Fugitives, Vagrants, and Found Dead Bodies: Identifying the Individual in Tsarist Russia

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On 20 July 1840, a notice ran in the *Kostroma Provincial News*, one of several notices of "arrested vagrants" published in an effort to find where these figures properly belonged within the Russian Empire. In this case, the notice came from the Makar'ev land court (*zemskii sud*) and it described an identity puzzle regarding "Aleksei Ivanov, sent to this court from the Kazan' district court, claiming himself to be a serf belonging to the Makar'ev estate of Count Gruzinskii, of the village of Lyskovo." This meant that the Kazan' authorities had arrested and questioned Ivanov, discovered his proper place was in Makar'ev district, and sent him there to be returned to his place of origin. Upon his arrival, however, authorities discovered that he was not who he initially claimed to be. Instead, "then in a statement taken from him in the district court he declared himself to be a household serf belonging to Mr. Sochin from Novgorod province, Valdai district, the village of Rakushin." But this was not his proper identity either: "This declaration, according to further inquiries, turned out to be false."[1]

As a result, the Makar'ev authorities published this notice to try to find Ivanov's true identity. He had lied twice about who he was, and so the authorities had to come up with a different method of identifying him properly. To do so, or at least to try to do so, they included something else, a physical description: "height 2 *arshin* 4 1/2 *vershok* (162 centimeters, or 5 feet 4 inches), hair on his head and beard are light blond, grey eyes, a long nose, a clear complexion,

[1] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (20 July 1840): 226–28.

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he is seventy-six years old, and has no distinguishing marks." Perhaps a reader of the newspaper would recognize a man of this description. If so, that would help to resolve the most important issue in the case: "whether he turns out to belong to someone." In principle, nearly every subject of the Russian Empire had an official place in society: they were serfs belonging to a master, they were state peasants belonging to a village commune, or they were townspeople belonging to a town commune. If someone recognized the description of Aleksei Ivanov, they were invited to turn to the Makar'ev authorities with proof of their relationship to the man in order to have him returned to his official place.

There are several ways to interpret this notice. Historians of American slavery have used newspaper advertisements seeking the return of runaway slaves to investigate not only the idea of resistance to slavery through flight but also the lived experience of slavery.[2] They mine the advertisements for evidence of literacy, or of clothing choices; they see runaways as "confidence men," or investigate the ways that advertisements express evolving conceptions of race.[3] Some of these writers have seen the great effort that owners put into recapturing runaway slaves as central to maintaining the system of slavery as a whole, because, as John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger put it, "The entire system of slavery was predicated on the ability of whites to control their property."[4]

Notices like the one seeking information about Aleksei Ivanov are in some ways distinctly different than those mined by historians of America slavery. For one thing, they are more formulaic and less detailed in their descriptions, and rarely move beyond the purely physical. This was largely due to another

[2] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Lathan Algerna Windley, *A Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina from 1730 to 1787* (New York: Routledge, 1995). There are a number of document collections of runaway slave advertisements, including Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the* Pennsylvania Gazette, *1728–1790* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *"Pretends to Be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Freddie L. Parker, ed., *Stealing a Little Freedom: Advertisements for Slave Runaways in North Carolina, 1791–1840* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); and Antonio T. Bly, ed., *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).
[3] David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 56, 2 (1999): 243–72; Antonio T. Bly, "Pretends He Can Read": Runaways and Literacy in Colonial America, 1730–1776," *Early American Studies* 6, 2 (2008): 261–94; Martha J. Cutter, "'As White as Most White Women': Racial Passing in Advertisements for Runaway Slaves and the Origins of a Multivalent Term," *American Studies* 54, 4 (2016): 73–97.
[4] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 150. On the scale of effort slave owners put into recapturing runaways, see also Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 107.

