

The Old Believers and Their Marriage Patterns in Early Twentieth Century Urals, Russia A Microdata Analysis

ELENA
GLAVATSKAYA
JULIA BOROVIK

While the whole country was on its way to modernization, this most conservative and most numerous religious minority of ethnic Russians maintained their identity and practices: not registering marriages and observing religious endogamy.

Elena Glavatskaya

Professor at the Department of History, Institute of Humanities, Ural Federal University, Ekaterinburg.

Julia Borovik

Senior researcher at the Department of History, Institute of Humanities, Ural Federal University, Ekaterinburg.

Introduction

LATE NINETEENTH century Russian history was marked by rapid industrialization and urbanization. Ekaterinburg was one of the cities that received migrants from both the countryside and the western provinces of the Russian Empire. Especially in the first quarter of the twentieth century the city became more ethnically and religiously diverse, even if the majority of its citizens, over 90 per cent, were ethnic Russians and members of the Russian Orthodox Church. While there are many studies conducted on European urban nuptiality, less has been done on the Russian sources. However, the Princeton Fertility Project analyzed differential marriage ages in the Russian gubernias (provinces)

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based on the 1897 census aggregates in their study of fertility in Russia.¹ Their study included Perm province (including Ekaterinburg), with a population of about 3 million, but did not consider internal regional differences. The same applies to the comprehensive study of Russia's social history that includes a section on demography.²

Even less has been done on the sub-regional level. Except for a sole monograph on the demography of the Ural population employed in metal producing plants in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries,³ there were no studies on historical demography in the Urals. Urban nuptiality got even less attention and most of the studies were based on aggregate data, except for the research focusing on Ekaterinburg's Catholic, Lutheran, and Jewish communities.⁴

The concept of 'European marriage pattern' introduced by John Hajnal in 1965 refers to two basic characteristics: high age at first marriage: 27–29 for men and 24–26 for women, and a large proportion of people remaining unmarried—10–15 percent. His demarcation between the East and the West is the line Trieste—Saint Petersburg,⁵ and the defining factors were social status, cultural values, and especially the type of place of residence. Katie Lynch found that the 'European marriage' characteristics were especially manifest in cities.⁶ Taking that into consideration we decided to analyze marriage patterns, including age at marriage, using Russian urban data, in a city situated near the dividing line between Europe and Asia. Ekaterinburg had had a European focus, with its industries and Western Christian communities, since the eighteenth century. It was one of the major cities in Russia through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even if not among the biggest, and its situation can help us understand demographic dynamics in the core of Russia. This is our second attempt to analyze the Urals' urban marriage patterns with nominative data,⁷ and the first one on the Old Believers community, which scholars consider the most conservative religious denomination in Russia. In the present article our research question is how the Old Believers were different from the Russian Orthodox majority.

Geographic and Religious Setting

PETER THE Great founded Ekaterinburg in 1723, as the main metal (copper, iron, and cast iron) production center in Russia. The metal production boom in the Urals attracted dissenters from the Russian Orthodox Church—the Old Believers—since the early eighteenth century. Georg Wilhelm de Gennin, a general of German origin in the service of Russia and Peter the Great's friend, was the city's governor for 12 years (1723–1734). A Lutheran himself, and thus a representative of a religious minority in an area dominated

by Orthodoxy, he was known for his religious tolerance and employed people without considering their religious affiliation.⁸ Thus, in the mid-eighteenth century up to one third of Ekaterinburg's population were Old Believers.⁹ They fled religious persecution, settled near the metal plants, and supplied the local population with a wide variety of agricultural products. Within a few decades, they managed to accumulate enough capital to invest in the local metal production and also in other sectors, eventually playing important roles in trade and city management. Old Believer peasants from neighboring villages sent their adult children to work in Ekaterinburg or moved there themselves. Ekaterinburg was the biggest center of the Old Believers in Perm province and one of the major Old Believers centers in the eastern part of the empire. According to the first all-Russian census data, the Old Believers were the largest religious minority in the city (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN EKATERINBURG, 1897

