In his new book, Jeffrey Burds sets himself the task of studying “the ways in which peasant experience of non-village life affected a whole spectrum of village and non-village social relations (p. 9).” In the post-emancipation period that experience grew hugely. New opportunities to earn money away from home (otkhodnichestvo in Russian) attracted a great number of peasant laborers to St. Petersburg, Moscow and other centers, with great consequences in the villages. The arrival of universal military service, the railways, and rapidly spreading literacy expanded the horizons of the villager. Such processes are familiar from many societies, but in Russia the relationship between villages and those who left them to exploit new earning opportunities was to a large extent determined by the unique terms of the settlement of 1861, as well as subsequent government policy. By law, departing peasants remained members of their home village. They were expected to contribute to its collective tax burden and were subject to the will of local officials, the commune and their head of household.

Burds approaches his theme from various angles so that while the book fits together well as a whole, individual chapters can profitably be read (and recommended to students) in isolation. The book is divided into three parts. In the first part (Chapter One) Burds uses internal passport data to show the growth and geographical variation in the scale of peasant labor migration. It was highest in the Central Industrial Region (Moscow province, Kaluga to its south west and Tver', Iaroslavl', Vladimir and Kostroma to the north and east).

The Central Industrial Region is the focus of the rest of the book. Following Emancipation families and village communes there could not have met the state’s demands for taxes and redemption dues (all levied on the commune collectively) without outside earnings: economic need was initially the driving force behind migration. Perhaps one-third of the region’s adult peasant males, or at least one member of each household, worked away for extended periods each year (p. 24). Typically men returned to the village for good at around age 35. The growth in male otkhod was leveling out by the 1890s, but women’s opportunities increased markedly at the end of the century. The chapter then briefly outlines the threat to patriarchal household and village power, and to village morals, that labor migration posed.

The second part of the book (Chapters Two Through Five) looks at how the community and family attempted to control the migrants. Chapter Two sketches how the tsarist state, lacking the resources to rule the countryside directly, was forced to extract tribute through volost’ and village officials who belonged culturally to a different world from more senior state servants. “Temporary and limited alliances” were formed between peasant self-government, higher state authorities and outside employers (p. 43). The chapter is nothing if not to the point; Burds restricts his investigation to a mere six pages and, disappointingly, makes no detailed use of the volost’ level records which he employs to such effect in subsequent chapters. There is no mention of the increase in supervision in the countryside that the state attempted with the introduction of the office of land captain (zemskii nachal’nik) in 1889. This is a rather puzzling omission. What we already know suggests that the captains, much like the volost’ officials, were quickly snowed under with paper, but it would be good to see how the new
officials fitted in. In addition to having disciplinary powers over volost' officials they were responsible for dealing with disputes over labor contracts in the agricultural sphere. Did they also find themselves mediating between new types of employer and the village?

With Chapter Three, "The Social Control of Peasant Labor", Burds moves into gear. He achieves a nice balance between providing a broad temporal and geographical overview and bringing alive the subjective experiences of the actors in the story. For the first task, the two-volume printed collection of reports of the tax inspectors (St. Petersburg, 1894-1895) is an invaluable source, employed to good effect throughout the book. To unlock the personal experience of individuals, Burds quotes various volost' documents such as the written contracts that became normal between the commune and each migrant by the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The migrants themselves welcomed these because they established a clear claim to village land on their return and hence security against illness, old-age and the caprice of the market. At the same time, a system aimed at channeling workers' earnings back to the villages could cause them great frustration.

The internal passport system was the key tool in controlling those who worked away from home. Obtaining a passport required the approval of the head of the household (usually a young man's father), the commune and the volost' elder. Officials and fathers could use the need to extend passports as a lever to extract money (legitimately or not). Some migrants who had been away for long periods found themselves in effect paying for land that did not exist or that others were working at a profit. Landless peasants were sometimes forced to pay scandalously inflated "leave charges." The most effective way of binding a youth to his village was considered to be marriage to a village girl. It was relatively rare that prodigal sons were forcibly returned home, perhaps to face condemnation in the volost' court and a sentence of corporal punishment. The machinery to bring them back under duress was, nevertheless, in place and it worked.

Chapter Four explores how the commune "brokered" relationships between its members, officialdom and employers. Village communities provided credit to enable would-be migrants to pay their dues in advance and so be granted permission to leave by the volost' authorities. A web of informal indebtedness bound villagers, present and absent, together. Peasants preferred to avoid borrowing from outsiders, but when they did, it was often from the hiring agents. Examining the volost' contract books, Burds concludes that one contractor often monopolized the local labor market and his offer of a proportion of wages up front was very tempting.

The growth of outmigration had its effect, meanwhile, on relations between those who stayed behind. In these decades the economic meaning of traditions of mutual and hospitality changed significantly: agricultural pomoshch, originally self-help between neighbors of more or less equal wealth, was reinvented. Wealthier peasants now laid on lavish hospitality for the neighbors who worked for them. Entertaining fellow villagers was a sign of a genuine reciprocity in relations that so distorted the development of rural class relations in the Marxist sense. Richer peasants were still in thrall to the power of village opinion. They needed respect within their community as patrons or pervostateineiki (first-class citizens) ("Kulak" was an insult which was only applied to exploitative outsiders before 1917). Their "generosity" also had an economic purpose: it helped to retain labor in the face of so many non-agricultural opportunities. Wealthier peasants were, then, the most zealous upholders of village traditions.