distinct difference: they were not typically placed by owners seeking the return of lost property, but rather by state institutions seeking information about found people, both vagrants and dead bodies.[5] On the surface at least, this notice, along with the thousands of others that appeared in official mid-nineteenth-century provincial newspapers, can be read as the apotheosis of the tsarist state's long-term struggle against fugitives and vagrants. According to Evgenii Anisimov, the reign of Peter I (r. 1682–1725) saw a decisive shift in the ways that the central state viewed fugitives. With the introduction of a new poll tax on (nearly) every male subject, fugitives were no longer simply serfs escaping their owners, but taxpayers escaping their responsibilities to the state.[6] Running away led to vagrancy, and as Simon Franklin has put it, "vagrancy was abhorrent, dangerous, and wasteful," since vagrants at best did no productive work and at worst were downright criminals.[7] Through the eighteenth century, the tsarist state introduced documentary requirements for movement, tried coercive measures, and also employed measures like amnesties in its efforts to get people back to where they properly belonged.[8] These notices were yet another method instituted by the central tsarist state to try to control its larger population.

At the same time, these notices also served to grapple with an essential question that plagued the imperial Russian state, just as it had long plagued and would continue to plague governments around the world: how could authorities know who a person really was? Or put in another way, how could a state ascertain the true legal identity of a given individual?[9] These notices

[5] There were such advertisements in the American press, as described in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves* (p. 178), but they play a smaller role, at least in the historiography. Similarly, in earlier periods there were owner-placed advertisements of runaway serfs in Russian newspapers, for example a notice in *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti* (2 Sept. 1796).

[6] E. V. Anisimov, "The Struggle with Fugitives during the Reform Period," *Soviet Studies in History* 28, 1 (1989): 59–77.

[7] Simon Franklin, "Printing and Social Control in Russia 1: Passports," *Russian History* 37 (2010): 208–37, 214.

[8] T. S. Mamsik, *Pobegi kak sotsial'noe iavlenie: Pripisnaia derevnia Zapadnoi Sibiri v 40–90-e gody XVIII v.* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1978); N. V. Kozlova, *Pobegi krest'ian v Rossii v pervoi treti XVIII veka (iz istoriia sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi zhizni strany)* (Moscow: Moskovskii universitet, 1983); V. G. Chernukha, *Pasport v Rossii, 1719–1917 gg.* (St. Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2007); Alison K. Smith, "'The Freedom to Choose a Way of Life': Fugitives, Borders, and Imperial Amnesties in Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 83, 2 (2011): 247–49.

[9] For work on this subject, see Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds., *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Chandak Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj: How Fingerprinting Was Born in Colonial India* (London: Macmillan, 2003); Gérard Noiriel, ed., *L'identification: Genèse d'un travail d'État* (Paris: Belin, 2007); Valentine Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*, Mark Kyburz and John Peck, trans. (New York: Zone Books, 2007); Vincent Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité: France, 1715–1815* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2008); Craig Robertson, "Four Documents, a Non-Citizen, and a Diplomatic Controversy: The Documentation of Identity in the Mid-Nineteenth

tried to solve this problem through a particular vision of individual identity based on a kind of simple anthropometrics, perhaps even a simple biometrics. They gave attention to physical descriptions—to height, age, hair and eye color, facial features, scars and birthmarks—so they would not have to rely on the stories individuals told about themselves, or even on the documents an individual held. They were a means to get beyond the "long tyranny of the face to face" and part of a wider practice of personal identification and registry within the imperial Russian system of social estate (*soslovie*).[10]

LEGAL IDENTITY IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, through a series of decrees and manifestos, the tsarist state had established measures intended to register and document nearly its entire population. These practices extended well beyond the efforts of individual serf-owners to control their own property. Serfdom had been institutionalized in the Law Code of 1649. That code, though, not only bound peasants to land owned by individual lords—thereby eventually binding them to those lords—but also bound all peasants to their villages and all townspeople to their towns.[11] Everyone other than a very narrow elite was to stay where they were. Anyone who left without permission was to be considered a fugitive. Anyone who gave refuge to a fugitive was to be punished. Maintaining this system, however, required ever more active state intervention. There were no newspapers that might allow individual towns or individual landowners to advertise for their missing people.[12] And so, through the rest of the seventeenth century, property owners and town communes petitioned the tsarist state to maintain this system through active efforts to recover fugitives.[13]