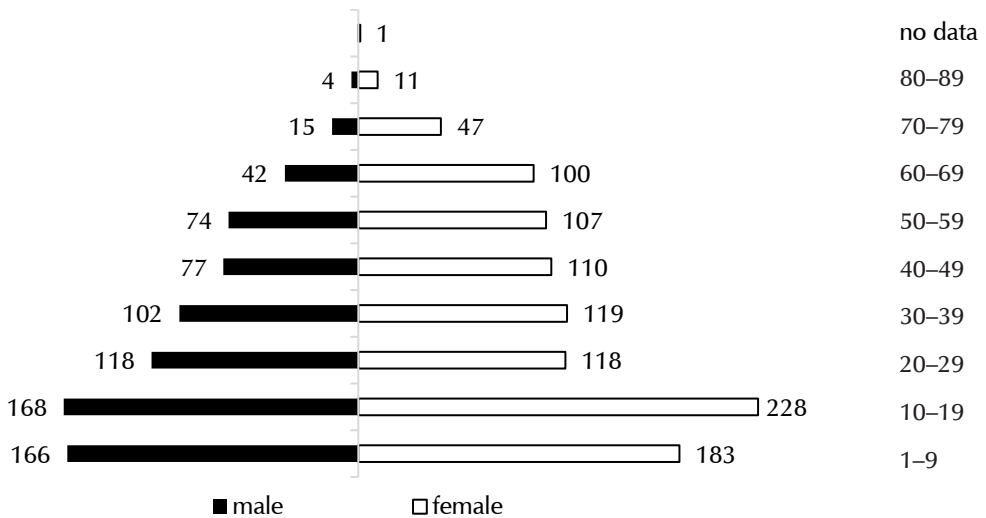
Denomination	1897			
	Male	Female	TOTAL	%
Orthodox	18,534	21,211	39,745	91.8
<i>Old Believers</i>	766	1,024	1,790	4.1
Catholics	167	156	323	0.7
Protestants	179	205	384	0.9
Muslims	386	292	678	1.6
Jews	150	153	303	0.7
Other	23	34	57	0.1
TOTAL	20,205	23,075	43,280	100

SOURCE: 1897 census aggregates. See Nikolay A. Troinitskii, ed., *Permskaya guberniya* (Perm province), *Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiiskoi imperii 1897 g.* Izdanie Tsentral'nogo statisticheskogo komiteta ministerstva vnutrennikh del (The First National Census of the Russian Empire, 1897. Publication of Perm Province Central Statistical Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), 30 (Saint Petersburg, 1904), 72–73.

Their actual numbers were most likely underestimated, for the Old Believers were a discriminated religious group and did not openly manifest their religiosity and avoided registration by the state. However, since there is no other data available on their numbers we shall use the census aggregates. According to the 1897 Russian census, the Ekaterinburg Old Believers numbered 1,790 members; 766 males and 1,024 females (see Figure 1).

The Old Believers separated from the official Russian Orthodox Church in protest against the church reforms targeting liturgy, the holy books, icon paint-

FIGURE 1. EKATERINBURG'S OLD BELIEVERS POPULATION
ACCORDING TO THE 1897 CENSUS: AGE AND GENDER



SOURCE: 1897 census aggregates. See Troinitskii, *Permskaya guberniya*, 292–293.

ing canons, ritual life, etc. introduced by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow between 1652 and 1666. The most symbolic change which every believer experienced personally was the transition from the two-fingered sign of the cross practiced while self-blessing to the three-fingered blessing originally practiced by the Greeks. Many disagreed and continued practicing the old rites (*starye obriady*). The Great Moscow Council of 1666–1667 issued an anathema on the old rites and their supporters, who came to be known as *staroobryadtsy*—the Old Believers. They were persecuted for disobedience regardless of their social status.

The Old Believers in their turn considered the reformed Russian Orthodox Church, including the Russian tsars, as heretics and a sign that the second coming of Christ was close. In order to avoid falling into Antichrist's hands, they disobeyed the authorities. This fear was so strong that some burnt themselves alive rather than submit to the “servants of the Antichrist.”¹⁰ The Old Believers manifested their distinct religiosity by following pre-Patriarch Nikon's habits: men did not shave their beards, preferred to wear the seventeenth century style clothes, or did not consume imported products like potatoes and tobacco. They also maintained the pre-reform rituals with a long liturgy, using books and icons in pre-reform style.

The Old Believers' movement, even if sharing a common identity, was not homogeneous. One stumbling block was the problem of the priesthood. None of the Orthodox bishops joined the schism, which meant that the Old Believers could

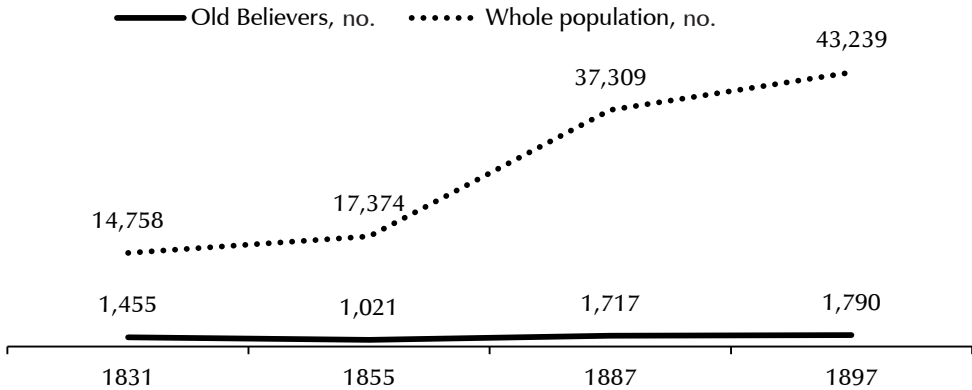
not get priests and split into the ‘priestless’ and ‘priestly’ Old Believers. The former thought they could manage without priests, while the latter preferred to accept clergy fleeing from the Russian Orthodox Church who underwent ‘correction’ in the Old Believers’ centers. The state persecuted the Old Believers who went underground and/or escaped to remote areas—the Russian North and Siberia.

