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**RUSSIAN ARTEL REVISITED  
TROUGH THE LENS OF THE NEW  
INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS**

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Artels, a kind of semi-formal associations for co-operative labor, were widely spread in Russia right up to the early twentieth century. The most popular explanation of this phenomenon is specific Russian mentality, the so-called “artelnost”, i.e. the internal commitment to collective work. The paper checks this statement and reveals that artels, as an organizational form of production in specific spheres which is characterized by the team use of inputs, existed mainly due to rather effective solving of adverse selection and moral hazard problems.

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## Introduction

Collectivism is often highlighted by scholars as one of the features of the Russian national character and mentality. They regard it as an informal, embedded institution of the Russian society which should be taken into consideration during socio-economic transformations. Many contemporary Russian economists, sociologists, and public leaders consider *artelnost*, i.e. a specific propensity for working collectively in solidary groups in the economic sphere, as one of the most significant manifestations of collectivism and sometimes even appeal to introduce *artel* principles into modern organizations. But, in fact, this issue has been ignored by Russian researchers over the last decades, remaining simply rhetorical.

In this connection, it is very important and pressing to find out to what extent *artelnost*, and, in a broader sense, collectivism, determined, and still determines, the economic behavior of the Russian person. It is of great importance both at the macroeconomic level for developing an appropriate government socio-economic policy and at the microeconomic level for improving management styles used to run Russian companies, for working out adequate forms of labor organization and workers' motivation by Russian managers.

The subject of this article can be of interest to the readers also due to extreme scarcity of publications in English directly considering Russian *artels*. Indeed, you could count them on the fingers of one hand. Among rather recent publications there are papers of Y. Imai (1990), J. Bushnell (1990), and A. Wood (1990). However, the method used by the authors is mainly historical. Moreover, Bushnell's and Wood's papers are devoted to very specific topics. Imai's paper examines *artels* and consumer cooperatives in Russia and the Ukraine in the 1860s and early 1870s basing itself on the observations of contemporary Russian authors on this subject. The socio-economic approach to *artel* is demonstrated in a profound, full of stimulating ideas, and in some way "classical" paper of Norbert Pincus under the heading 'Artel' and published in 1902 in *Economic Journal* [Pincus, 1902]. Pincus examined origin and discussed the principles governing the formation of Russian *artels*.

The aim of this paper is to find out whether *artelnost* is in fact a basic institution of the Russian society. The paper focuses on checking the following hypothesis: the Russian person did not have a specific inherent motivating commitment to collective work in *artels*. The existence of *artels* in Russia was, to a large extent, due to a higher economic effectiveness of this organizational form of economic activity in some spheres.

The object of investigation is artel as an institutional form of economic activity in Russia in XIX — early XX centuries. Factors which helped artels come into being and remain relatively stable and common in the historic past as well as the role of mental models in these processes are the subject of this investigation. This study is based on empirical descriptions of artels of the second half of XIX century, artels' charters and written contracts, statutes relating to artels and a wide range of historical literature. Alchian-Demsetz' team production concept and Jensen-Meckling's agency costs concept are used as an analytical tool.

The first section of the paper briefly analyses literature on Russian mentality concerning one of its features such as collectivism or artel'nost and suggests the criteria for estimation of artel'nost. The second one describes artel as a form of economic activity in Russia, as formal and informal institution. The third section reveals Russian artel'nost as a research artefact. The fourth one gives evidence that artel can be interpreted as a way of solving team production problems. The final section summarizes the findings and suggests some implications.

### **Collectivism as the Russian mentality feature**

Modern science cannot give a trustworthy prototype of the Russian person. In theoretical works the Russian person is quite inconsistent and even contradictory. On the one hand, he is unattractive because he tends to be a Utopist, disrespects private property and works hard only occasionally. On the other hand, he is notable for his spiritual life, aspiration for freedom and independence, he regards work as the highest value, strives for justice and equality with the aim of serving people and the state. Collectivism is often named by researchers as a typical feature of the Russian national character and mentality. They regard it as an informal, embedded institution of the Russian society.

These statements go back to the middle of the XIX century when expectations of achieving rapid results after the Great Reforms were replaced by disappointment and, as a consequence of this a new trend in social mentality, which linked Russia's future with a specific national way of development, was born. It projected a distinctive non-capitalistic way of development based on a collectivist principle. Implementation of this principle was to be carried out by maintaining and consolidating socio-economic forms which, according to researchers, were organically inherent in Russia, i.e. communes, cooperatives and artels. V. Vorontsov, a Russian populist (narodnik), specified that «our capitalistic manufacturing must be transformed into a state or artel production», «our further industrial progress

will rest on truly people's principles represented by communes and artels» [V. V., 1882, pp. 68, 309].<sup>1</sup>

Western scholars also actively study problems related to the Russian mentality [e.g.: The World of the Russian Peasant..., 1990; Kingston-Mann and Mixer, 1991; Zviglyanich, 1993; The Russian Mentality..., 1995]. It is almost commonly recognized that commitment to collective work is typical for the Russian culture and makes it completely different from Western cultures.

O. Figes [Figes, 1996] and G. Hoskins [Hoskins, 1991] emphasize Russian people's innate propensity for collective work. It is regarded as a particularly important feature of the Russian mentality which greatly influences management styles and practice in Russia [Lawrence and Vlachoutsicos, 1990, p. 20]. D. Bollinger [Bollinger, 1994] also insists on the collectivist nature of the Russian management culture. F. Trompenaars [Trompenaars, 1993] has come to different conclusions — according to public opinion polls, the level of individualism among Russian managers as well as other employees is extremely high.

According to G. Hofstede's estimations [Hofstede, 1994], Russian people's values are only 50% collectivist, whereas the statistical data of Russian researchers who use Hofstede's methods show the dominance of collectivist values [Naumov, 1996]. In the mid 1990s a survey of 53 countries including Russia was conducted within the Globe Project framework. According to the level of collective value development, Russia ranked 35, and the polled managers wished it were higher [Grachev, 1999, p. 30].