Century," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 22, 4 (2009): 476–96; and Jean-Pierre Gutton, *Établir l'identité: L'identification des français du moyen âge à nos jours* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2010). Nearly all of these works start with the story of Martin Guerre as interpreted by Natalie Zemon Davis in *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[10] The quote is from Gerard Noiriel, "Introduction," in *L'identification*, 8–10. On registry and *soslovie*, see Alison K. Smith, *For the Common Good and Their Own Well-Being: Social Estate in Imperial Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17–18, 192–93.

[11] Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[12] Histories of journalism in Russia usually date its first newspaper to 1702, when Peter I established an official *St. Petersburg News* (*Vedomosti*) to disseminate information about foreign affairs and domestic issues. See B. I. Esin and I. V. Kuznetsov, *Trista let otechestvennoi zhurnalistiki (1702–2002)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 2002); P. N. Berkov, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki XVIII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1952); L. P. Gromova, ed., *Istoriia russkoi zhunalistiki XVIII–XIX vekov* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2003).

[13] Valerie Kivelson, "Merciful Father, Impersonal State: Russian Autocracy in Comparative Perspective," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997): 635–63, 649.

These efforts gained new form during the reign of Peter I. He instituted both a new system of military recruitment and a new system of tax payments: the "soul tax." The tax was levied on every individual male soul (again other than an elite few) but was paid communally by villages or towns; every male soul of a certain age was likewise eligible for the draft.[14] The records produced to count those souls, and thus to define a community's tax payments and military obligations, standardized the ways that individuals were bound to their communities. Landlords were to compile the tax census of their serfs, and town and village communes were to compile the tax census of their members.[15] With the third tax census, conducted in the early 1760s, the registers began to include women's names as well.[16] This made them into something more than a simple means of ensuring that taxes were paid and military service fulfilled, for women were subject to neither of these demands. The registers instead came to constitute the full legal identity of all those listed in their pages: peasants, both men and women, registered by and thereby belonging to a particular landowner or village; and townsmen and townswomen likewise registered in and belonging to specific towns. Moreover, this registry lasted past death since "dead souls" remained on the tax rolls until a new census was called. In fiction, this fact offered the hero of Nikolai Gogol's novel an opportunity for profit. In reality, it meant that discovering the identity not just of vagrants but also of found dead bodies had real practical significance both for the state and for serf-owners and town societies.

A few decades later, in her charter to the towns, Catherine II (r. 1762–1796) added a further element to this notion of belonging. "If someone is not written into the residency books of a given town," the charter declared, "then that person not only does not belong to the citizenry of the town but also does not enjoy the benefits of that town and status."[17] This presented a view that the broad registry of all subjects, not just serfs, was not simply punitive or controlling, but aimed to allow individuals to take their proper place in society. Catherine had earlier instructed all "free people" to register somewhere because it would be a benefit "for the common good and their own

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[14] E. V. Anisimov, *Podatnaia reforma Petra I: vvedenie podushnoi podati v Rossii, 1719–1728 gg.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982). Neither of these duties applied to nobles. Later other privileged groups, like merchants, were excluded from the soul tax-paying population.

[15] The decrees instituting the first census are in *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, 45 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830) (henceforth *PSZ*) vol. 5, no. 3245 (26 Nov. 1718); no. 3287 (22 Jan. 1719); no. 3474 (21 Dec. 1719); and vol. 7, no. 4343 (5 Nov. 1723).

[16] *PSZ* vol. 15, no. 11364 (28 Nov. 1761).