Many of Ekaterinburg’s Old Believers, merchants and industrialists, descended from Old Believer families in Shartash, a commercial settlement some 5 km to the east of the city and a famous Old Believer center. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Ekaterinburg’s Old Believers acted as an established community with their own places of worship: two wooden chapels and two stone chapels on the properties of wealthy Old Believer families. However, their legal position was rather weak. Unlike the Muslims, Lutherans, Catholics and Buddhists, the Old Believers did not receive permission to form their own ‘ecclesiastical board’ to connect to the Russian state.¹¹ The second quarter of the nineteenth century brought a change in the state policy towards religions and a new wave of persecutions for the Old Believers. Tsar Nicholas I (1825–1855) launched missionary campaigns against them: the construction of new churches and even the repair of the old ones was forbidden, marriages performed by Old Believer *nastaniki* (pastors) were not recognized and children born to such families were considered illegitimate. The Old Believers had to face the reality of staying priestless. The chances of getting a priest fleeing from the Russian Orthodox Church were close to zero in times of persecutions. Nevertheless, the Old Believers preferred to keep their religion along with their confessional isolation: they met for prayer in chapels, buried their dead at a separate graveyard and were ruled by laymen. This covenant (*soglasie*) got its name of *Chasovennoe*—Chapel Covenant because they prayed in *chasovni* (chapels) and did not have priests. Ekaterinburg Chapel Old Believers had two chapels: St. Nicholas Chapel and the Ascension Chapel, with about 1,000 parishioners between them.¹²

Another Old Believers’ covenant in nineteenth century Ekaterinburg was the Belokrinitinskaya Church, originally founded in the Russian Orthodox monastery located in Romanian Belaya Krinitisa, then part of the Austrian Empire, in 1846. Unlike Chapel Old Believers, they had their hierarchy and priests ordained by Metropolitan Bishop Ambrosius, who left the Constantinople Orthodox Church and accepted the invitation of the Old Believers to found the Old Believer hierarchy.¹³ This new Belokrinitinskaya Church was attractive to the Old Believers because it was a real church and had lawful priests, yet they kept their independence from the Russian Orthodox authorities and the Moscow Patriarchate. Some Ekaterinburg Old Believers joined this new church already in the 1850s, forming a small community that initially worshipped and held services in private houses. They grew rapidly and in the 1880s managed to erect their

own St. Trinity Church, whose number of parishioners steadily increased due to immigration into Ekaterinburg. Nevertheless, while Ekaterinburg's population grew rapidly, its proportion of Old Believers steadily declined (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. EKATERINBURG'S OLD BELIEVER
POPULATION IN THE 19TH CENTURY



SOURCE: Yuliya Borovik, “Staroobryadtsy-chasovennye Ekaterinburga: chislennost', soslovnaya prinadlezhnost' i proyavlenie konfessional'noi obosoblennosti” (The Old Believers of Ekaterinburg: population, social estates and manifestation of religious identity), *Izvestiya Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta. Seriya 2. Gumanitarnye nauki* 172, 1 (2018).

The implementation of the 1905 Decree on Religious Tolerance strengthened the status of Ekaterinburg's Old Believers. One visible advantage was the introduction of vital event registration in their own church books. While the Belokrinitskaya Church generally supported the reform, many of the Chapel Covenants and some other communities in the Urals and Siberia approved the official registration and the introduction of church books (parish registers) only after heated discussions, and some refused to register their marriages.¹⁴

Metricheskie Knigi—the Church Books

TSAR PETER the Great had ordered the general registration of vital events in church books starting with 1722. During the next long century, the state extended the obligation to keep ministerial records to the religious leaders of any officially recognized religious congregation, but the Old Believers were not included on the list. It was only in 1874 that weddings performed by the Old Believers' priests were legitimized on the condition that they were con-

firmed and registered by the local police. Even then, the authorities treated an Old Believer marriage as a civil act rather than a sacrament.¹⁵ It was only in 1905 that the Old Believers pastors achieved inclusion into the multi-confessional establishment of the Empire.¹⁶

We found Ekaterinburg Old Believers' church books in the State Archive of Sverdlovsk oblast' (GASO) covering the period 1907–1925. We have not yet found any police protocols on the Old Believers' vital events for the period between 1874 and 1906. The Ekaterinburg Old Believers church books are annual, consisting of three separate parts: baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and exist in two copies. Russian legislation regulated the accuracy of church books. The religious community council had to check and verify the books every month and the authorities had the right to come and check the records whenever they wanted. All the events had to be recorded immediately after a priest or Chapel Old Believers' pastor performed the ceremony. Abbreviations and corrections in the church books were banned. All mistakes or spelling errors had to be marked and accompanied by appropriate comments. Priests, pastors, as well as the whole community were to be fined for any irregularity in the church records (the complete text on the regulations published in 1906).¹⁷