As it has been emphasized, modern Russian scholars regard Russia's traditional version of collective work as *artelnost* [Yasin, 2003, p. 18], which is most clearly formulated by V. Ryazanov [Ryazanov, 1998, pp. 330] who names «a specific propensity for collective work in the economic sphere», which becomes apparent in communes and artels, among principal sources of Russia's economic system. He explains wide spreading of artel forms by their maximum suitability to the specifics of the country's economic development and by conformity with behavior patterns of the population majority [Ryazanov, 1998, p. 344].

That's why the problem of finding out to what extent collective work has affected and still affects Russian people's behavior is very pressing.

*Operationalisation of the artelnost notion.* Cultural parameters such as individualism or collectivism are quite difficult to formalize, measure and express in quantitative terms. Modern assessments of collective work are carried out by means of field research on the basis of public opinion polls. When we try to assess the past, this approach is impossible. That's why

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<sup>1</sup> See also: V. V., 1895a, 1895b.

historical assessments are made, as a rule, when analyzing statements, literary works, original documents, etc.

In order to make the *artel* notion operational a new institutional economics tool will be used in this paper. In accordance with the theory of institutions and institutional transformations [Greif, 1994; 1998; Denzau and North, 1994] present institutions reflect actors' cultural beliefs or mental models because they form the motivation and incentive basis to set up certain institutions and, to a large extent, predetermine the formation of appropriate institutions. Acceptance or rejection of particular institutional types depends on the prevalence of this or that cultural belief. It was clearly stated by Denzau and North [Denzau and North, 1994] that in order to understand decision-making processes in conditions of great uncertainty it is necessary to find out connection between mental models created by people to comprehend the surrounding world, ideologies brought about by these models and institutions set up in the society to regulate interpersonal relationships.

This study stresses the idea that in all approaches to interpret mental models and mentality, the latter becomes apparent in motivation, actions, economic and communication methods. Mentality, as a complex of intellectual habits, beliefs, mental aims typical for some community or a group of people, and the state of mind, or a complex of behavior, mentality or judgemental patterns, ethical norms, the turn of mind, represents propensity for acting in a particular way.

Consequently, if *artel* had really been a traditional Russian version of collective work, it would have led to the creation of appropriate institutions at *all* levels of the institutional hierarchy introduced by O. Williamson [Williamson 2000, pp. 596–599]. In informal, embedded institutions it should have become apparent as appropriate customs, traditions and norms, while at other levels it should have led to a continual spontaneous development of appropriate, stable and widely spread labor and economic forms, as well as formed the basis of successful institutional engineering, i.e. implementation of projected *artel* labor and economic forms in accordance with these traditions by means of different measures including legislative ones.

Proceeding from the above-stated assumption, the following criteria, in my opinion, can be used to estimate *artel*: firstly, the extent to which *artel* labor and economic forms spread in all spheres of activity; secondly, for the most part spontaneous character of their emergence; and finally, inherent commitment to this organizational economic form, i.e. lack of opportunistic behavior in *artels*.

## **Artel as economic organization**

The history of artel traces back to its origins in the ninth- tenth centuries. Artels, a kind of semi-formal associations for co-operative labor, were widely spread in Russia right up to the early twentieth century.

There were a lot of artel types carrying out different work: of a spiritual character: religious, entertaining, educational (joint subscriptions to newspapers and books, hire of teachers, etc.); nursing; communal; of thieves; of beggars; economic: agricultural, fishing, production, handicraft, trading, building, etc. Artel's forms and operation areas were so varied that they make it impossible to describe and classify them in detail.

S.Y. Vitte divided artels into three groups [Vitte, 1997 (1912), p. 18–20].

Group 1 included artels which had been known from ancient times, e.g. artels of fishermen, carpenters, diggers, reapers, mowers, etc., had a simple organizational structure and were guided not by written charters and agreements, but by tradition. It can be said that relationships among such artels' members were regulated by a kind of a contract which was not obvious and conditions of which had not been necessarily talked over in advance because they were well known to everybody. Artels of this kind were formed either by the members themselves or by a contractor. An agreement with the contractor was, as a rule, reached orally. These artels were formed for a relatively short term to complete a set of tasks, had a small number of members, one of whom was made the artel's head, i.e. starosta. Members were, as a rule, peasants who did seasonal work or representatives of the lower middle classes.

Group 2 consisted of artels which were formed for a long term, had charters and partially the features of capitalist enterprises. It included exchange (birzhevaya), customs and other artels. Their members' duties were diverse. They provided loading and unloading of goods, packed and dispatched various cargoes, guarded warehouses, received and paid money. Sometimes they were given big sums of money to carry because their employers trusted them. Besides that, artel members fulfilled other duties for their employers: they worked in offices as assistants and errand boys. Quite often they did household chores. The members of the other group of exchange artels were employed as clerks and messengers in banks, commercial establishments and in the railway administration. Such artels had quite a large membership, a more complicated management structure which had other bodies apart from starosta. They often employed workers, which made them similar to capitalist enterprises.

Group 3 was composed of production artels, i.e. industrial enterprises formed by workers themselves. Their capital was made up of membership

fees and loans. Profit was either equally divided among the artel's members or in proportion to their labor and invested capital. Associations of this kind first came into being in France but they didn't become common everywhere.

This paper focuses on artels which employed collective work because it is the subject of this study. They include labor artels proper (a group of workers offering their collective services as builders, diggers, loaders, porters, etc. for pay) and production artels of a pure labor type where all workers are owners of the plant and the goods they produce, there are no hired workers, the head is elected by the workers.

*Artel as a formal and informal institution.* The word 'artel' was used in legislative documents for the first time in the middle of the XVII century replacing the word 'vataga' (crowd). It was formalized as an institutional economic form in 1799 in Guilds' Charter where in Chapter XIV «On work done by artels» artel members' rights and duties were finally defined. According to the definition formulated in Clause 1, «work or a task which is beyond one worker's capabilities can be done by common consent by a group of workers, and such groups must be called artels» [Ustav tsekhov, 1799]. Clause 4 also had some important information on artels. It read that «each artel member must be responsible for the incurred damage or losses and guarantee payment».

The artel definition was specified in the 1823 Statute which ran that «artel means that each worker is responsible for everybody in artel and the whole artel is responsible for each worker, they are paid from a common fund (duvan) and work is done collectively» [O vzyskanii 40-rublyovoy poshliny..., 1823, art. 4]. The same definitions were used in the Trade Charter, and in the XIX — early XX centuries artels were specified as «associations of workers set up voluntarily to carry out work or production which is beyond one worker's capabilities» [Ustav torgoviy, 1912, Art. 79].