[17] *PSZ* vol. 22, no. 16188 (21 Apr. 1785), section 56. Benefits of town status might include access to education or the freedom to engage in sorts of trade prohibited to peasants. Catherine released a parallel charter to the nobility on the same day, and it, too, stated that those not listed in the heraldry books of a given province did not enjoy the "privileges" of noble status in that province. *PSZ* vol. 22, no. 16187 (21 Apr. 1785), section 69.

well-being."[18] In principle, everyone from this point forward belonged somewhere: to an owner, to a town or village society, even to a noble assembly.

The introduction of stricter rules for registration went along with stricter controls over mobility. It was possible to change one's place of registry (and one's social status, or *soslovie* as well), but only with documented permission of one's owner or one's village or town, and also of the village or town one wished to join. Even temporary mobility came under the state's purview. There had been earlier forms of documents required for travel around the state, but again Peter I's reign brought a refinement of the rules. In 1724, he declared that peasants required documents, soon called passports, to travel away from their home villages.[19] Also that year, townspeople, too, were instructed to obtain official passports for travel.[20] Passports were tools in the tsarist struggle against fugitives and vagrants; if a person on the road had a passport, he was not a vagrant, but instead could be identified as having a proper place within the larger imperial society. Being identified also meant that he could be held responsible for the taxes and duties he owed the state.

But, of course, neither Catherine's demand that everyone find a proper place nor the introduction of passports solved the problem of fugitives. People continued to run away, and emperors continued to worry about vagrants. If anything, the institutionalization of passports created, or perhaps brought to light, two related problems. First, by emphasizing the need for documents, the state created a new category of people: the undocumented (*bez pismennogo vida*). Over and again during the eighteenth century, laws exhorted employers not to hire and landlords not to give refuge to anyone who lacked proper documents.[21] Second, although the tsarist state came to rely on paper, both registries and passports, as a means of ordering its population, it soon found that those were not necessarily reliable proofs of identity. Soon after Peter's establishment of the passport, further decrees outlawed handwritten passports, in part because they were easier to forge, and demanded they instead be filled out on proper, official, printed blanks.[22] That, too, proved insufficient since, as a decree of 1744 put it, "not only many written but even printed false passports already appear."[23] Paper identities were fragile, yet they were the only

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[18]   *PSZ* vol. 21, no. 15853 (20 Oct. 1783).
[19]   *PSZ*, vol. 7, no. 4533 (26 June 1724). He made these rules not in a decree (*ukase*), but in a broadsheet (*plakat*) and as a result the documents came to be known as *plakatnye* passports.
[20]   *PSZ* vol. 7, no. 4624 (n.d., 1724), section 39.
[21]   An incomplete list includes *PSZ* vol. 7, no. 4742 (30 June 1725); no. 4931 (15 July 1726); vol. 8, no. 5333 (12 Sept. 1728), section 47; vol. 9, no. 6696 (26 Feb. 1735); vol. 11, no. 8706 (17 Feb. 1743); vol. 12, no. 8954 (31 May 1744); vol. 14, no. 10450 (21 Aug. 1755); vol. 18, no. 12968 (22 Aug. 1767); and vol. 21, no. 15226 (15 Sept. 1781).
[22]   *PSZ* vol. 7, no. 4827 (1 Feb. 1726). Similar prohibitions continued into the nineteenth century, as found in *PSZ* vol. 27, no. 20595 (20 Jan. 1803). On the printed blanks, see Franklin, "Printing and Social Control," esp. 223.
[23]   *PSZ* vol. 12, no. 9076 (28 Nov. 1744).

real option if the state had any hope of identifying its subjects while also allow-ing them to move.[24]

