyashchie lyudi* or vagabonds). He seeks to prove that they participated in the colonization, as well as the penetration, of Siberia.

G. F. Miller's original *History of Siberia*, written in the mid-eighteenth century, stressed the role of the trappers as 'scouts and volunteer-helpers of the serving people' and as the 'first describers' of the lands of Siberia<sup>2)</sup>. Many subsequent Russian writers followed this formulation<sup>3)</sup>. Soviet writers, while far from attaching no importance to the role of the trappers, continued for a long time to regard them as generally an inferior and incidental 'social element', miscellaneously excluded from the main process<sup>4)</sup>.

1) П. Н. Павлов, «Характер передвижения русских промышленников в Сибири во время развитого соболиного промысла 20–80-е годы XVII в.»: Окладников и др. ред., *Вопросы истории Сибири досоветского периода (Бахрушинские чтения, 1969)*, Наука, Новосибирск, 1973.

2) Г. Ф. Миллер, *История Сибири (Описание царство Сибири 1751 г.)* том 1, М.-Л., 1937, стр. 391.

3) Г. С. Батеньков, «Общий взгляд на Сибирь», *Сын отчества* 1823, ч. 83 № 2, стр. 54. См. В. Г. Мирзоев, *Историография Сибири, 1-я половина XIX в.* Кемерово, 1965, стр. 192–3.

4) В. Н. Скалон, *Русские землепроходцы-исследователи Сибири XVII века.* 1951; В. Г.

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A fact in support of Pavlov's contention is that, as clearly noted by some Russian historians, the most profitable furs—principally the sable— began to be depleted from the very beginning, as early as the 1640 s. In so far as the sable was 'king' among furs (as gold is king among other minerals), the hunters began correspondingly to cease to seek it farther and farther into the eastward parts of Siberia, to hunt more generally and intensively in the more *osvoyenny* parts of the great region, even to settle down in the latter. Their long-range safaris diminished, their orbits became smaller and more definitely centred locally. Some of the trappers settled down on their own land, or worked the land of others<sup>5)</sup>, though everywhere some continued as before.

Until the 1970s Soviet historians in general ascribed no highly 'formative' role to the trappers. From the end of the 1960s, a revision of this evaluation was advocated. Pavlov notes the economic weight of furs: 'from 1620-90 the output of furs exceeded (in value) 3-4 times that of cereals'. 'Correct understanding of the trappers' role in the *osvoyenie* of Siberia was impeded by the view, prevailing until recently and not seriously disputed by anyone, that the trappers in Siberia were extremely mobile<sup>6)</sup>. 'Ever since the beginning in the eighteenth century, the trappers were traditionally seen as going constantly farther and farther' (east)<sup>7)</sup>. G. F. Miller saw the *osvoyenie* of Siberia as a matter of State expansion. His successors took little notice of the trappers, except for their immediate role: considering only the fringe, the area of most distant advance at each given time. Thus I. Eh. Fisher (1774) popularized Miller's 'schema' of the uninterrupted movement, on a west to east axis, of trappers pursuing the animals which fled before them<sup>8)</sup>.

It is striking that this remained the attitude not only of the Tsarist commentators but of the Soviet writers in the first decade of their new era, the 1920 s. They too gave the State the dynamic and creative role; and could not ascribe leading influence to individuals or individualists who could not be given a 'class' demarcation in either the 'feudal' or the Marxist scheme of things. Thus such authorities as Ogorodnikov

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Мирзоев, *Присоединение и освоение Сибири в исторической литературе XVII века, 1960*; А. Н. Копылов, *Культура русского населения Сибири в XVII-XVIII вв.* Наука, Новосибирск, 1968.