Labor artel Statute was passed on June 1, 1902 in which labor artels were defined as «partnerships set up to carry out specific work or production as well as provide services by participants' personal involvement at their expense by collective guarantee». A similar definition was given in the Civil Statute [Zakony grazhdanskiye, 1906, Art. 2198<sup>1</sup>]. Labor artels were established in accordance with either charters or agreements.

Artels managed by charters were obliged to observe the following rules. Their charters were submitted to the governor for approval and published in local newspapers. Any person, male or female, over 17 years old could become an artel member. But under-21s had no right to participate in management. Membership was not limited but it couldn't be less than 5 people. It was managed by the general meeting. Meetings took place only

if not less than half of the members were present. Every member had one vote. Decisions were made by a majority of votes. More important decisions required the presence of 2/3 of its members. Membership fees were the same for everybody and could be paid in cash or in kind. If sums paid to the cashier exceeded fees, they were considered as loans. Wages were paid to all members in accordance with the resolution of the general meeting regardless of the sums in each member's account. Artel used its assets to cover all losses and meet liabilities. If artel's assets were insufficient, its members' private property was claimed in its entirety or in the amount specified in the Charter. All chartered artels enjoyed the rights of entities, i.e. they could buy assets, sign agreements, sue and be sued, set up or take on lease industrial or trade facilities.

As for production artels formed in accordance with contracts, their structure and management were not regulated by jurisdiction.

Thus, the most important features of artels in Russia were as follows:

- voluntary membership;
- personal involvement in artel's activities binding for all members;
- collective guarantee (krugovaya poruka), i.e. all members shared responsibility for the damage and losses;
- besides that, amendments to the 1823 Guilds Charter stated that anyone wishing to be an exchange artel member must pay an admittance fee.

These formal principles of managing artel's activities supported by the legislation strengthened the rules used by artels at the time and which were full of generalities. The only thing regularly highlighted by various state decrees on objects of management was the necessity of each member to carry responsibility for artel.

As far as artels' structure, relationships among members, their contracts and agreements are concerned, there was hardly any legislation on that, and published artels' charters and contracts differed significantly from each other. That's why formal principles were supplemented with informal, widely spread procedures spontaneously formed over artels' long history. These principles include taking decisions by a vote at the general meeting, electing management, equality in profit sharing for the same labor input. Admittance criteria were also similar. The following things were taken into consideration:

- gender;
- place of residence;
- age;
- physical strength;
- skills;
- property status;

- no other jobs;
- moral qualities (sobriety was valued most highly).

These criteria were to provide artel members with work on equal terms in return for their commitment to work in artel's interests. Honest work was also guaranteed by:

- admittance fee in some artels;
- references (until the admittance fee is fully paid);
- tests;
- trial period;
- penalties;
- risk of expulsion from artel;
- collective guarantee.

### **Russian artelness as a research artefact**

Here's a question to consider. Did the Russian person really have some innate propensity for collective work and give priority to public goals over his own? Section I of this paper provides the following criteria which make it possible to assess the extent of artelness as mentality feature: the extent to which artel labor and economic forms spread in *all* spheres of activity; for the most part spontaneous character of their emergence; and inherent commitment to this organizational economic form, i.e. lack of opportunistic behavior in artels. Let's consider each of these aspects.

*Were artels really ubiquitous?* A lot of modern scholars insist that artels as economic form were ubiquitous in Russia. In particular, B. Mironov, a historian specializing in social history, is one of them. In his two-volume investigation of Russian social history he writes that «besides communes in rural and suburban areas, they [peasants] developed a kindred organizational form, artel, which we see in every place where people are involved in specific activities beyond peasants' and settlement communes» [Mironov, 2003, V.1, p. 525–526].

But a thorough study of facts casts doubt on the simplicity of this conclusion. Only Group 1 artels were quite common. But their functioning was, first of all, restricted by activities which, as a matter of fact, required labor cooperation, and secondly, such artels disintegrated upon completing the task.

Labor production artels, were not as common as they are sometimes described. First of all production artel's «natural habitat» was quite narrow and was confined within a) activities of low capital investment, simple homogeneous job and labor with primitive equipment and technology; b) lower classes of population. Artel in its «pure» forms did not survive in other spheres. Indeed only two production artel types were common and

successful in Russia, i.e. butter manufacturing and exchange ones. Exactly these artel types are often referred to when proving that artelness is inherent in the Russian national character. Let's consider each type in detail.

There were 51 butter manufacturing artels in Russia in 1901; in 1917 their number was 3,000. They were not of a labor type though, because hired workers were engaged in butter manufacturing. Small milk producers owned these artels, managed the manufacturing process personally and collaborated with other owners only when selling milk. Consequently, a butter manufacturing artel is a selling cooperative, a processing partnership. The butter belonged not to the producers but to the milk suppliers. Profits were divided in proportion to the supplied milk, not by shares [Tugan-Baranovsky, 1989 [1919], p. 102]. Such artels emerged in Russia in late 1860s. They were initiated by N. Vereshchagin, a gentleman by birth, who borrowed the idea from Switzerland and had been introducing it actively in Russia since 1865.<sup>2</sup> The first artels didn't live long. One of the reasons of their failure was that peasants were not prepared for them. They gave no credence to this economic form. Their attitude to innovations was that of opposition. That's why Vereshchagin made every effort to convince them of advantages of dairying artels. Butter and cheese manufacturing artels started springing up again only in late 1890s and became common only when peasants came to understand that it was a paying business, and it had advantages over other forms, including capitalistic.

As for exchange artels regulations on them were passed on June 16, 1905. They were quite similar to the Labor Artel Statute. In accordance with Clause 1, «exchange artels aim at carrying out work related to acceptance, dispatch and storage of goods as well as fulfilling office tasks and trading with organizations and individuals» [O pravilakh dlya birzhevykh arteley..., 1905]. Exchange artels could function only in accordance with the charter which was approved by the Exchange Committees. Thus, exchange artels' activities were based on clearly defined rules, meeting of liabilities being guaranteed collectively by the insurance policy. At the same time they hired outside laborers, their members were paid by the day and by the piece and due to these features these associations were not artels in their true sense because they did not meet all artel's requirements. As a consequence exchange artels could not be considered as "artel", which was officially recognized by the 1823 Statute [O vzyskanii 40-rublyovoy poshliny..., 1823]. And the fact that "they are, really, artels only in names" was absolutely correctly stressed by Pincus [Pincus, 1902, p. 487].