Ekaterinburg city Old Believers considered the introduction of church books to be of vital importance, while many of their co-religionists in the countryside were afraid of possible persecutions and refused to provide information about themselves to the authorities. The Old Believers obviously had an interest in documenting their vital events, since they kept the registration for several years after the 1917 Revolution, even if the authorities no longer demanded it. Altogether, we found 36 church books of Chapel Old Believers covering the period of 1907–1919 and 28 church books of the Belokrinitinskaya Church Old Believers covering the period 1906–1925, although not thoroughly kept in the 1920s due to the Civil War. For this reason, we did not include them in the analyses.

The registration of marriages in church books provides names (first, family, and patronymics), wedding date, marital status, social status and/or occupation of both groom and bride, their place of origin or registration, and their age. In addition, there was similar personal information on the names of two to four witnesses. We have information on 172 first-time marriages for 146 brides and 139 bridegrooms in the Ural Population Project database (hereafter URAPP), where information was transcribed from the church books of the Chapel and Belokrinitinskaya Church communities.

The Old Believers in general responded positively to the change in the state policy towards religions, after the 1905 Law on religious tolerance and its extension about the Old Believers introduced in 1906. They gradually introduced church books in 1907. However, after a couple of years, some families became skeptical about registering marriages due to new concerns that the information

could be used against them. The second increase in marriages among them coincided with the 1917 Revolution, which banned all religious discrimination in Russia. Apparently, the fact that their persecuted religion finally received equal rights with the Russian Orthodox Church inspired the Old Believers to start registering marriages again. That may explain the high frequency of the Old Believers' marriages registered in 1907 to 1909 and 1917.

Taking into consideration the relatively small size of the provincial city, the Old Believer communities and their close connections, where everyone knew everyone, we may assume that records in the church books should be rather accurate. One argument in favor of the accuracy is the sex ratio of the newborn babies, registered in the church books: 207 boys versus 180 girls in the Chapel Covenant books and 209 boys vs. 191 girls in the Belokrinitskaya Church books.

Since we do not have census data for the early twentieth century, neither the exact population size of the Old Believer community, nor their age and gender distribution is known. Instead, we used the 1897 census numbers and church records data to compute an approximate marriage coefficient: the number of annual marriages per 1,000 parish members. We assume that their numbers had grown since 1897, when there were 1,790 Old Believers registered in the city. It was especially low among the Chapel faction with an average 3.3 marriages per year. The marriage activity coefficient for the two neighboring Russian Orthodox Church parishes and for Belokrinitskaya Church during the same period was 16.4 marriages per year (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. MARRIAGE COEFFICIENT OF ORTHODOX AND OLD BELIEVER PARISHES IN EKATERINBURG 1907–1919

Denomination		Approx. no. of parish members	Average marriages per year	Approx. marriage coefficient per 1,000
Russian Orthodox Church	2 parishes	7,300	120	16.4
Old Believers	Chapel faction	1,500	5.0	3.3
	Belokrinitskaya Church	2,000 500	13.2 8.2	6.6 16.4

SOURCE: URAPP.

Assuming that both communities had similar age and gender structures, we have to ascribe the difference to the Old Believers' religious tradition: members of the priestless denomination of Chapel Old Believers apparently preferred not to register their marriages. However, if they did, the entry in the church book was made appropriately.

Marriage Patterns in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ekaterinburg

SINCE THERE is no alternative data available, we computed the marriage distribution in Ekaterinburg according to the 1897 census data (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGE OF NEVER MARRIED
IN EKATERINBURG BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP

Men			Women		
Age	Population	% Never-married	Age	Population	% Never-married
15–16	954	100.00	15–16	1,186	98.65
17–19	1,478	96.98	17–19	1,650	79.63
20–29	3,776	56.99	20–29	4,054	40.2
30–39	3,266	17.29	30–39	3,424	19.15
40–49	2,346	9.80	40–49	2,541	15.58
50–59	1,277	6.96	50–59	1,773	11.44

SOURCE: 1897 census aggregates. See N. A. Troinitskii, ed., *Permskaya guberniya*, 31 (Saint Petersburg, 1904), 36.

A relatively high death rate, as well as a religiously confirmed tradition of obligatory marriage were main reasons for remarriage in Russia for centuries. According to URAPP the share of remarriages among the Ekaterinburg Old Believers in 1907–1919 was 14 percent for men and 8.1 percent for women, which did not differ from the share of remarriages in 1906–1910 calculated for the whole country by Tol'ts (14.2 and 8.9, respectively). Due to the lack of source material for the earlier period, we do not know if the number of remarriages declined since the late nineteenth century, as was the case in the rest of Russia. Possible reasons for the decline in remarriages in Russia could be the general mortality decline; there were fewer widowers, and widows with surviving children had smaller chances to remarry.¹⁸ In addition, the family and marriage institution, once considered the bedrock of Russia, underwent profound changes.¹⁹ There is no data on divorces in our DB, but the marital status of eight out of fourteen remarrying brides is unclear, for they are not classified as widows, or as maidens. We cannot accuse their Old Believer pastor of neglect, for he carefully wrote down their social status. At this stage, we have to keep open the question as to whether some of these could have been cases of divorce after all.

