

Rasputin's Profile and How Charisma Works in Inducing Others into Guided Actions of all Sorts

Sinan Çaya

Institute of Marine Administration and Sciences, Istanbul University, Vefa-Istanbul, Turkey

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Abstract: Monk Rasputin infiltrated the palace in the last years of Tsarist Russia and gained favour. He abused his mystical hypnotic capabilities for his personal might and passions. As the man began to appear as a topic of various legends, his attributes got exaggerated in the minds of people. A thorough scrutiny of Rasputin as a symbol will help a better understanding of the role of charisma in influencing others in inappropriate ways like inducing to criminal acts behind the scene. By explanation of such powers, one can also shed light on the incredible influence of many newly-emerging cult leaders in highly developed western societies.

Key words: Charisma, power, leader.

1. Introduction

The concept of charisma was coined by German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920). It involves inherent gifts which work spontaneously in prompting certain impacts on people. A special form of it is mystical charisma, a demonstrative example of which was possessed by a Russian monk, Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin (1869-1916) (Fig. 1). Being a very interesting topic for scholars as well as art producers, he is the subject of many retrospective studies even today.

2. Rasputin and the "Sacred Touch"

At the Petersburg Palace^(*) it was a busy day. Tsarina Alexandra Fyodorovna (*granddaughter of Queen Victoria*) was shouting at her servants to go find Yefimovich.

The fetched man was of middle height, fortyish, clad like a peasant with his dirty tunic and crude boots. Noble men and women in elegant clothing, officers in decorated uniforms were opening the way with deference.

^{*} Saint Petersburg was founded by the Tsar Peter the Great in 1703.

Corresponding author: Sinan Çaya, Ph.D., research fields: leadership, forensic studies, rural sociology, general education, peasant studies. E-mail: sinan.caya@gmail.com.

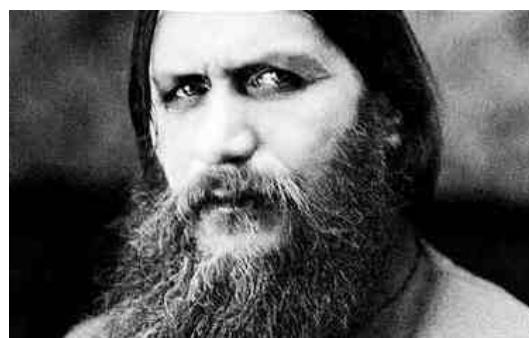


Fig. 1 Rasputin (Inernet).

The thin face was revealing a past of austerity. The unkempt hair was long and black while the blue eyes reflected a keen look.

Tsar Nicolas II, who had a pointed beard and a mighty moustache, was standing near his crying wife. The mysterious man approached the bed of the heir prince. The handkerchief on his nose was blood-soaked. The man began to sing a hymn with his deep, husky voice. The child soon fell asleep. The handkerchief slipped away. The bleeding was over^(*).

Where else in history a peasant could act so freely in a palace and talk with the dynasty in familiar terms?

^{*} In a movie about Rasputin, the child joyfully leaps around, shouting that the holy man healed him. The boy had hemophilia, is a rare bleeding disorder in which the blood doesn't clot normally. It is a recessive hereditary disease.

Only Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin could between the years 1906 and 1916 [1].

3. Raspoutin's Past

Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin was born in a village in eastern Siberia as the son of a simple moujik, who was making a living by raising cattle.

He had an unmanageable childhood and a naughty puberty. Since he was harassing girls and women, many fathers and husbands beat him. His mischievous demeanor earned him the title "rasputin", meaning a lecherous person. He did not become very sensible even after marrying a village girl and having three children.

While carrying a monk in his carriage one day, he got to talk with him. This event marked a turning point in his life. As his daughter Maria reported, soon after Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to him in an open field, suspending in the air as a vision for some time. Then it was time for Grigory to wander through Russia, with a walking stick in his hand. The people embraced this mystic as one from among the file and rank, asking for blessing. He was advising them to discipline their ills. Nobody can deny the man's magnetic power over people.

Meanwhile he joined the religious order called the "Flagellants" (*) whose twenty thousand adherents were aiming to reach God directly. The male and female disciples were meeting at nights in forlorn places, singing hymns and dancing madly. Those lacking in enthusiesm were being whipped by the leaders. At the end they were all rolling on the ground in ecstasy. One can infer that those rituals combining pornography with mysticism were quite appealing to Rasputin [1].

4. Raspoutin's Charisma and his Ascent at the Palace

—"Ra-Ra-Raspoutin
 Lover of the Russian Queen"

* In the French text the French synonym is provided rather than the original Russian word.