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<sup>2</sup> See a series of articles of Vereshchagin (1999 [1892], 1999 [1870], 1999 [1869], and 1999 [1865]).

As far as labor artels which used collective work are concerned, they became common only in the spheres of activity which didn't require big investments, complicated machinery, where work was homogeneous and could be divided into equal parts and done by individual workers, in other words, where people simply cooperated to do a job. Artels were mainly formed to produce goods in the absence of expensive machinery and great technical expertise [Yarotsky, 1898, p. 22]. N. Kalachev [1999 (1864), p. 308] described artel as part of the common people's life and relationships. The last aspect was also admitted by Pincus [Pincus, 1902, p. 496] who defined artel 'as an association for co-operative labour formed by the lower classes of the population themselves usually under pressure of extreme need and therefore strongly imbued with that spirit of local solidarity which the conditions of life have developed in the Russian, and also ruled by the customs and laws of the local Mir, the Russian village community'.<sup>3</sup>

Production artels of a pure labor type were very rare everywhere. Great Britain had only one artel of this type in 1916, whereas Germany had none. There were about a hundred small production artels in France due to the support from the government bodies, public institutions or individuals. Only big Italian agricultural artels achieved success without any support. But their aim was to fight unemployment, and their members had more than one job. In Russia, production labor artels didn't become common either. According to I. Sapozhnikov [Sapozhnikov 1916, p. 14], there were only 16 artels in Moscow in 1908, 60 in 1909, and about 115 by 1916. However, none of them developed into a big enterprise. They were small workshops which either died or turned into small capitalist enterprises. Sapozhnikov thinks that shortage of working capital and mainly absence of

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<sup>3</sup> However it is necessary to stress that artel and peasant commune as organizational forms of production were quite different. In Russian peasant commune property rights regimes were of different types. There were communal property rights in arable land, hayfields, mills, wharfs. Arable land and hayfields were subjected to equally repartitions according to definite criteria. Mills and wharfs were usually leased with income at commune's disposal. Common property resources (the commons) included wasteland, grazing land, rivers, and woodlands. However good-quality woodland was usually parceled out. Inherited by the family members plots of land attached to houses in the village used for growing vegetables, fruit, and so on. There were also obligatory public tillage (*obshchestvennye zapashki*), when some communal arable land was cultivated collectively and the crop was stored in so-called «storage shops» (*zapasnyie magaziny*) as a form of insurance against crop failure. Egalitarian principle concerned only land distribution not income because household allotments were cultivated by users individually. Moreover equal repartition was not "spontaneous order" but an institutional answer on governmental tax policy, namely equal poll tax imposed by Peter I and collective responsibility to pay taxes. Collective responsibility was almost outdated by 1900. About 99% of communes did not use it.

organizational, technical and institutional support caused the failure of those artels.

As far as agricultural artels are concerned, of all types of cooperation peasants could form, these were the rarest. As it is written in one of the early XX century articles on agricultural artels, «at present we have not more than a few dozens of big agricultural artels in Russia which would buy or rent land collectively with a view to working jointly on it» [Gorovaya, 1916, p. 8–9]. This phenomenon was caused, according to Gorovaya, by two things. Firstly, artel members often had to give up habits and propensities acquired in childhood and inherited from the previous generations. They had to conform to the actions and desires of their fellow-workers, but neither household possession nor the compulsive order in the commune taught peasants to be compliant. «Sometimes they champion their interests passionately but at other times they submit to the decision made by the majority of artel members out of necessity» [Gorovaya, 1916, p. 6]. Secondly, differences in peasants' property status, capacity for work and intellectual faculties hampered artels' activities.

Only one big production artel lived long in Russia and proved to be viable. It was a knife-producing artel in the village of Pavlovo in Nizhegorodskaya province which was set up in 1890 and supported by individuals, public institutions and the state. However, Pavlovo artel gave so few benefits to its members that hired workers did not want to join it [Tugan-Baranovsky, 1989 [1919], p. 207].

*Were artels really spontaneous?* Spontaneity can be discussed only in relation to Group 1 artels. But even their labor organization in some cases was stipulated by law. For example, according to the statute of 1836, free workers hired by the owners of inland ships had to be grouped in artels. Workers who came from the same village, small rural district or town had to form an artel from there in order to make it easier to form a bigger artel with mutual guarantee [Ustavy putei soobshcheniya, 1912, ats.324, 326]. In accordance with legislation Ust'insky seal-hunting in Mezensky bay had to be done exclusively by artels [Ustav sel'skogo hozyaistva (1912), ats. 519, 520].

Researchers note that sometimes artels were compulsorily formed by the head of the rural district or town authorities to provide jobs to artel's members so that they could pay duties and cover arrears [Orshanskii, 1875, p.185; Kalachev, p.37; Sbornick materialov..., II, p.125].

In 1823 members of the Saint Petersburg exchange artel asked for a permission not to pay a 40-rouble duty to the state treasury to become artel's members. They referred to the fact that the name for the artel was chosen by their owners [O vzyiskanii 40-rublyovoy poshliny...].

Other collective forms of labor in Russia were often introduced deliberately and to a considerable degree were connected with the non-economic coercion and propagation. Deliberate creation of labor production artels by some enthusiasts required much time, effort and investments from them. It has been mentioned above how much energy and efforts N. Vereshchagin put into the creation of butter-producing artels. Agricultural artels' existence, like that of butter manufacturing ones, was mainly due to enthusiasts' activities. It was Nikolai Levitsky who organized the first agricultural artel in Russia in 1896 and who was called 'artel's batko' (ideological leader) by peasants. On the other hand he pointed out that labor artels in general and production artels in particular were the most difficult types of cooperation to put into practice. «It is not an easy task. It requires that peasants have plenty of stamina, developed self-consciousness and great initiative» [Levitsky, 1916, p. 4]. He pointed out that the society rejected this form of production organization, that «artels were the most neglected form of cooperation» unlike consumer, credit or loan-saving societies which were under the patronage of the community, zemstvo or state.