According to Russian legislation, it was illegal to marry more than three times, and third time marriage was a rare phenomenon. In our DB there were

only three marriages recorded in the Old Believers' communities with a groom or bride using their last legal chance to have a spouse. All three marriages were registered in 1910 and all three couples had a significant age difference, of 10 years or more. Fedor Kochurov, a 39-years-old peasant from Kurgan city, married Alexandra Pavlova, a 24-years-old maiden, the daughter of an Ekaterinburg merchant belonging to the Chapel Covenant. Anton Chudin, a 36-years-old peasant from Ryazan' city, married Feodosia Makarova, a 19-years-old maiden, the daughter of an Ekaterinburg townsman (Belokrinit'skaya Church). Pavel Popov, a 26-years-old Ekaterinburg townsman, married Efrosinia Afonasieva, a 36-years-old widow from Ekaterinburg, for whom it was the third marriage (Belokrinit'skaya Church). A similar marriage pattern was characteristic in late 19th century Netherlands. Both widowers and widows usually preferred their new spouse to be young.²⁰

We also computed the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) to be 27.1 for men and 24.6 for women. This corresponds well with the mean age at marriage among the urban population in the Russian Empire computed by Boris Mironov: big cities²¹—27.7 years for men and 24.8 for women, and in smaller cities—26.8 and 22.8 respectively.²² Mean age at first marriage in Ekaterinburg for the whole period was almost the same as in most of Russia's cities—26.3 years for men and 22 for women (URAPP).

Religious Endogamy

THE MEMBERS of both the Belokrinit'skaya Church and the Chapel Covenant preferred religiously homogeneous marriages. The Belokrinit'skaya Church did not recognize marriage ceremonies performed by the Chapel pastor in their chapels unless a Belokrinit'skaya priest took part in the ceremony. In their turn, Chapel Old Believer pastors never registered marriages other than those of their own co-religionists and did not recognize the Belokrinit'skaya Church's hierarchy and their priests. Needless to say, there were no mixed marriages between members of the two communities registered in the Chapel Covenant church books. This indicates the preservation of a strong religious identity, endogamy and rigid isolation from the rest of the world at least in everything that had to do with family affairs.

The Belokrinit'skaya Church community was more open; they registered marriages with Chapel Old Believers and even with the Russian Orthodox Church members. Occasionally they required a member of the Chapel Covenant to join their community prior to the wedding ceremony. For example, Firs Yuzhakov, a 20-years-old peasant from Verkhotur'e, and Elena Borokhnina, a 19-years-old

maiden from Nev'yansk—both Chapel Old Believers, had to join Belokrinitskaya Church before having their wedding. The reason could have been their parents' disapproval, which made them change religious affiliation and register their wedding in a different parish, which had been standard practice since the beginning of the eighteenth century.²³ On the other hand, it could have been a mutual decision made with the prospect of getting away from the most conservative covenant. It is worthwhile noting that 92 percent of grooms and 81 percent of brides signed their marriage document themselves. Unlike the Russian Orthodox Church members, the Old Believers often gave their daughters an education. They usually did not attend the Russian Orthodox parish schools, but studied at home. The ability to read, copy fragments of the holy texts, including the Book of Psalms or canons for everyday reading, as well as teaching the children of co-religionists, were considered to be useful occupations for Old Believer women. It could help to provide for families in times of crises and was considered especially useful for maidens and widows.

Age at First Marriage

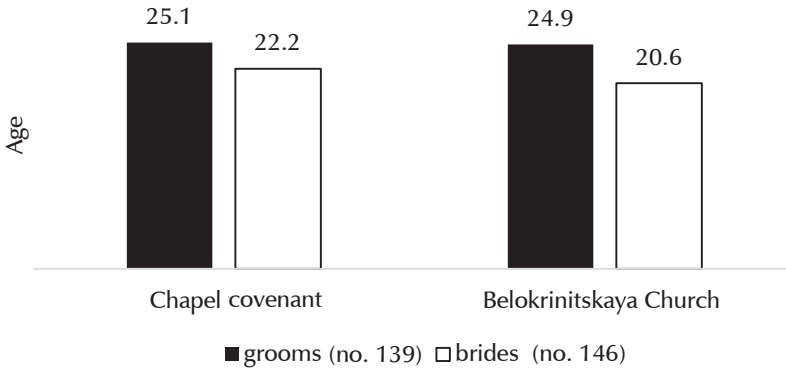
MEAN AGES at first marriage for the Ekaterinburg Old Believers brides and grooms were 21.2 and 24.9, respectively. These results are nearly the same as for the Russian Orthodox Church members in one of the biggest parishes in Ekaterinburg—St. Catherine's Church, for which we have microdata—21 for brides and 25.5 for grooms.²⁴ There was a certain difference in age at first marriage between the Chapel and Belokrinitskaya Church brides, as the latter married earlier, aged 17–22 (see Figure 3).