- 5) В. Н. Шерстобоев, *Илимская Пашня*, т. 1. Иркутск 1949, стр. 113-231; В. И. Шунков, *Очерки по истории земледелия Сибири (XVIII в.)*, 1956, стр. 172-3, 236; Ф. Г. Сафонов, *Крестьянская колонизация бассейнов Лены и Илим в XVII веке*. Якутск, 1956, стр. 55; он же, *Русские крестьяне в Якутии (XVII-начало XX вв.)*, Якутск, 1961, стр. 35, 224-5, В. А. Александров, *Русское население Сибири в XVII-XVIII вв.*, 1964, стр. 42, 107-8, 196, 220. А. Н. Копылов, «Государевы пашенные крестьяне Енисейского уезда в XVII в.» *Сибирь в XVII-XVIII вв.*, Новосибирск, 1962.
- 6) П. Н. Павлов, «Место пушного промысла среди других отраслей хозяйства Сибири в XVII в.», *Из истории Сибири*, вып. 1, Красноярск, 1969, стр. 76, 100.
- 7) Миллер, 1937, стр. 301.
- 8) И. Э., Фишер *Сибирская история*, СПб., 1774, стр. 195.

(1924) and Bakhrushin (1928), on this point, sustained the same estimation, albeit from a Marxist class view, that their Tsarist predecessors had from an aristocratic-monarchical point of view<sup>9)</sup>.

Though there had been indications as far back as 1771 that sablehunting was a 'comparatively settled' (non-nomadic) occupation — an evaluation ascribed to S. P. Kra-shennnikov among others (perhaps in relation to Kamchatka especially)<sup>10)</sup> — such statements remained the exception. A. P. Shchapov (1908) called the seventeenth century a period of 'colonization by wandering trappers' (*brodyachyaya zverolovcheskaya kolonizatsia*)<sup>11)</sup> and N. M. Yadrintsev (1892), though believing free (peasant) immigration to have been the great basis of the colonization of Siberia, said the people there, 'under the influence of seeking wealth in furs, became wandering and nomadic adventurers (*adventyuristy*)<sup>12)</sup>, N. N. Koz'min (1910) wrote of the trappers merely 'slipping' into or around the taiga and the tundra<sup>13)</sup>.

S. V. Bakhrushin in the 1920s produced a heavily Marxist analysis linking the trappers' activities with socio-economic developments in Russia, as they came under 'capitalist hiring' (wages system) 'supplemented by bondage', giving the dominant role to 'large enterprises'. This was hardly a realistic description of the conditions of lone hunters, but was fully in the Leninist mode of magnifying the grip of monopolistic capital and minimizing the significance of small individual operators, who were to be despised or liquidated. Bakhrushin described the trappers as a 'crowd of chance visitors' to Siberia (*sluchainye gosti* — people there accidentally or occasionally)<sup>14)</sup>. At the same time some of his own material does give more of an impression of the solidity and continuity of activities of the small trappers<sup>15)</sup>.

From the late 1960s, some Soviet writers (exemplified by P. N. Pavlov whose views are summarized here) turned to a distinctly different view. V. A. Aleksandrov (1968) contributed something that is essential to the Marxist mind — a periodization. At the same time he put forward the trappers as being important as settlers, even on a 'mass' scale. The new attitude is part of the populist Soviet patriotism that has

9) В. И. Огородников, *Очерк истории Сибири до начала XIX столетия*, ч. 2, вып. 1. Владивосток, 1924, стр. 4. Л. Бахрушин, «Исторические судьбы соболя» *Вестник знания*, 1928, № 13, стр. 675.

10) И. Яхонтов, «О соболином промысле», *Новые ежемесячные сочинения*, ч. 58, СПб., 1791, стр. 22-3.

11) А. П. Щапов, «Сибирское общество до Сперанского». *Сочинения*, т. 3, СПб., 1908, стр. 647.

12) Н. М. Ядринцев, *Сибирь как колония в географическом, этнографическом и историческом отношении*, СПб., 1892, стр. 190, 328.

13) Н. Н. Козьмин, *Очерки прошлого и настоящего Сибири*, СПб., 1910, стр. 31.

14) С. В. Бахрушин, *История Сибири с древнейших времен до наших дней*, т. 2, Наука, Ленинград, 1968, стр. 77-78; *Научные труды*, т. 3, ч. 1, 1955, стр. 198, 302.

15) С. В. Бахрушин, «Мангазейская мирская община в XVII в.», *Научные труды*, стр. 297-300.