The Pavlovo knife-producing artel owes its origin to A. G. Shtange, an engineer-technologist who settled in Pavlovo at the end of the 1890s, to an interest-free loan from S. T. Morozov, a Moscow plant owner and to two young engineers, Yefremov and Zelgeim, who gave the artel all their knowledge and time in exchange for modest earnings.

*Opportunistic behavior in artels.* Opportunistic behavior, «self-interest-seeking-with-guile» or calculated dishonesty according to the definition given by O. Williamson [Williamson 1996, p. 689], implies pursuing one's own goals, sometimes perfidiously and unethically, which interfere with an institution's interests. Postcontracting opportunism becomes apparent in the form of shirking, extorting and blackmailing. Consequently, opportunistic behavior can testify to disregard of collective interests. Discipline (labor, technological, economic, etc.) is crucial in cooperation. Was there any discipline in artels? Unfortunately, it is impossible to estimate the actual scale of opportunistic behavior in artels.

For example, no special penal books in exchange artels preserved. To protect artel's reputation after the year was over, and all payments made, artel's financial books were destroyed making it impossible to see whether any member had been fined or not [Kalachev, 1999 [1864], p. 322]. However, the destruction of the books in itself testifies to the problem of improper attitude to work. Embezzlement was the main problem in exchange artels' activities. Newspapers of the early XX century were full of embezzlement facts, misappropriated sums amounting to 200,000 roubles, which was a huge amount at the time. That's why one of the reports made at the first all-Russia convention of exchange artel representatives was on rein-

forcement of responsibility for embezzlement [Vserossiysky s'ezd predstaviteley ..., 1912].

Opportunistic behavior was common practice in artels. In his paper on artel development in Russia, G. Petrov [Petrov 1917, pp. 66–67] points out that attempts to make artels common failed. They failed to overcome negative features inherent in other forms of cooperation. Minutes of general meetings mentioned quarrels, envy and favoritism, lack of self-consciousness and self-discipline, and poor attendance at meetings. Because of that, management had to either impose penalties or pay for attending meetings. Not all artel members worked for it. Plenty of them used artel's raw materials for work somewhere else, sometimes for artel's competitors.

In butter-manufacturing artels members spoiled milk by adding water, some other substances, by not keeping within technological processes. Even such an adept artel's advocate as M. Slobozhanin [Slobozhanin, 1919, p. 14] stated that artels' reality was a far cry from their ideals embodied «people's aspirations for a better financial standing, freedom, equality, democracy, consciousness, dignity, friendship, fraternity, etc.».

These facts prove once again that Russian people did not have any special propensity for working in artels as a way to meet their needs to work communally, and that the main reason for joining them was of economic nature. Collective work was only a means which enabled people to make money in initial conditions and types of jobs.

In practice, production artels operating both abroad and in Russia were either ineffective or turned into capitalist enterprises, which is demonstrated quite convincingly in one of the articles of the late XIX century [P-r, 1897]. Many researchers pointed out that a lot of artels which originally were workers' unions turned into entrepreneurs' unions. Hands were hired to do work, whereas artel members managed them and gained profits. Thus, the very essence of artel as a workers' union was destroyed. In this connection, wage labor in artels was restricted by law. Artels' charters had to stipulate terms and the procedure of employment as well as the number of hired workers. Hired workers were allowed to work in artels only on a temporary basis in exceptional cases. These regulations artificially confined evolution of artels to capitalistic concerns and conserved this primitive form of economic activity.

Researchers of XIX — early XX centuries put forward some reasons why production artels did not succeed. They were summarized by Tugan-Baranovsky [Tugan-Baranovsky, 1989 [1919], p. 196] and were as following: lack of discipline among artel members; the employer's absence and the elected leader's weak authority with the result that his decisions are ignored, with workers putting their interests first; the leader selected from

within, as a rule, does not have enough expertise and management skills; workers' technical backwardness, weak propensity for innovations and implementation of modern technology; workers do not tend to use new production methods; no freedom in selecting staff. Staff consists only of artel members. A new member represents a threat to the benefits which artel has due to its old members' effort. That's why, if artel is successful, introduction of new members leads to old members' losing part of their benefits.

To sum up, it is worth to quote M. Tugan-Baranovsky [Tugan-Baranovsky, 1997 (1907), pp. 495–496; 498–499] who wrote that “despite all profuse talk about Russian people's unusual propensity for working collectively, enthusiasm for associations and artels had no roots in Russia, and that's why it brought no fruitful results. General praising of artels did not result in creating a single, stable artel and did not lead to the emergence of a cooperative movement somewhat similar to that in Europe. The individualistic West with its different political systems turned out to be more tailored to accept artel principles than communal Russia”.

Nevertheless, the question why artels were common in Russia is still open.

According to Pincus [Pincus, 1902, pp. 489, 493] the artel forced into existence 1) in the first instance by economic pressure, i.e. inefficiency of individual efforts due to peculiar geographical features of Russia (inclement and uncertain climate; vast and monotonous surface; lack of fertile soil; inadequate for effective intercommunication river systems; paralyzing influence of the long distances), 2) by Russia's historical vicissitudes, in particular Mongol-Tartar influence, and 3) by curiously complicated problems of ethnography in Russia.

Some of these arguments are undoubtedly valid but need to be added one which seems to be decisive in the explanation of persistence of Russian artel in nineteenth — early twentieth centuries. Labor artels, as an institutional form, were a good way of solving a classical teamwork problems and enabled to considerably cut agency costs.

### **Labor artels as team production**

Work in artels can be considered as teamwork. A team is a group of individuals with common aims who divide work among themselves and carry responsibility for achieving certain results. Team members are interdependent because to achieve common aims they need the results of the work done by their fellow-workers. The team's main difference from traditional formal work groups is synergy effect (i.e. total amount of work done by the team exceeds the sum of their individual work). Teamwork is widely used at present. Teams are formed when it is economically benefi-

cial, regardless of which culture, collective or individualist, prevails in the society.