A first visit to the city often inspired excited awe in a young villager, but life away on work could soon become a great psychological strain, as records from one Moscow hospital for the insane show (Chapter Five). Peasants from one village or volost' supported (and restrained) each other (zemliachestvo). On holidays, migrants returned whenever possible to their villages to relax. They built houses there and bought land too, all as an insurance against the market. Compared to the Central Agricultural Region, the flow of wealth back to the villages helped to reduce the likelihood of agricultural failure. Those who lived closest to the villages sent back the most hard cash. The proportion of peasant-workers who sent money was lowest among those from the poorest families but three-quarters of the atkhodniki from landless households in the Central Industrial Region continued to send money home, although they could expect no dividend of security. This, argues Burds, shows how the village "remained the focal point in the peasant cosmogony" (p. 133), a point also driven home by the inclusion of photographs that workers had taken of themselves against rural backgrounds in city studios.

The author uses rich documentation to underpin his assertions and bring the subject to life. The book has grown from his research for his 1990 Yale University doctoral thesis (in the case of material from two of the seven chapters by way of previously published articles). Burds
carried out extensive dissertation research in repositories such as the famous collection of the Tenishev Ethnographic Bureau (housed in the Archive of the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg) and the Moscow and Perm’ regional (oblast’) archives. For the book he has gone on to visit the provincial archive in Iaroslavl’ as well. The book makes effective use of the previously little-used records of the local organs of peasant self-government (the volosti) and the district and provincial councils (zemstva), especially from Moscow province. It also draws on an impressively wide range of memoirs, and includes a splendid selection of previously unpublished and revealing photographs, such as those portraits of migrant workers, shots of the signs and symbols that adorned city shopfronts, and a picture of a peasant, prostrate and barebacked, about to feel the sting of nasty-looking birch rod.

The final section is the most creative in the book. It is concerned with two selected aspects of the cultural effects in the village of labor migration. Chapter Six explores how non-village cash earnings, initially motivated by need, became increasingly driven by a growing desire to consume: the transformation from “a culture of need to one of acquisition” (p. 142). It was not only the experience and earnings of migrant labor that made this possible. Burds argues that “popular myths of upward mobility” struck root in the villages (p. 152). Peasant parents vied to get their children apprenticed as salesmen or contractors in the hope that this would bring wealth for all. The market began to supply mass-produced items to the village. The goods were increasingly on sale not just in bazaars and from itinerant tradesmen, but also from rural stores.

The end of serfdom was a license to flaunt as the risk that conspicuous peasant wealth would be confiscated fell away. In the subsequent decades cottages in the region acquired metal roofs and extra windows. New “essentials” such as sugar, tea, tobacco and fashions and cosmetics began to penetrate the villages. Tavern and cafe life developed. Peasants were not drinking more, as ignorant outsiders feared, but they were associating with one another in new ways, to discuss national events in the tea houses, for example. There was an “information revolution”, particularly after a popular press began to develop following the upheaval of 1905.

This picture is a long way removed from the stereotyped image of the Russian village populated with emaciated tillers dreaming of the “black repartition”. It has implications for our understanding of “revolutionary” violence: it was provoked by rising expectations. When strikes got out of control and turned into riots (rather than the organized and restrained worker protests beloved of Soviet historians) frustrated ambitions and well-justified envy were well to the fore: “the peasant dream probably consisted of no more than the banal realization of material comfort” (p. 185).

The final chapter explores religious denunciation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which, given the cultural importance of reputation, Burds sees as another way of controlling the otkhodniki and influencing power relationships within the village. Studying the records of over three hundred cases in the Moscow Spiritual Consistory, Burds finds that nearly 90 percent of village “heretics” whose occupation was recorded were peasant-workers who earned away from home (p. 215). Their maintenance of the parish registers that were crucial for obtaining passports or loans and organizing military service guaranteed the continued power of the priests. Yet the hard-pressed clerics were unable to keep up moral supervision over their flock. Denunciation of otkhodniki by villagers developed to fill the vacuum and brought with it “the transformation of religious controls into secularized, community-based norms” (p. 197). The relationship between priests, the police, and “village or parish opinion” was complex. Shadowy decentralized but centrally-backed fraternities such as The Brotherhood of the Holy Cross or the Brotherhood of Saint Peter Mitropolit “grew more common as the efforts of tsarist authority to regulate oral behavior diminished...popular vigilantism grew to fill the vacuum left by waning institutional controls” (p. 206).

At the end of Chapter Seven, however, the book comes to an abrupt halt. The introductions to each section help provide an overview, but the work could have done with a conclusion, in which Burds might have pulled the threads back together and perhaps speculated about some of the larger questions that he has raised.

In summary, this work is a notable addition to a growing literature on the Russian peasantry that free access to Russian archives is making possible. Parts of the picture painted in the first two parts will already be familiar to students on the peasantry, but this is no criticism. Throughout the book Burds’ ranges confidently across the territories of numerous specialists and adds passing insights as he builds his own sophisticated thesis. His specific contribution is his exploration of the interplay between economic and cultural imperatives and his firm focus on what the interaction between the village and

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the world outside meant in practice for all concerned. Readers of the book will learn the extent to which life in the post-emancipation countryside was changing as the market penetrated the Russian countryside but also come to see the extent to which "the village" adapted outside influences on its own terms. An old and unanswerable question remains: given time, would the new influences and opportunities have dissolved the old village culture, or was the unique scale of the Russian countryside so overwhelming that the "peasantization" of the towns was bound to triumph?

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