From a pop song of 1980s—

His fame came to the attention of the church. Some theologicians told him to go to Petersburg, where they introduced him to the palace. At the time; occult practices like summoning spirits or *necromancy* (communication with the deceased) were popular in Russia. He was granted the title of "Staretz" (father) enabling him to satisfy all his appetites in a socially accepted manner.

In 1906, Grand Duchess Militza of Montenegro asked him about hemophilia. The illiterate man replied that it occurs in males while women are solely carriers and the zlightest bleeding could be fatal and certain plants and prayings provide healing. Supposedly a state secret, the sickness of Alexei, the heir to the throne, was known to the high society.

The Tsar was not convinced by the duchess at first. He consulted Bishop Theophanes of Poltava, who ascertained that Rasputin, despite committing sins, after each repentance became purely innocent like a newly-baptized baby, thanks to his extremely strong faith.

Without affected airs, the rustic man introduded into an enviroment where French was as commonly spoken as Russian. Indeed, he achieved what the doctors could not. He cured the child. Today, some attribute the secret to his hypnotic power and none can provide a sheer scientific explanation.

He thus became a popular figure among the royal family. The women themselves were not repelled by his dirty fingernails and food-stained fingers.

Once at a restaurant he boasted that the vest he was wearing wabs knit by the Great Dame (meaning the Tsarina). This arrogance attracted a lot of hatred in his name in political circles [1].

5. The Plots of his Opponents

One night; Prince Felix Yusupov, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Duma member Vladimir Purishkevich, war veteran Captain Sukhotin, and French physician Stanislas de Lazovert lured Rasputin

into Moika Mansion, using Yusupov's wife Princess Irina as an attraction. Using rubber gloves, Lazovert prepared the poison to be placed in the cake and the cinder.

Rasputin was led into the basement by the escort. Irene was not even at home. He was told that she had other guests as well. The American songs coming to his ears did not please Rasputin much [1].

It is told that the poison did not affect Rasputin at all and Yusupov had to resort into shooting Rasputin with a pistol. From a sociological point of view; it is easy to infer that his mythological personality did not deserve death by poisoning.

Mayse Rasputin's being a glutton can provide some scientific explanation. Especially the possible presence of pork as a greasy kind of meat may get into account here. Oils hinder the absorption of toxic substances through mucous membranes. In fact it is a known fact that in night clubs consummatrice-girls drink olive oil beforehand in order not to get drunk. With a similar logic; in a snake-bite, it is recommended to rinse the mouth before starting to suck and spit out the blood from the bitten point [2].

6. Mystical Charisma and Lustfulness

Even though at first sight sexuality and mysticism seem incompatible in general and only an exceptional "compound" in the person of Rasputin; there are other incidences where the two concepts do go together:

Leader of the religious order Branch Davidian, David Koresh who fought with security forces at the ranch-headquarters in Waco-Texas in April 1993, was a hypersexual male. He was enthusiastic for females ever since his adolescence. His disciples could easily forgive that aspect of his.

As Samples et al. note, David's first spouse was 14-year-old Rachel, second spouse 13-year-old Karen, Karen's sister, 12-year-old Michelle third spouse and 17-year-old Robyn the fourth spouse [3]. He acquired two more wives but his sexual propensity extended onto other females within the community.

[Especially after the state's close surveillance over the order became conspicuous and the end was nearing] *life at the ranch was like a sexual orgy, whereby the males had the function of protecting the harem of the chief at all costs* [3].

Another somewhat mystical and lecherous leader was former Indonesian president Ahmad Sukarno (Fig. 2). In 1960 he got his sixth wife but his sexuality did not pertain to legal wives^(*) alone. According to Willner [4] in *Hinduist-Buddhist comprehension the sacred man is not an ordinary man in sexual matters. Instead, he is either one who vows a strict sexual "diet" or else one who is extremely active. The former kind is epitomized by Gandhi, who had taken a vow of celibacy at the age of 37 and kept it until his death at the age of 78. He had even done this in work cooperation among females rather than in seclusion. He had quit further physical relations with his wife as well.*



Fig. 2 Sukarno (Internet).

* Historian-journalist Murat Bardakçı writes in an article that when Sukarno visited Turkey in 1959; one of the best girls of the well-known *mama*, Luxurious Nermin, was offered to this distinguished guest. However, it turned out that upon his return home, a venereal disease (gonorrhea) broke out in his body, which was associated with this event and caused a diplomatic scandal at the time.