Using D. McIntoch-Fletcher's team criteria artel can be classified as an intact team type in contrast to a cross-functional one. An intact team is usually a production unit or a long-standing group of workers producing a certain product or service. It can have a leader who is not a team member, and whose duty is to coordinate work and secure order. In other cases the team can have a leader from within. In some cases team members can play the leading role in turn. McIntoch-Fletcher [McIntoch-Fletcher, 1996] points out that quite developed mature autonomous intact teams can operate as small enterprises.

There are four team types according to their aims: consultative (dealing with management); production (teams of production workers, miners, repairmen, etc.); project (research and planning groups, etc.); action (sport teams, for example). From this point of view, artel can be defined as a production team.

The problem of teamwork production and methods of monitoring was analyzed in a well-known article by A. A. Alchian and H. Demsetz [Alchian and Demsetz 1972]. Teamwork entails big transaction costs: organizational, of monitoring, disciplining, assessing each member's contribution to the production output. «Team production will be relied upon... if there is a net increase in productivity available by team production, net of the metering cost associated with disciplining the team» [Alchian and Demsetz, 1972, p. 780].

Alchian-Demsetz' study was a starting point for a number of articles, including an article by M. C. Jensen and W. H. Meckling in which they introduce the notion of agency costs. According to them, in most agency relationships the principal and the agent incur positive costs of monitoring as well as bonding costs in a monetary or non-monetary form. Besides, there are the principal's residual losses as a result of discrepancies between the agent's solutions and the solutions that could have maximized the principal's financial standing [Jensen and Meckling, 1976, p. 308].

In his paper 'Teamwork and moral hazard', B. Holmstrom demonstrated that the free rider problem could be solved to a great extent if ownership had been at least partially separated from the workers, which gives priority to capitalist firms over partnerships. Labor contribution rating system can help to overcome a moral hazard threat because it divides risks in a more favorable way. Of great importance are the following questions: whether the agents can come to a mutual agreement while using this work assessment method; what monitoring methods are used; how the output is divided among team members, including the subject of monitoring, in or-

der to work out the most effective incentives for work [Holmstrom, 1982, pp. 338–339].

The structure of principal-agent relationships in artels was quite complicated. On the one hand, the owner who hired artel workers to do a job, played the role of the principal while artel was an aggregate agent. At the same time the owner quite often signed agreements with individual artel members when, for example, he hired them himself, as it was in barge hauling artels, or if he employed them to do some household chores, which was common practice in exchange artels. On the other hand, artel itself served as the principal towards artel members, but at the same time they jointly controlled artel activities because important decisions were made at the general meeting.

Labor artels had quite successful mechanisms of lowering different transaction costs resulting from team production:

- by preventing possible opportunism;
- by measuring productivity and remuneration;
- by solving a free rider problem when one member's shirking affects the rest of the team.

*Prevention of opportunist behavior in artels.* Admittance criteria, such as a property status, moral qualities of a member-to-be and an admittance fee which was, as a rule, quite high, were preventive measures against opportunist behavior before signing a contract with the worker — screening mechanisms. For example, admittance depended on «paying, on average, up to 1,000 silver roubles [Kalachev, 1999 (1864), pp. 320, 324]. Thus, to become a member of Metelkin artel at St. Petersburg's Marine Exchange, a candidate had to pay a fee of 900 roubles to artel in 1812, 200 roubles paid at the time of joining it [Kalachev, 1999 (1864), p. 350]. At that time it was a huge amount of money which could be earned only by a hard working person with entrepreneurial skills. The fact of having this sum signalled that the candidate had all the necessary qualities.

The problem of dealing with false information about candidates was partially solved by finding out the truth in the neighborhood where they lived because they had to give information on the place of residence. References also played an important role. Thus, candidates were, to some extent, screened because of admittance criteria. Besides being a signal, the admittance fee, according to Jensen-Meckling's terminology, played the role of bonding costs, as the member who was about to be expelled from artel because of his inadequate behavior, lost a part or the whole sum of the collateral.

Collective guarantee was a powerful factor which undoubtedly made postcontractual opportunist behavior less probable.<sup>4</sup> But it could not prevent it completely. That's why artel members were paid accordingly: they could be punished for their demerits in accordance with artel rules or resolutions passed at the general meeting. The inflicted punishments included fines, corporal punishment, removal from work and even expulsion. The list of demerits and the size of fines varied in different artels. For example, in Metelkin artel which was mentioned above, a member had to pay a 5-ruble fine for being absent from work, for abusing other members, for not being as hard working as them, or being drunk at work. If a member had an additional job without having let artel know about it, he had to pay 25 roubles [Kalachev, 1999 (1864), p. 350]. One of artels in 1810 had a rule of imposing a big fine on a member causing trouble between the employer (or 'master' as members of artel called him) and the members [Kalachev, 1999 (1864), p. 349]. Some artel charters ordered its members to inform on their fellow-workers if they misbehaved. If they did not do that, they were also severely punished. Such practice seemed to be common because this type of mutual monitoring considerably lowered costs related to it.

One of the ways of fighting shirking suggested by Alchian and Demsetz involves selecting of a special subject who monitors the team's performance. However, the problem is that the subject can shirk himself. There was a controller in each artel (starosta (headman), desyatnik (chargehand), ataman) who besides getting his share of pay, as a rule, was paid some extra money as a bonus for his work, but was fined if he misbehaved.

Thus, exchange artels were run by persons, either selected from within who did it in turn, or elected at the general meeting. The "manager" (starosta) was usually elected for a one-year period. If he coped with his duties well, he could be re-elected for a new term. His duties included securing artel's money, assigning tasks to members, checking their completion, imposing petty fines. The elected starosta was specially remunerated for his work whereas the person who played this role in turn, did not get any extra pay for that.

Fishing and hunting artels always had a head who was paid four to seven times more than an ordinary member. Barge hauling artels paid equally to all members including the elected desyatnik for their work but he was paid a special remuneration for additional duties.