Table 1. Trappers in Siberia, 1620-90: places of registration (yavka) and activity, 1620-90

Registered at:	MANGA-ZEYA	YENI-SEISK	ILIMSK & CHECHUI	YAKU-TSK	NIZHNI-VILYUISK	ZHIGA-NSK	OLENĚK	YANA	INDIGIRKA	ALA-ZEYA	KOLYMA	TOTAL
TOTAL	264	84	71	436	67	136	33	10	75	8	74	1,258
of whom, began trapping there	254(96%)	72(86%)	28(39%)	278(64%)	27(40%)	47(35%)	6	4	17(23%)	2	15	750(60%)
Hunted only in that region	171(67%)	34(47%)	11(39%)	131(47%)	1	7	3	1	8	1	5	373(50%)
in that region + one other	55(22%)	19(26%)	13	111(40%)	20(74%)	35(75%)	2	1	9	1	10	276(37%)
in that region + 2 others	19(8%)	12(17%)	2	28(10%)	5(19%)	5(11%)	1	1	-	-	-	73(10%)
in that region + 3 others	4	7	1	8	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	22(3%)
in that region + 4 others	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
in that region + 5 others	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3

been prodigiously developed since the German invasion of Russia in 1941; in the light of which the seventeenth-century trappers can be credited with a respectable and significant role. Aleksandrov — for the case of the Mangazeya *uyezd*, the oldest and most established focus of Siberian settlement — distinguished the following stages:

1) mid seventeenth century: beginning of the formation 'in its own mass, in the direct sense of the word, of a Russian population', marked by the establishment of families. 2) 1670s: 'transformation of a great part of the Mangazeya trappers into a permanent population, some becoming townsmen (*posadniki*)'; plus movement of population to the north. 3) first quarter of the eighteenth century: the local population 'formed' definitely 'into a mass' and there emerged a permanent population of hunters in the Transbaikal and on the Amur<sup>16)</sup>. The expression 'mass' is unsuitable, in view of the small total numbers in question, but cohesion is meant rather than proliferation.

I. S. Gurvich (1963) had said much the same, but stressed mainly the north of Siberia beyond the Yenisei<sup>17)</sup> and his view coincides, as to periodization, with that in vol. 2 of the five-volume *History of Siberia* ('first feudal period'). Pavlov (1973, p. 103) praises Aleksandrov (1964) for detecting a permanent population of trappers, but does not find Aleksandrov's characterization of that phase as 'transitional' (not yet permanent settlement) altogether satisfactory.

Pavlov proceeds to something much more useful, in the shape of a statistical analysis of the trappers' movements. He processed nearly seventy tax-office books (*tamozhnye knigi*) of Siberian centres of registration (*yavka*) at intervals of between two-and-a-half and five years during the period 1620–90<sup>18)</sup>. On the procedure which he defines (Pavlov 1973, pp. 105–6), the results are as in the Tables herewith. Table 1 identifies 1,258 trappers registering at eleven centres of 'compulsory attendance' in Siberia during 1620–90. A third of these registered at Yakutsk initially, a fifth at Mangazeya, less than half at all the rest.

Almost 60 per cent of these (750 men) began trapping in the district in which they first registered; and the Tables record their areas of subsequent activity. Just a half of them proceeded to hunt only in that region where they made their first *yavka*. More than a third hunted only in that region and one other; only one in ten

16) В. А. Александров, «Начало хозяйственного освоения русским населением Забайкалья и Приамурья (вторая половина XVII в.)», *История СССР*, №2, стр. 48–9, 54.

17) И. С. Гурвич, «Русские на северо-востоке Сибири в XVII в.», *Сибирский этнографический сборник*, т. 5, 1963, стр. 80, 85–6, 90.

18) 5 books of Mangazeya *uyezd*, 14 of Yenisei, 15 of Yakutsk, 19 from various offices on the periphery of Yakutsk *uyezd*, 6 of the Chechui post (*застава*) of Ilimsk *uyezd* (sometimes under Yakutsk, but here counted under Ilimsk throughout) and one book of Ilimsk itself. For identification of names, Н. Н. Бражникова, «Русская антропонимия Зауралья на рубеже XVII–XVIII веков», *Ономастика*, 1969, стр. 93–5.