Most Old Believers belonged to the two social groups (*soslovie*), peasants and townsmen (*meshchane*), while a minority were merchants and belonged to the petty bourgeoisie (*kuptcy*). The Old Believer peasants married one year later than their co-religionist townsmen, while those from the petty bourgeoisie group usually married even later, at the age of 27 (see Figure 4).

Marriage postponement was unusual among the Russian peasants, and for men the age at first marriage in Russia's rural areas was usually lower than in the cities. More than 55 percent of the Old Believers were peasants who in-migrated to Ekaterinburg. Finding themselves in the new social and cultural environment, they could have experienced problems starting a family and therefore had to postpone marriage. That corresponds well to the findings based on the Historical Population Database of Transylvania. Those who migrated to more developed regions married on average one year later than their non-migrating counterparts.²⁵

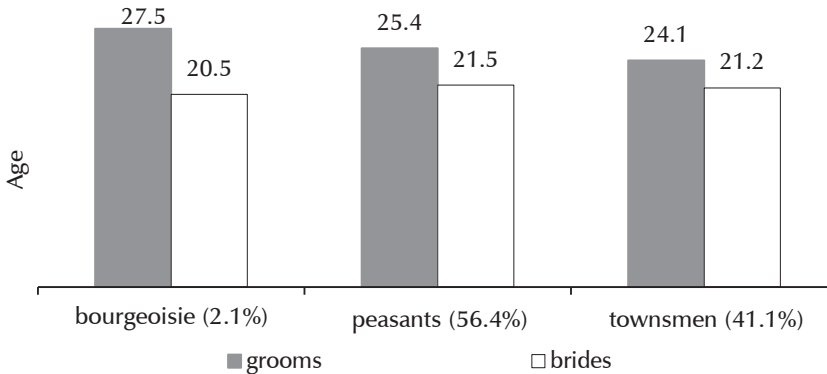
There were a few cases of 16-years-old brides—8 out of 145. Such early marriages were not a widespread phenomenon in late Imperial Russia, where only 2.5

FIGURE 3. MEAN AGE AT MARRIAGE BY DENOMINATION AND GENDER
(1907–1919) (NO. 285)



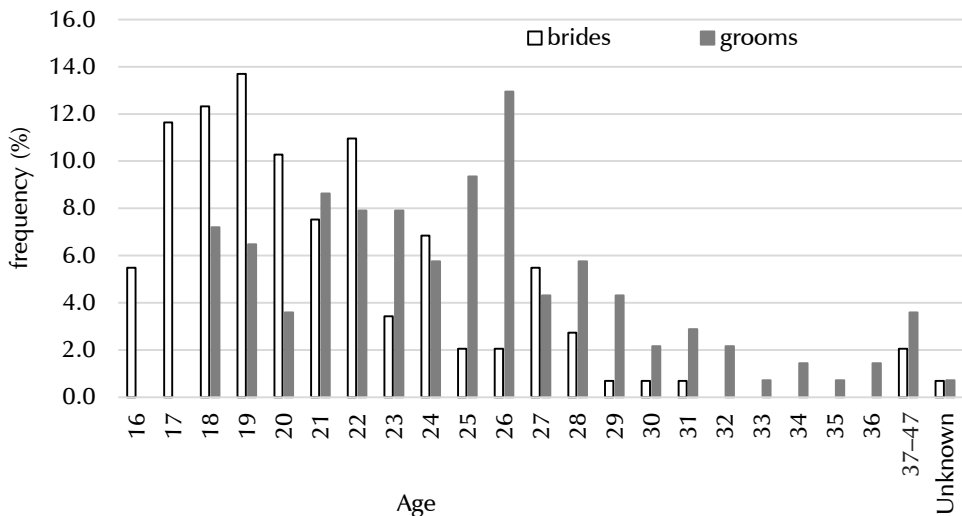
SOURCE: URAPP.

FIGURE 4. MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE AMONG
THE OLD BELIEVERS BY SOCIAL GROUP AND GENDER (NO. 280)



SOURCE: URAPP.

percent of the brides married before reaching 17 years of age.²⁶ Most of Ekaterinburg's Old Believer brides married aged 17 to 23 years, just like their peers in the rest of Russia, and the majority of them married at the age of 19. As to the grooms, there could be three different strategies for the three age groups, 18–20 years, 21–24, and 25–26. The first group were those who entered the marriage market before they reached 20, the age of conscription in Russia. Depending on the regiment, young men served three to four years in the army (five in the navy). Most of those who married at the age of 20 to 24 apparently managed to escape conscription. At the age of 25 the returned conscripts entered the marriage market (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5. FREQUENCY OF AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY GENDER
(1907–1919) (NO. 285)

SOURCE: URAPP.