Thus, artel can be defined as a coalition of agents with a revolving leadership structure where agents participated in profit making as well as

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<sup>4</sup> Grameen bank set up in Bangladesh by a 2006 Noble Prize winner, Muhhamad Unus, is a good modern example of giving out loans, taking into account collective guarantee as a tool to solve the problem of adverse selection and prevent agents' opportunism.

took turns in playing the role of the principal. Rotation of agents in the principal position with the authority delegated to them to control the other members' actions resulted in exchanging reliable information, creating the necessary prerequisites for strengthening trustworthy relationships among agents and developing cooperation, which in turn led to creating an «associative atmosphere» within the organization which prevented opportunist behavior and maximized feasibility [Williamson, 1975, pp. 38, 44]. Personal or collective contracts with an employer served as an additional protection from opportunism in artels, e. g. there were detailed laws regulating relationships among barge haulers and ship owners. Thus, conflicts could be settled both unofficially and in court, shipping and arbitrary courts being in charge of that.

*Measurement cost cuts in artels.* Payment for work done by artel members was made in accordance with the capital or effort contributed by each of them. Profits were usually divided equally among the members, fines being deducted after that. Sometimes the amount of labor input, on rarer occasions the level of expertise, were taken into account to calculate workers' pay. Measuring of individual input entailed transaction costs. Cutting of these costs was mainly achieved by setting up artels to carry out simple one-type jobs. Work could be either divided into quantitatively equal parts and assigned to separate workers, as it was done for loading and unloading, digging, mowing, forest cutting jobs, or it simply required joint effort, as in barge hauling.

Another important thing was that labor, as a production factor, was relatively homogeneous because physical strength and skills were taken into account when hiring artel members. This team formation principle was common everywhere. According to A. Engelgardt [Engelgardt, 1995, p. 146], «peasants do not agree to mow collectively by forming a line. It is possible only when artel is formed by 4–5 workers with similar capabilities».

The discussion of agency costs issue would be incomplete without consideration of interrelationship between artel's organizational structure and the decision process. E. Fama and M. Jensen [Fama and Jensen, 1983] put forward a question of how to divide among the agents such functions as: 1) decision management (decision initiation and implementation); 2) decision control (decision ratification and monitoring), and 3) a residual risk bearing in order to ensure economic efficiency. According to them, in small, non-complex organizations it is reasonable to make one or several agents responsible for these functions because if the number of residual claimants is great, their participation in decision control entails considerable costs. Artels were for the most part small non-complex organizations. But the above-mentioned functions were not separated here. All three func-

tions were placed in the hands of the same individuals. The key reason was collective guarantee. All members carried risk equally being responsible for the damage and losses. In return all members had equal rights for residual claims and the management and control of important decisions at general meetings. Non-separated functions of risk bearing and decision-making lowered the profits, but they were possibly compensated by cutting metering costs and less opportunism due to collective guarantee.

### **Concluding remarks**

Modern statements about Russian artelnost based on the conclusions of the past seem to be mainly rhetorical. Analysis reveals that assertion of Russian people's artelnost has no supported evidence. The following criteria were used to estimate artelnost: the extent to which artel labor and economic forms spread in all spheres of activity; for the most part spontaneous character of artels emergence; and inherent commitment to this organizational economic form, i.e. lack of opportunistic behavior in artels.

Existence of artels in Russia was, to a large extent, due to a higher economic effectiveness of this organizational form of economic activity in some spheres. Principal-agent and team production approaches highlight that Russian artel as an economic organization can be interpreted as an effective way for solving adverse selection and moral hazard problems. The behavior of artels' members was rational and quite individualistic.

Labor artels were mainly confined within activities of low capital investment and uncomplicated machinery. Work was homogeneous and the job could be divided into quantitatively equal parts.

Practically, the only asset used to carry out simple homogeneous work was workers' human capital, which could lead to extra opportunistic behavior. That's why artel as a contract-based institutional type came into being to control it.

Production artels in Russia were not common. They did not live long. A lot of XIX — early XX century researchers considered long-term cooperation of producers and artels completely unpractical in Russia. Even those who believed in their future stressed the necessity of coercing people who worked by themselves into these economic organizations. It was also important that the government, local self-government bodies (*zemstva*), and individual sponsors should support them. The researchers involuntarily pointed out that they were of contradictory character.

So one shouldn't exaggerate the role of artel in the process of Russian development.

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		потенциала и развития карьеры линейных менеджеров отечественных производственных предприятий
№15(R)–2006	С. В. Кошелева	Удовлетворенность трудом как комплексный диагностический показатель организационных проблем в управлении персоналом
№16(R)–2006	А. А. Румянцев, Ю. В. Федотов	Экономико-статистический анализ результатов инновационной деятельности в промышленности Санкт-Петербурга
№17(R)–2006	Е. К. Завьялова	Взаимосвязь организационной культуры и систем мотивации и стимулирования персонала
№18(R)–2006	А. Д. Чанько	Алгебра и гармония HR-менеджмента. Эффективность обучения персонала и диагностика организационной культуры
№19(E)–2006	T. E. Andreeva	Organizational change in Russian companies: findings from research project
№20(E)–2006	N. E. Zenkevich, L. A. Petrosjan	Time-consistency of Cooperative Solutions
№21(R)–2006	T. E. Андреева	Организационные изменения в российских компаниях: результаты эмпирического исследования
№22(R)–2006	Д. Л. Волков, Т. А. Гаранина	Оценивание интеллектуального капитала российских компаний
№23(R)–2006	А. В. Бухвалов, Ю. Б. Ильина, О. В. Бандалюк	Электронное корпоративное управление и проблемы раскрытия информации: сравнительное пилотное исследование
№24(R)–2006	С. В. Кошелева	Особенности командно-ролевого взаимодействия менеджеров среднего и высшего звена международной и российских компаний
№25(R)–2006	Ю. В. Федотов, Н. В. Хованов	Методы построения сводных оценок эффективности деятельности сложных производственных систем
#26(E)–2006	S. Kouchtch, M. Smirnova, K. Krotov, A. Starkov	Managing Relationships in Russian Companies: Results of an Empirical Study
№27(R)–2006	А. Н. Андреева	Портфельный подход к управлению люксовыми брендами в фэшн-бизнесе: базовые концепции, ретроспектива и возможные сценарии
№28(R)–2006	Н. В. Хованов,	Модели учета неопределенности при