Table 2. Trappers' choices of second hunting-ground, 1620-1690

Went to (places of second hunting)

From (place of first hunting):	SURGUT	MAN-GAZEYA	YENISEI	ILIMSK	VILYUI	YAKUTSK	ZHIGANSK	OLENĚK	YANA & INDIGIRKA	ALAZEYA & KOLYMA	TO TAL
MANGAZEYA	1	/	9	7	18	40	1	3	3	1	83
YENISEI	-	6	/	10	1	18	2	-	1	-	38
ILIMSK	-	-	1	/	-	15	-	-	1	-	17
YAKUTSK	-	1	1	14	18	/	57	15	19	22	147
NIZHNI-VILYUISK	-	1	-	-	/	21	2	1	1	-	26
ZHIGANSK	-	-	-	-	1	31	/	1	4	3	40
OLENĚK	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	/	2	-	3
YANA	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	/	-	3
INDIGIRKA	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	/	7	9
ALAZEYA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
KOLYMA	-	1	-	1	-	7	-	-	1	-	10
TOTAL	1	9	11	32	38	134	66	20	32	34	377

trailed into three regions, only six men went into four or five of the territorial divisions of Siberia. The variations in the percentages for the different areas are striking, with mostly higher (above average) linkages of 'permanency' of above or relative localization of activity in the centres to the left of Table 1 than in the outlands on its right hand side.

Certainly these figures destroy any notion that may have been entertained of an extreme mobility of trappers all over Siberia; of one man being (say) at one time in Kamchatka, at another in the Sayan, later far to the north-west, or anything of that sort. Nevertheless the 'localization' adduced by Pavlov remains a very relative one, by the simple fact that the districts in question in Siberia were very large — of the size of many of the independent countries in the middle range, in terms of area, in the world today. However, Pavlov proceeds to shed further light.

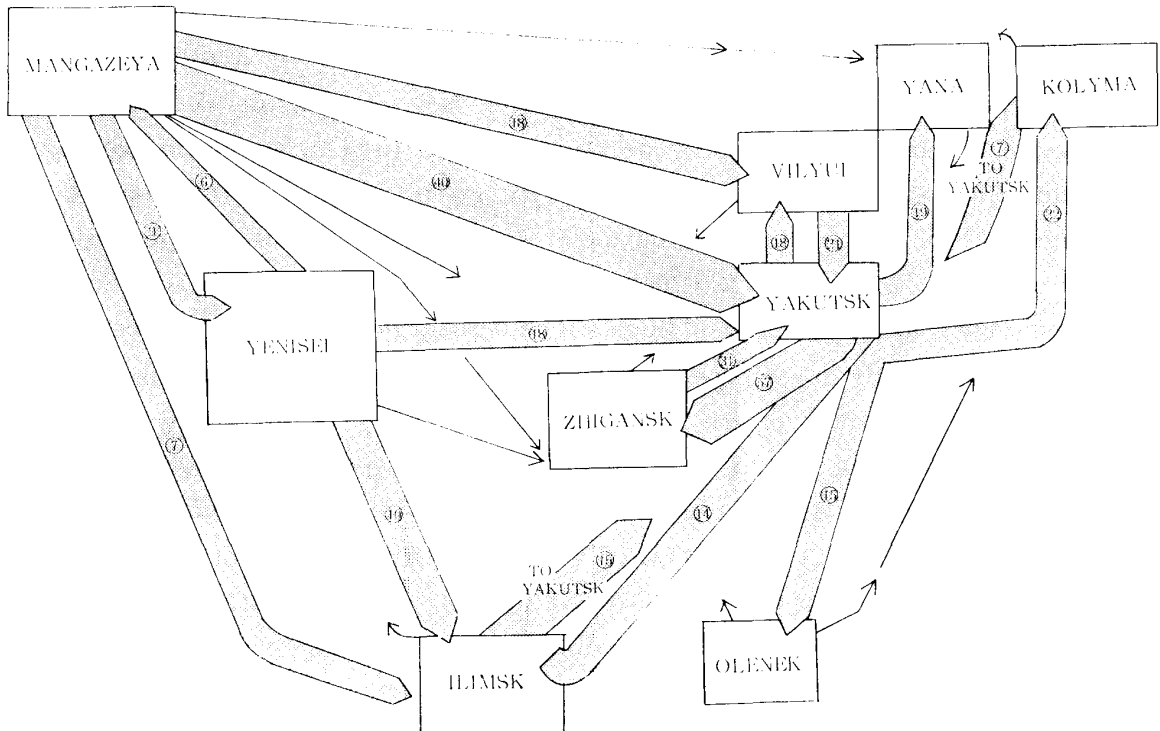
He analyses (Table 2) in the form of an input-output grid, the movements of the 376 trappers who hunted in 1620–90 in more than one region, in respect of their transference from their first area of operation to their second. Three quarters of these 376 more mobile trappers, Pavlov emphasizes, hunted in only two regions, only one in five in three regions, a mere one in twenty in four and an insignificant one per cent in five. The much higher figures for some areas than for others are again notable. And clearly, by the size of its figures, Yakutsk was the greatest by far of the 'cross-roads' or 'traffic nodes' of Siberia in this connection; this fact stands out if the columns for Yakutsk are read vertically from top to bottom and horizontally from left to right, making a central cross in Table 2.