The youngest Old Believer couple who registered their marriage in Ekaterinburg were peasants from neighboring villages: 16-years-old Maria Kuznetsova and 18-years-old Pavel Matveev, both members of the Belokrinitskaya Church. They could have had a wedding at their place of residence, but preferred to go to Ekaterinburg, almost 80 km away, which took at least two days. In Ekaterinburg they had acquaintances who acted as witnesses during the wedding. According to the church books, the villagers often preferred to have weddings in the city, where there was a majestic stone Trinity Church belonging to their coreligionists. There are 15 such wedding voyages registered in our DB. Six of these couples were from the village of Shipelovka, some 70 km east of Ekaterinburg. It was exactly the same village from where the Ekaterinburg Trinity Church priest Andrei Tokmantsev (1873–1909) came. It seems that his former neighbors and relatives preferred to have their weddings in the city, using their contacts and family ties, even if they could have married at their residence.

Another example of early marriage is the 16-years-old Anastasia Fedotova, a citizen of Chelyabinsk in Orenburg province, who married Alexander Boytsov, a 19-years-old petty bourgeois from the town of Kamyshlov, Perm province. Both belonged to the Chapel Covenant and lived in Ekaterinburg. The wedding took place in the city's St. Nicholas Chapel.

It was usually the family and business ties that provided meeting and acquaintance opportunities for the potential bride and groom in the Old Believer

communities. Some parents would send their young daughters to visit relatives in the city or other villages, so that the girls became acquainted with the peer group of young people, under the supervision of their relatives.

There were eight couples whose age was much higher than average (brides over 28 and grooms over 30-years-old), which requires additional analyses. Among them, six couples were members of the Belokriniskaya Church and two were Chapel Old Believers. Particularly distinct was a wedding of 40-years-old Dominica Boytsova and 43-years-old Semen Korepanov, registered on 13 April 1914. The church book stated that it was the first marriage for both. However, it is possible that it was preceded by some kind of union. Both the bride and the groom came from the village of Shartash, whose inhabitants belonged to the Chapel Covenant and concluded unions without a priest. It is quite possible that such a union was not recognized by the Belokrinitskaya Church priest and he registered the marriage as the first one.

There was also an example of a late marriage registered in the church book of St. Nicholas Chapel. On 14 January 1907, Siklitinya Blagina, a 46-years-old Ekaterinburg peasant, married Ivan Sarafanov, a 30-year-old peasant of the Shaitan factory. This marriage was an exception both due to the bride's advanced age and to the significant age difference between spouses.

Age Differences

AS A RULE, the grooms were older than their brides: 1–4 years in 40 marriages (29 percent), and 5–8 years in 36 marriages (26 percent). There were few obvious age misalliances registered in the Ekaterinburg Old Believers church books with more than nine years age difference between the spouses, or when the bride was older than the groom: 12 (8 percent) and 14 (10 percent), respectively. Among couples with a noted age difference of 12–15 years, we have the wedding between Anisya Narbutovskaya, a 19-years-old peasant girl, who married Ivan Kulik, a 31-years-old Polish peasant from Galicia. Ivan probably was one of the Austro-Hungarian war prisoners, exiled to the Urals in their thousands after their capture in 1914–1915. Many of them married Russian girls while in captivity, some being even married at home.²⁷ However, a majority of the Ekaterinburg Old Believers married their coreligionists living nearby, in Ekaterinburg itself, Perm province, or the neighboring Viatka province. Brides and grooms from faraway places were rather exceptional.

The Old Believers who were residents of Ekaterinburg city (57 grooms and 66 brides) preferred to marry other locals, but the women were less reluctant to marry in-migrants. In-migrant grooms had more chances to marry a Ekaterinburg

erinburg city dweller than the in-migrant brides had to marry a Ekaterinburg resident. For some it was a possibility of social elevation. However, as described earlier, it was not uncommon for the people from the countryside to come to the 'big city,' just to have their marriage registered in the nice big church.

The First World War influenced the Old Believer grooms age at first marriage the same way as for their Russian Orthodox peers. The mobilization decreased the number of young men in the Orthodox parishes, which allowed older grooms to enter the marriage market. As to the Old Believer brides, their mean age at first marriage did not change much during WWI. This phenomenon will need further investigation.