	Ю. В. Федотов	построении сводных показателей эффективности деятельности сложных производственных систем
№29(R)–2006	Е. В. Соколова, Ю. В. Федотов, Н. В. Хованов.	Построение сводной оценки эффективности комплексов мероприятий по повышению надежности функционирования объектов электроэнергетики
#30(E)–2006	M. Smirnova	Managing Buyer-Seller Relationships in Industrial Markets: A Value Creation Perspective
№31(R)–2006	С. П. Куш, М. М. Смирнова	Управление взаимоотношениями в российских компаниях: разработка концептуальной модели исследования
№32(R)–2006	М. О. Латуха, В. А. Чайка, А. И. Шаталов	Влияние «жестких» и «мягких» факторов на успешность внедрения системы менеджмента качества: опыт российских компаний
№33(R)–2006	А. К. Казанцев, Л. С. Серова, Е. Г. Серова, Е. А. Руденко	Индикаторы мониторинга информационно-технологических ресурсов регионов России
№34(R)–2006	Т. Е. Андреева, Е. Е. Юртайкин, Т. А. Солтицкая	Практики развития персонала как инструмент привлечения, мотивации и удержания интеллектуальных работников
#35(E)–2006	T.Andreeva, E.Yurtaikin, T.Soltitskaya	Human resources development practices as a key tool to attract, motivate and retain knowledge workers
№36(R)–2006	А. В. Бухвалов, В. Л. Окулов.	Классические модели ценообразования на капитальные активы и российский финансовый рынок. Часть 1. Эмпирическая проверка модели CAPM. Часть 2. Возможность применения вариантов модели CAPM
№37(R)–2006	Е. Л. Шекова	Развитие корпоративной социальной ответственности в России: позиция бизнеса (на примере благотворительной деятельности компаний Северо-Западного региона)
№38(R)–2006	Н. А. Зенкевич, Л. А. Петросян	Дифференциальные игры в менеджменте
№39(R)–2006	В. Г. Беляков, О. Р. Верховская, В. К. Дерманов, М. Н. Румянцева	Глобальный мониторинг предпринимательской активности Россия: итоги 2006 года
№40(R)–2006	В. А. Чайка, А. В. Куликов	Динамические способности компании: введение в проблему
№41(R)–2006	Ю. Е. Благов	Институционализация менеджмента

		заинтересованных сторон в российских компаниях: проблемы и перспективы использования модели «Арктурус»
№42(R)–2006	И. С. Меркурьева, Е. Н. Парамонова, Ю. М. Битина, В. Л. Гильченко	Экономический анализ на основе связанных данных по занятым и работодателям: методология сбора и использования данных
#43(E)–2006	I.Merkuryeva, E. Paramonova, J. Bitina, V. Gilchenok	Economic Analysis Based on Matched Employer-Employee Data: Methodology of Data Collection and Research
№44(R)–2006	Н. П. Дроздова	Российская «артельность» — мифологема или реальность' (Артельные формы хозяйства в России в XIX — начале XX в.: историко-институциональный анализ)
№1(R)–2007	Е. В.Соколова	Бенчмаркинг в инфраструктурных отраслях: анализ методологии и практики применения (на примере электроэнергетики).
№2(R)–2007	С. П.Куш, М. М.Смирнова	Управление поставками в российских компаниях: стратегия или тактика
№3(R)–2007	Т. М. Скляр	Проблема ленивой монополии в российском здравоохранении
№4(R)–2007	Т. Е. Андреева	Индивидуальные предпочтения работников к созданию и обмену знаниями: первые результаты исследования
№5(R)–2007	А. А. Голубева	Оценка порталов органов государственного управления на основе концепции общественной ценности
№6(R)–2007	С. П. Куш, М. М. Смирнова	Механизм координации процессов управления взаимоотношениями компании с партнерами
#7(E)–2007	D.Volkov, I.Berezinets	Accounting-based valuations and market prices of equity: case of Russian market
№8(R)–2007	М. Н.Барышников	Баланс интересов в структуре собственности и управления российской фирмы в XIX – начале XX века
#9(E)–2007	D.Volkov, T.Garanina	Intellectual capital valuation: case of Russian companies
№10(R)–2007	К. В. Кротов	Управление цепями поставок: изучение концепции в контексте теории стратегического управления и маркетинга.
№11(R)–2007	Г. В. Широкова, А. И. Шаталов	Характеристики компаний на ранних стадиях жизненного цикла: анализ факторов, влияющих на показатели результативности

		их деятельности
№12(R)–2007	А. Е. Иванов	Размещение государственного заказа как задача разработки и принятия управленческого решения
№ 13(R)-2007	О. М. Удовиченко	Понятие, классификация, измерение и оценка нематериальных активов (объектов) компании: подходы к проблеме
№14(R)–2007	Г. В. Широкова, Д. М. Кнатъко	Влияние основателя на развитие организации: сравнительный анализ компаний управляемых основателями и наемными менеджерами
#15(E)–2007	G.Shirokova, A.Shatalov	Characteristics of companies at the early stages of the lifecycle: analysis of factors influencing new venture performance in Russia
#16(E)–2007	N.Drozdova	Russian “Artel’nost” — Myth or Reality? Artel’ as an Organizational Form in the XIX — Early XX Century Russian Economy: Comparative and Historical Institutional Analysis
#1(E)–2008	S.Commander, J. Svejnar, K. Tinn	Explaining the Performance of Firms and Countries: What Does the Business Environment Play'
№1(R)–2008	Г. В. Широкова, В. А. Сарычева, Е. Ю. Благов, А. В. Куликов	Внутрифирменное предпринимательство: подходы к изучению вопроса
№1A(R)– 2008	Г. В. Широкова, А. И. Шаталов, Д. М. Кнатъко	Факторы, влияющие на принятие решения основателем компании о передаче полномочий профессиональному менеджеру: опыт стран СНГ и Центральной и Восточной Европы
№ 2(R)–2008	Г. В. Широкова, А. И. Шаталов	Факторы роста российских предпринимательских фирм: результаты эмпирического анализа
№ 1(R)–2009	Н.А. Зенкевич	Моделирование устойчивого совместного предприятия
№ 2 (R)–2009	Г. В. Широкова, И. В. Березинец, А. И. Шаталов	Влияние организационных изменений на рост фирмы
№ 3 (R)–2009	Г.В. Широкова, М.Ю. Молодцова, М.А. Арепьева	Влияние социальных сетей на разных этапах развития предпринимательской фирмы: результаты анализа данных Глобального мониторинга предпринимательства в России