This 'nodality' of Yakutsk may be shown graphically also by presenting the data in Table 2 in the form of a flow-diagram (Figure 1); showing how greatly Yakutsk was the 'hub' of the traffic of fur-hunters in Siberia. It is to be emphasized however that Table 2 and Figure 1 show only the initial movements, for two areas — the first and second areas of trappers' operation. It should be noted also that the Yakutsk area extends particularly to the eastward, to the Aldan and the Okhotsk coast. While, in Figure 1, though all the other areas are placed roughly in their relative geographical positions, Zhigansk is shown (merely for convenience in designing the diagram) to the southward of its true location, which is of course on the lower Lena, north of the Vilyui.

The movements of the trappers *within* each of these eleven extensive regions is much harder to trace. Probably it can never be known in such statistical terms as the foregoing; but much could be done by accumulating and correlating case-histories, or personalia. Pavlov gives some examples of relevant case-histories. The Yenisei tax-books for various years (1647, 1654, 1664, 1668, 1675, 1684 and 1685) give data on the localities where the furs delivered to the tax *izba* were originally caught. Nineteen

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Figure 1. Main movements of trappers from first to second hunting-ground, 1620-1690



persons who began trapping on the Yenisei between 1620 and 1690 are recorded twice or more. Ten of them regularly went after furs 'on the banks of the Yenisei', six went to other rivers, and three went from a second river to a third. Much of the activity was in the Angara basin.

Vasilii Ivanov from Ustyug first trapped on the Yenisei, after that on the banks of the Tunguska (Angara), finally on the Mura, a tributary of the Angara. Koz'min Pavlov, also from Ustyug, went from the Yenisei onto the Kova (a distant tributary of the Angara, afterwards to the nearer-by Mura. Ivan Sanin from Pinsk went from the Yenisei to the Kamenka (a nearer tributary of the Angara), subsequently to the Kova. Some trappers from Eastern Siberia remained on the Angara.

The Kolegovs (from the Komi area in north-west European Russia) hunted for three generations in the Ketsk, Yeniseisk, Ilimsk and Yakutsk administrative areas; the brothers Semyon and Ivan were in Yeniseisk *uyezd* in 1630 — exact location not known — in 1647 the brothers Ivan, Andrei, Rodion and Mikhail were hunting on the banks of the Kata, a distant tributary of the Angara, then in 1655 Rodion was on the Kamenka, much nearer to Yeniseisk. In 1659 Rodion and his brothers Mikhail and Larion were on the Chechui portage on the Lena, where they located themselves quite definitely, though working from time to time down the Lena towards Yakutsk. In 1675 Rodion's son Boris went onto the Chechui portage.