Conclusions

OUR ANALYSES of the Old Believers' marriage behavior allowed us to get insights into their life in early 20th century Ekaterinburg. While the whole country was on its way to modernization, this most conservative and most numerous religious minority of ethnic Russians maintained their identity and practices: not registering marriages and observing religious endogamy. Our analyses revealed some differences between the two main covenants of the Old Believers. The Belokrinit'skaya Church was more open and generally followed the official legal requirements, while the Chapel Old Believers not only refused to recognize the official Russian Orthodox Church, but also did not cooperate with the Old Believers of the Belokrinit'skaya Church. That factor caused some Chapel Old Believers to drop their affiliation with it and get baptized and/or at least get married in the Belokrinit'skaya Church. Our analyses of individual data confirmed that some Old Believers practiced wedding voyages in order to have their wedding in the splendid Holy Trinity Church in Ekaterinburg, some 70 km away from their residence place.

Age at marriage is the most important factor deciding what proportion of fertile women are married, in addition to the effects of the proportion of women never marrying and the proportion of widows. Thus, average age at marriage becomes a decisive factor explaining the historical level of fertility rates. This is the reason why the Princeton Fertility Project (PFP) analyzed differential marriage ages by province from the 1897 census in their study of fertility in Russia.²⁸ Even if the wording of their chapter 5 title limits the scope to the European part of the empire, female averages from Perm oblast on both sides of the Ural Mountain range, including Ekaterinburg and even Tobol'sk gubernia further east, are mapped. The rates were computed with the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) technique on the basis of age group tables by marital status from

the 1897 census aggregates. Perm Gubernia is part of a band of uyezds stretching across European Russia from the west and into Asia, with urban SMAM rates 22,5–24 for brides.

Our calculation of SMAM for Ekaterinburg city from the same census are somewhat higher, 24.6 years for women and 27.1 years for men, just like the PFP analysis admits that there will be internal differences in the province. The 1897 aggregates do not subdivide the age group/marital status tables further, but our analysis of the church records on the individual level provided clues to explain the higher average age at marriage in Ekaterinburg, especially for the Catholics, Lutherans, and Jews. We should remember that SMAM calculated from the census aggregates and average marriage age calculated from the church record microdata are influenced by migration in different ways.²⁹ In this case, the difference indicates that those who married before in-migrating to Ekaterinburg had married at higher ages than those who married inside the city.

The Old Believers had lower average ages at marriage than the SMAM, which we calculated for Ekaterinburg: 21.2 for brides and 24.9 for grooms, yet higher than the SMAM calculated by the PFP team for the urban population of the whole Perm province. These results are nearly the same as our results for the Russian Orthodox parish in the city, for which we have church microdata. Surprisingly, the Old Believer male peasants from the countryside who moved to the city married almost one year later than their co-religionist townsmen. Both findings correspond well to similar findings for the Orthodox population in Transylvania. The likely reason is that the city created job opportunities unavailable in the countryside and thus more freedom to start a family. However, our analyses confirmed that information about the Old Believers first marriage when their age was notably higher than average should be treated with skepticism, particularly in the case of Chapel Old Believers. Priests did not take into consideration their unregistered cohabitation and marriages registered by pastors who were not officially authorized. Generally, our analyses confirm that the Old Believers of both branches practiced religious endogamy and the Chapel covenant members were somewhat more conservative than the Belokrinskaya Church members. Given the special character of their religion and the centuries-long discrimination, we had expected larger differences in marriage ages between the Old Believers and the general Orthodox congregations. The same goes for the seasonality of their weddings, although we do not have enough cases to draw firm conclusions. Our hypothesis is that the urban Old Believers, in spite of their peculiar religion, had begun to accept the dominant social norms in their city. As the German saying goes: “Stadtluft macht frei.”³⁰ The one demographic measure where we found significant differences for the Old Believers compared to the Orthodox majority was the former’s lower infant mortality.³¹ We inter-

pret this as a benefit of their relative social isolation—also favored by the lack of marriages between the two Orthodox groups.

We need further studies of Old Believers' and other Orthodox church records in the rural parts of the Urals to substantiate our hypothesis. The same goes for our finding that the social crises during WWI affected the age at first marriage of brides and grooms in different ways: it increased for the grooms and slightly decreased for the brides. It will be also interesting to correlate the marriage age and the occupational structure as expressions of modernization for wider geographic areas with data both on the individual and aggregate levels. □

Notes

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Abstract

The Old Believers and their Marriage Patterns in Early Twentieth Century Urals, Russia: A Microdata Analysis

The article focuses on the marriage behavior of the Old Believers—conservative dissenters who split from the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century. Persecuted by the state, they migrated to the country's fringe areas, including the Urals. Far away from the authorities, they maintained their pre-reform traditions and way of life. The biggest religious minority among ethnic Russians, they gained legal status and started to register vital events in church books after the Religious Freedom Manifesto was introduced in 1905. We present here first results from the computerized analyses of these records, including marriage frequency, age at first marriage with special attention to gender, social status and migration as determinants of marriage timing. We also address the issue of remarriage and conversion in connection with marriage. We argue that this was a sign of social elevation and of abandoning religious endogamy, which in its turn could be a sign of modernization of the institute of marriage in early twentieth century Russia.

Keywords

Russia, religious minorities, Ekaterinburg, Old Believers, Ural Population Project, parish registers, age at marriage