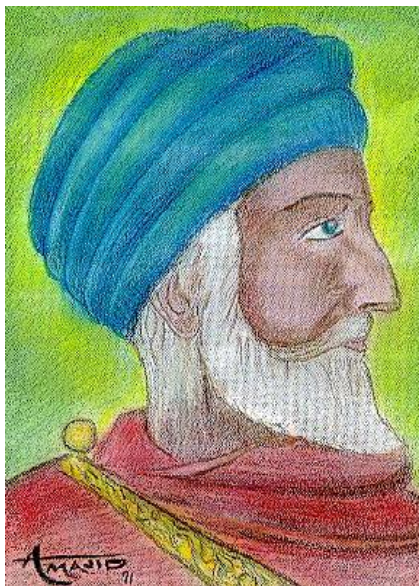


Fig. 3 Hassan Sabbah (Inernet).

As for the latter type, Sukarno represents it. Even though Indonesia got Islamized later in history; the roots reach out into Hinduist-Buddhist origins. Thirteenth century Javanese kings were thought to unite with temple nuns, holy virgins, goddesses to acquire the supernatural imperial cult. Even though Sukarno, as a Moslem, did not confess to the imperial cult, this was attributed to the man, in a sense. Such legends used to propagate in basically illiterate societies via word of mouth.

Willner specifies that some Indonesian peasants he encountered notified him about their awareness of the magical sword possessed by Sukarno [4]. *They said they had learnt about it from a seller, who had leant about it from the wholesaler merchant of the nearby city, who in turn had leant about it from his cousin, a guard at the palace.*

7. Hassan Sabbah, a Doyen of Assassins

Hassan Sabbah (Fig. 3) was born an orthodox Moslem. [At a certain age] he became a wandering missionary for the Ismaili cause. A legend has it that the ship on which he sailed ran into a violent storm. Only Hassan stood perfectly calm, explaining that he could not die until he had fulfilled his destiny. When the storm suddenly ceased, Hassan got the credit, and

made several converts. [Historian] Von Hammer seems to regard Hassan as a kind of Rasputin figure, a trickster and a fraud who used religion to gain personal power (but then, he also describes the Ismaili religion [sect] as “mysteries of atheism and immorality”) [5].

“Hassan selected his fortress, the castle of Alamut (or Eagle’s Nest), perched high on a rock in the Elburz mountains. This was in 1090. The religious rule there was strict. But if the aims were religious, the method was military. The Ismailis wanted to supplant the Sunni Caliphs of Baghdad: To do that, they first had to drive out the Turks who supported them. In 1092, the ‘assassins’ claimed their first eminent victim, Nizam Al-Mulk, the Vizier of the [Seljuk] Turks. In May 1194, Hassan bin sabbah, one of the most remarkable religious leaders of all time, died in his castle of Alamut, at the age of ninety” [5].

[According to Crusaders] the Assassins’ Old Man was a magician who surveyed the world from his castle. His men were so fanatically devoted to their master that he often demonstrated their obedience to visitors by making them leap out of high windows. By the time Marco Polo saw Alamut in 1273, in Persia they had been slaughtered by the Mongols; in Syria suppressed by Baybars, Sultan of Egypt.

[Those who escaped into India seem to have evolved into] “Thugs, who, although known as Moslems, worshipped the Hindu goddess Kali. Their aim was actual killing, rather than the robbery that accompanied it. According to Sherwood, they lived quietly in their villages until the months of November-December, when they took to the roads and slaughtered travellers” [as a sacred ritual]. [They were eliminated from India by the British rule, soon after their being discovered in early 1800s]” [5].

8. The Mystical Charismatic Leader and his Appropriate Follower

It appears that certain profiles are subjected to charismatic mystics. The environment and the times also collaborate together to complete the entire picture.

Indeed recent studies reveal that most disciples of current cults are recruited from among middle classes. Poor people being preoccupied with gain are too cunning to believe others easily. The rich have been reared with warnings about being stolen and grown cautious. The most naive ones with highest potential to place their belief into others happen to be those coming from the middle classes.

Certain other authors emphasize the methods of persuasion involved. Foot-in-the-door technique requires small offerings first and incrementally increases the demands, maybe up to the point where the person donates his entire wealth to the cult. At that point, to eliminate his cognitive dissonance, an irritating feeling, he is forced to believe that his choice was worthy after all that sacrifice and he should just go ahead. Only this consistency gives him comfort and respite continuously.

Such a disciple, for instance, would approve every act of his chief David Koresh, no matter what. Again; such a disciple, for instance, would obey Jim Jones, the leader of the People's Temple, even when he orders collective suicide by drinking a soluble cyanide compound, in their headquarters in Guyana, a Latin American colony for overwhelmingly American followers. More than 900 people did it in

1978 [6]! As a surviving woman told later, an objector-female was forced by others to conform, among shouts of "traitor" [7].

9. Conclusions

Rasputin is a symbol-figure in near history. He represents the possibilities of charismatic influence, the legends embellishing and exaggerating facts. Understanding similar individuals can shed light into cult behavior of the modern western world.

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