'Mobile' operators concentrated on probing areas which led through to other hun-

ting grounds, while those trappers who worked only in one region often did so on 'blind alley' (*tupik*) rivers not leading to outlets into other areas; one such is the Pita, which seven men are recorded twice or more as having for their hunting-ground.

Another feature that blurs the picture is the lack of absolute division between the occupational categories; naturally peasants engaged to some extent in seeking fur-bearing animals, while *vice versa* trappers might go in for producing crops, berries, honey, etc. If on the one hand the mobility of the trappers is exaggerated, so on the other hand is the 'fixity' of the peasants, who frequently moved onto new land, abandoning their old lands and buildings. The peasant population in the Yenisei *uyezd* actually declined slightly in some periods in the seventeenth century because of this<sup>19)</sup>, and later in southern and western Siberia in the following century, new lands were settled by people moving within those regions as well as people from outside them<sup>20)</sup>. Settlement was 'step by step', with mixed activities at the moving margin<sup>21)</sup>.

Pavlov's other useful contribution is on the *length of sojourn* of trappers in Siberia in the seventeenth century. He considered the 750 'mobile' trappers in that respect also, with due attention to the statistical difficulties. His findings are summarized in Table 3; and may again be visualized in diagrammatic form, as the 'population-pyramid' in Figure 2. Of those who stayed more than one year in Siberia, about half stayed more than six years, a third more than ten years; the 'old timers' were as numerous as the 'tenderfeet' and some families were trappers for generations, even if not recorded as taxpayers (*podatnye*) ascribed to particular districts, therefore not classified as perma-

Table 3. Length of stay of trappers in Siberia, 1620-1690

Number of		Number of	
Years	Persons	Years	Persons
2	129(17%)	11-11	116(15%)
3	83(11%)	16-20	63( 8%)
4	49( 7%)	21-25	29( 4%)
5	57( 8%)	26-30	13( 2%)
6	45( 6%)	31-35	1
7	59( 8%)	36-40	3
8	36( 5%)	Total	
9	27( 4%)	11-40	225(30%)
10	40( 5%)	Grand total	750(100%)
Total			
2-10	525(70%)		

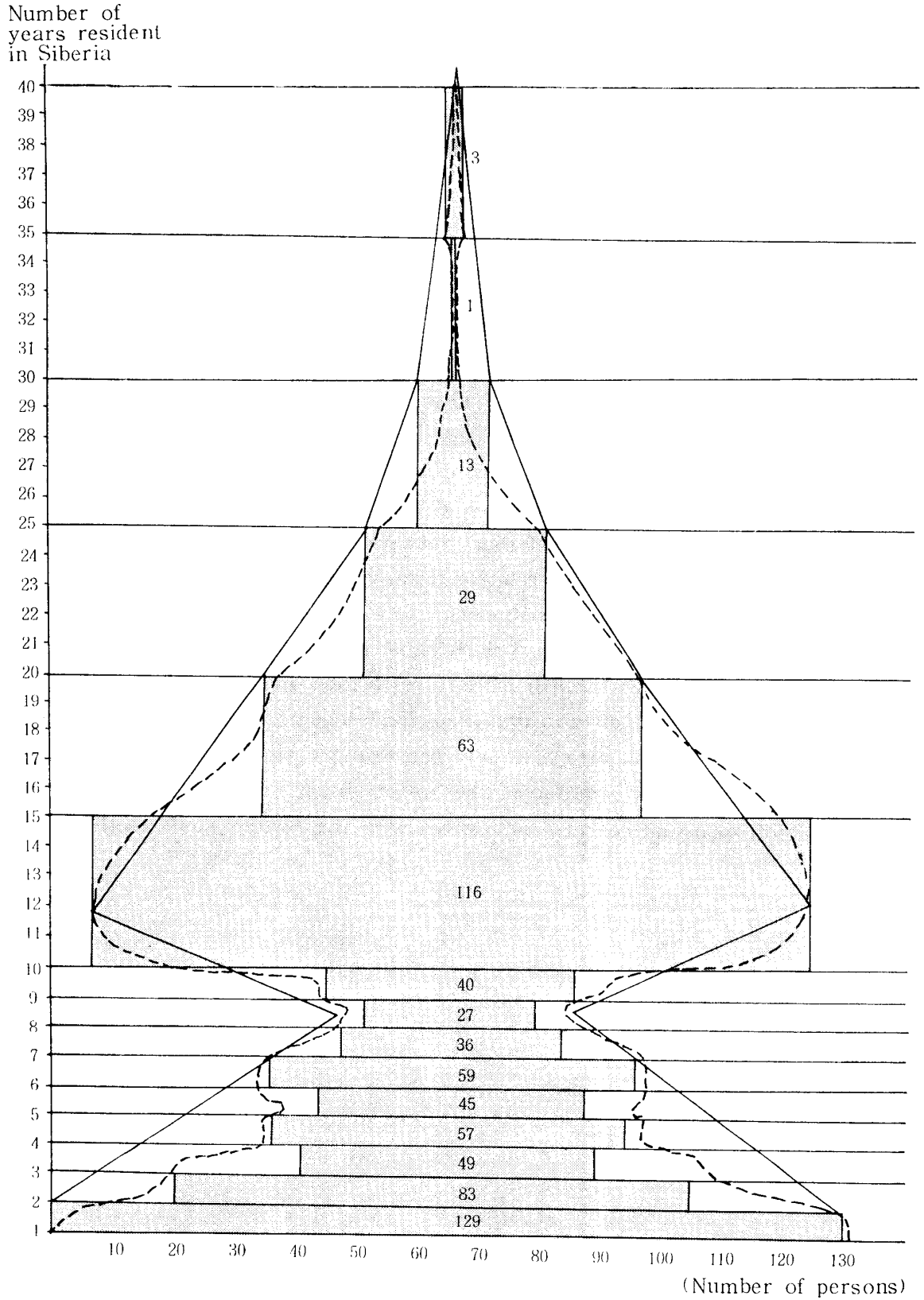
19) Александров, 1914, стр. 97, 100.

