

OLD-STYLE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP MOTIVATION

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Abstract

The old-style orthodox culture and ethics have always been distinguished by strictness that helped to survive during more than three-centuries old Schism. The success in entrepreneurial activity demonstrated by the representatives of the old-style orthodoxy is largely due to the special ethics within the structure of their worldview, supported by practices of everyday life. Merchant old-believers' dynasties are a well-known and familiar phenomenon for pre-revolutionary Russia, but what are the realities of old-believer entrepreneurs now? What is their relationship with the world of business? What does the current worldview of people who did not accept the church reforms of the 17th century look like when applied to actual trading conditions? We analysed the influence of location in special case of community, that was on the run in Argentina, and recently resettled in the Russian Far East region. The results, acquired by an interview survey, show a broad spectre of individual variations, still clearly based on key historically appropriated ethical principles of a 'rightful enterprise'.

Key words: Russian old-style orthodox Christians, entrepreneurship, business ethics

JEL Code: N13, N33, O15, Z12

Introduction

Motivation is always on demand in social organizations. And motives are reliable when culturally relevant, reflecting the actual values and attitudes. Anyway, the grand eurAsian region carries a lot of variation inside, still unfolding at the level of a grass-root economy (Pinkovetskaia et al, 2019) The importance of special cases in motivation comes with deep historic roots, or prototypes, and exotics usually brings to life some essential features of intentionality that seemed to be lost in time. Variations are good in discovering the universal laws in broader context of economic activities. Russia is marked with a wide range of internal cultural variations that still counterbalance the uniforming pressure of vertical state power. Those elements of non-conformity are indispensable for the overall landscape of entrepreneurial activities in the country, demonstrating intrinsic alternative for economic

trends in modern entrepreneurship in Russia. The primary impulse to start an enterprise on your own rather than looking for position in the existing structures is essentially expressing personal cultural and religious identity, sometimes stronger than gender. There is also a paradox of choosing economic innovation when pioneering in the style of reformation is represented in the supporters of old style as the only true one. People with old-believers background in Russia have been noticed in different spheres of cultural activities where the advanced ideas of the west were reincarnated by Russian actors. For example, 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' was virtuously reinterpreted by Alexandr Volkov, who had grown in old-believers family, authentically echoing the moral psychology of L.F. Baum, brought up by American protestant folkways.

1 History and Entrepreneurship Culture

The church Schism of the 17th century in Russia gave rise to various religious forms and trends. The result of Patriarch Nikon's church reforms was a change in the religious essence of Orthodox teaching, a distortion of the Holy Scriptures, and the emergence of new religious movements. The group of Orthodox Christians who refused to accept the church reforms of Patriarch Nikon is usually referred to as "Old Believers". Most of the Old Believers were forced to go into hiding, to escape persecution for religious reasons in remote areas of Russia, and then from its borders-to preserve their religious and cultural identity, to save their lives and the lives of their descendants. Until the beginning of the 19th century, not only the reformed church, but also the secular authorities of Russia called the Old Believers "schismatics", thus hinting at their guilt in the appearance of the Schism in Russia (it is worth noting that in the Old Believer environment itself, it was always suggested to ask the question: who was the organizer of the Schism – the Old Believers who tried to preserve the integrity of the teachings of the Orthodox Church, or the supporters of reforms who tried to violate this integrity?).

Later, the 20th century brought some freedom to the Old Believers – on April 17, 1905, the Supreme Decree of Nicholas II "On Strengthening the Principles of Religious Tolerance" was issued, according to which all subjects of the Russian Empire were granted the right to profess any faith. However, this gesture of goodwill is rightly linked not with religious tolerance directly to the Old Believers, but with a departure from the traditional strict laws and the fact that more and more Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants appeared in Russian society at that time. A greater level of freedom in the sphere of religion has rightly aroused

the interest of researchers in religious and near-religious topics, in particular, in the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in the Old Believer environment.

Nevertheless, the reforming Russian Empire collapsed in few years after that monarch declaration, and the bolshevik administration brought some changes and disappointments to citizens' daily life that couldn't change an overall scepticism of old-believers towards mundane powers in Russia. Some equivocal formulas were surpassed with the growth of stalinist regime that challenged the purity of religious thical principles in its ability to procreate the constructive survival in an alien world. Thus, the old believers were brought by waves of history to modern putinist Russia, which is nothing new in the context of cultural survival in Russian empire.

Modern Old Believers overwhelmingly try to preserve their socio-cultural identity within the canonical framework established long before the actual challenges to their tradition. However, it is necessary to recognize that the objective influence of modern society and related innovations affects the everyday and even liturgical culture of the Old Believers (Chernichkin, 2020; Levintova, 2007). At the same time, it is worth noting that some views and ideological orientations of the Old Believers may be unchanged, but their justification and reasons may change, as well as the opposite situation is possible: in matters that do not relate to the dogmas and canons of faith, changes are possible due to objective reasons (Levintova, 2007). People, inspired by keeping up their spiritual tradition also demonstrated an open thinking that echoes common sense, unlike the supporters of officially propagated version of (neo)traditionalism, where Russian empire and soviet union come together to decorate putinist ambitions of modern Russian Federation.