20) М. М. Громыко, *Западная Сибирь в XVIII в. Русское население и земледельческое освоение*. Новосибирск, 1965, стр. 106.

21) А. Д. Колесников, *Заселение и освоение Среднего Прииртышья в XVII—первой половине XIX в.*, Автореф. канд. дисс. Новосибирск, 1967, стр. 17.

THE TRAIL OF THE SABLE

Figure 2. Length of stay of trappers in Siberia (1620-1690)



ment residents but as 'wanderers'.

The subjection of the trappers to tax or imposts (*tyaglo*) proceeded step by step, but the authorities would enforce it as soon as possible. In the 1660s in the Mangazeya *uyezd* and the southern part of the Yakutsk *uyezd* both peasants and hunters 'settled' as 'townspeople' (*posadniki*) while still engaged in hunting for furs<sup>22)</sup>. It is thus emphasized that there was a transitional or intermediate stage (Pavlov notes), requiring a 'class-neutral' term such as 'dweller' (*zhitel'*) in a particular township; the full break with a person's home-place of origin in Russia came only with his subjection to taxation in a new Siberian place, with which he would have had a more than cursory acquaintance for some time earlier.

\* \* \*

Pavlov's short contribution thus adds both new details and new perspectives on this important subject, which is of key significance from the viewpoint of world history, and should be much further worked by analysts not only in the Soviet Union but in all other parts of the world. If Pavlov does not succeed in 'negating' completely the notion of the 'mobility' of the trappers and establishing in 'antithesis' that they were a fundamental element in the settlement and Russianization (*osvoyenie*) of Siberia in the period of the Russian conquest of that great northern half of Asia (in the vastness of which 'mobility' is necessarily a relative term) he has certainly provided valuable and interesting data and indicative comments.

A considerable amount of such work is being done in the Soviet Union, by modern research methods and with much more investigation and processing of the archives and original materials than was previously undertaken. Pavlov's paper which has been taken up in the present article is only one example of this. It is to be hoped that not only will this work continue in the Soviet Union but that people in other countries will follow it and concern themselves with the further study of the subject.

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22) Александров, 1964, стр. 66. Гурвич, 1963, стр. 85.