Old Believer entrepreneurship, indeed, deservedly stood out and drew attention to itself as a special element of Old Believer culture. The Old Believers' entrepreneurs achieved impressive results, and the effectiveness of their activities could not be ignored, writing off the accident, rather, on the contrary. V. P. Ryabushinsky (Ryabushinsky, 1928), a representative of the famous Old Believers' dynasty of industrialists, noted: "Two circumstances are characteristic of the old Russian merchant families. Firstly, their peasant origin, and secondly, the deep religiosity of their founders; there are many Old Believers among them".

At first glance, it may seem that entrepreneurship does not fit into the ethical framework of traditional religion (in particular, orthodox Christianity). But in the case of conducting business activities by a religious person, it is necessary to consider this activity from the point of view of a religious believer. In this case, a life free from sin comes first for

the entrepreneur, and it inevitably subordinates all his activities. Profit and earning capital do not become an end or a key motive for such an entrepreneur, and business is a mean for living a God-pleasing life – such business must be honest and not violate the framework of religious precepts.

The semantic content of religion will stand out the behavior and life orientations of a person who adheres to this religion. Max Weber (Weber, 1905) in his work "Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism" highlights the issue of religious attitudes and their relationship to economic activity. Weber argues that the worldview of the Anabaptists and Calvinists, conditioned by religion, quite specifically influenced their attitudes and behavioral practices. Weber distinguishes among them conscientious, competent business management and hard work. Calvinism in its teaching declares the predestination of human destiny. According to the teachings of Calvinism, a person cannot change his predestination to heaven or hell, but can already know his posthumous fate in the earthly life – it will be evidenced by the financial viability of a person. Therefore, for the adherents of Calvinism, it is so important to achieve financial success and successful economic activity. However, Weber touches not only on the Calvinist approach to the conduct of affairs, but also on the economic features of other religious types. Thus, he identifies the components of the financial success of Jewish entrepreneurs: the religious imprint imposed on the worldview, the position of the persecuted community, the closeness and lack of desire to contact the surrounding society, as well as the book culture and highly intellectual culture. Surprisingly, we find all these components as features of the Old Believer culture and everyday life.

The Old Believer merchant represented a special "ascetic ideal" - he did not work for personal gain, as a non-religious entrepreneur, and not for the sake of proving God's mercy to him, as did the Calvinist entrepreneur, not for the sake of religious ethics and duty, as a Lutheran entrepreneur. The goal of the merchant Old Believer was to build a special reality, a new world, a renewed life worthy of non-earthly Existence, and only then followed the goal of practical improvement of the earthly life of the community.

Max Weber (Weber, 1906) makes it clear that by the beginning of the 20th century, researchers already have an idea of a direct correlation between the religious worldview of an entrepreneur and his way of doing business. And the topic of Old Believer entrepreneurship is touched upon by researchers both in pre-revolutionary Russia, in the Soviet period and in modern Russia. The modern Russian researcher D. Raskov (Raskov, 2013; Raskov, 2020) singles out quite significant studies on the topic of Old Believer entrepreneurship from such authors as V. V. Andreeva, W.L. Blackwell, A. Gershenkron, V. Kelsieva, R. Krammi, and A.

Kolesnikov, Leroy-Beaulieu, A. S. Prugavina, A. P. Shchapova . V. Kerov cites a number of American scientists who have studied the phenomenon of Old Believer entrepreneurship: J. Armstrong, J.H. Billington, V.T. Bill, A. Gershenkron, P. Gatrell, R. Hingley, S. Black, R. Crummey, M. Cherniavsky, M.C. Kaser, D. McKleland, T.C. Owen, T. Parsons, Jones J. N. Patrons, J. Ruckman, A.J. Rieber, A. Robson. Research that took place in the period of pre-revolutionary Russia, in some form, continued in the Soviet period, but such a database of research data has a very meager amount of information concerning the current state of affairs of entrepreneurs-Old Believers.

2 Empirical research

Interviewing had broad geographical and professional scope, from Ural to the Far East region, from farmers to construction and industrial entrepreneurs. The interviewing was targeted to locals in the Sverdlovskaya oblast region, including Yekaterinburg and other major cities, and also, we were lucky to find contacts with recent immigrant from Bolivia in Amurskay oblast region, where the community mostly settled in the smaller northern towns, not in Blagoveschensk, the regional center. Telephone calls, including popular available messengers, and delegated interviews thanks to our colleagues in the Far East Federal university gave a clear chance of qualitative interpretation of data. Key sensitive questions were about ethical identity and interactions with the environment, with partners and employees from other religious and cultural groups, and with the state and local governance institutions. Ethical purity was interpreted mostly intuitively, which is expectable concerning the overall mystical attitude in authentic Christian orthodoxy. The interaction with other entrepreneurs and professionals were not defined due to some search of purity, but most respondents stressed that everyone who comes to them in their life, should be considered as a sign of divine providence.

Above all expectations, we did not meet any sign of ‘transformative’ nostalgia while talking to repatriates from Bolivia. The nostalgia is obvious in other groups of emigrants from Russia, occasionally returning to homeland, or still staying in a country of departure (Fialkova, 2005).

Another impressive quality of authentic old believers is gentle abstinence in judging any political facts, as they are traditionally overly critical in accounting mundane rulers of Russia. It is worth mentioning that common sense reasons do not appear as a starting point in old

believers' motivation, still they manage to demonstrate it amongst expectable attitudes to which they arrive in their daily life and entrepreneurship experiences.

Key semantic contexts of conversation with actual old believers rotated in the sphere of internal honesty in following the higher ethical demands, regardless on who you meet in your life, on your way. 'Us', the old believers are secured mostly for informal friendships and religious practices, while in mundane activities there is no difference between Russian Christians in general and ethnically various Muslims. At somewhat deeper psychological layer respondents demonstrate confidence and endurance, as they do not consider fast arriving success at the start of a project as something normally desirable, the preference is on the side of gradual and stable propagation of every meaningful beginning.

Our respondents demonstrate quality of judgement that lies outside public propaganda and political rhetoric of public communication. Still, the seemingly closed attitude towards life mixes with strong and pure pragmatic attitude towards entrepreneurial opportunities, available and probable. Modern old believers, as their predecessors, do not hurry to demonstrate their symbolical identity, meanwhile introducing the ethical principles of their faith into practical management ethics. Thus, the exotically closed thinking marries global tendencies of surviving through local initiatives when interaction and partnership with other people is tolerant.

Vague and gloomy perspectives for entrepreneurial enthusiasm in Putin's Russia cannot miss touching people of all cultural identities, nevertheless, the rudimentary old-style attitudes create some non-standard scenarios for survival, when absolutely traditionalist expectations are open to any imported instrumental innovation. Such cultural variations work as agents of normal cultural diffusion in a country that is almost closed already for catching up with advanced global tendencies in economic activities. Nevertheless, the 'bookish' cultural gene, marking the old believers' family education, gives hopes to see again the unique ability of survival through developing intrinsic competences and skills that could help to secure cultural and spiritual identity. All emerging professions and vocations, all forms of social technologies to run an enterprise could be learned by people surviving due to their cultural motivation.

Conclusion

Work in the Old Believer environment is considered through sacred dimension – as a matter of spiritual church building. It is known that the key element of preserving the fullness of the Faith in the Old Believer environment was the community, which was distinguished by

a specific joint management of the economy. It is the attitude to the conduct of work as an element of interaction with the world, characteristic of the Old Believer worldview, that contributed to the emergence of the world-famous phenomenon of Old Believers-entrepreneurs. Kerov (Kerov, 2001; Kerov, 2004; Kerov, 2003) disputes Weber's claims, saying that not only a modernized and rationalized Christianity can become the basis for successful capitalist activity – traditional, but fundamentalist Christianity can also be no less successful, and an example of this is Old-Believer Orthodoxy. V. Ryabushinsky (Ryabushinsky, 1928), known for his successful entrepreneurial activity, contrasts the consciousness of a secular entrepreneur and an Orthodox entrepreneur, introducing the concept of "economic sanctity". Under it, he understands the activity aimed at optimizing the conditions of spiritual development and is not an end.

Thus, it can be confidently stated that the Old Believer way of farming established a special ethno-religious, ethno-cultural phenomenon – the Russian merchant as an Old Believer (Andrian, 2003). The spiritual peculiarity and the communal component led to the concentration of Russian capital in frequent ownership at a time when Old-Believer entrepreneurs could freely conduct their activities. It is noted that by 1917, half of the entire capital of the Russian Empire was concentrated in the Old Believers' environment.

We are far from propagating any kind of retrospective Romanticism, yet we consider the heterogeneity of economic motivation being neglected in modern Russia. The country is falling behind original breakthroughs to innovative civilization projects, missing the unique variability of culture inside. The only way to adequate economic partnership outside lies in the honest confidence inside, when authentic long-standing tradition meets actual common-sense reality, or at least, gives a definite chance to move on to new horizons while not leaving the common-sense grounds. Regional variations also matter for socio-economic change in modern Russia, as Ural region and parts of Siberia express autonomous local policies that mismatch centralized approach of United Russia party, representing the vertical federal rule. Those are the regions securing old-believers' cultural gene in their actual social profiles.

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