This, then, was the background for the emergence of newspaper notices seeking to identify arrested vagrants and found dead bodies. Starting in the mid-eighteenth century, imperial decrees sought to use newspapers and public notices (*vedomosti*) to combat the problem of vagrancy and other illicit mobil-ity. Local authorities came to have an important role to play in the struggle against fugitives and vagrants, but they were constrained by the need to identify vagrants and to inform those who were responsible for them. They arrested and questioned suspicious characters, and then had to deal with returning them to their places of origin. The problem was that this was a time of irregular mail service, and furthermore a time when serfs often belonged to absentee owners. As a result, figuring out where to send an arrested fugitive was no simple matter. Starting in the 1760s, decrees began to use newspapers as one method of getting the word out about those who had been arrested. A 1765 decree stated that notice should be given by means of publishing in the Moscow and Petersburg newspapers, and by writing to the provincial or town governments in the places arrested fugitives and vagrants claimed to be registered. Those provincial officials would then be responsible for locating owners or societies within their borders.[25]

Later decrees continued to use newspapers and public notices as a way to disseminate information about fugitives, hoping to simplify the process of return. This is most visible in a decree of 1805, a response on the part of the Senate to a series of complaints and reports from provincial governors. The complaints all argued that local police were unduly burdened by the responsi-bility of getting fugitives and vagrants back to where they belonged, in large part due to the correspondence demanded by the laws. The paperwork involved in letting multiple authorities know about an arrested individual, or in respond-ing to requests for information from other provinces, "makes for nothing else than an unnecessary increase in work, taking away from the most important affairs," according to authorities in Podol'sk.[26] The Senate agreed, and declared

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[24] Clothing and beards (or their lack) marked individuals as part of larger social groups; Chris-tine Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes: A History of the Russian Fashion Industry, 1700–1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Brands or other disfigurations marked them as crimi-nals; Abby M. Schrader, *Languages of the Lash: Corporal Punishment and Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002). Paper seemed the only way to identify individuals as individuals. For a case that highlights the great difficulties that faced authorities in determining whether papers were trustworthy, see Alison K. Smith, "False Passports, Undocu-mented Workers, and Public (Dis)Order in Late-Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Journal of Social History*, forthcoming.
[25] *PSZ* vol. 17, no. 12506 (9 Nov. 1765).
[26] *PSZ* vol. 28, no. 21939 (23 Oct. 1805).

that publication should be considered sufficient notice. This approach was confirmed in additional decrees over the next several decades.[27]

It seemed clear that publication could simplify the act of administering the empire, but only to a limited extent because there were still only a few newspapers. That changed when a network of provincial newspapers (*gubernskie vedomosti*) was founded in the 1830s. In two decrees, the first in 1830 establishing newspapers in six provinces, and a second in 1837 as part of a reorganization of the duties of provincial governments, the regime of Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855) created, in principle at least, a system to allow for the more rapid and complete dissemination of news, official and otherwise, to a wider provincial audience.[28] The new newspapers were to publish notices from the Senate and other central institutions, notices from the provincial authorities, and various public notices like announcements of property sales and descriptions of lost documents. In addition, the newspapers were to be a method of locating people by reporting "calls or searches for people, whose place of residence is unknown," "found and detained fugitives and deserters," and "vagrants exiled for resettlement, beggars and vagrants, with descriptions of their features."[29] These notices were official statements intended to locate every individual properly in his or her place of residence, or at least with the proper documents that maintained their ties there.

Once the *gubernskie vedomosti* began to appear, they regularly ran three main types of notice intended to locate or identify individuals: notices "Seeking Various Individuals," "Of Arrested Vagrants," and "Of Found Dead Bodies." In the first case, individuals had left their official place, had gone off to "who knows where," and were now being sought by their owners in the case of runaway serfs, or more often by local judicial authorities. In the second and third cases, the issue was the opposite; here individuals of unknown or suspicious identity had been found away from their official place, and provincial authorities were seeking to return them to where they belonged (sometimes only on paper). These notices were explicitly linked to a concept of ownership or of belonging to specific communities. Every subject had a proper place in society, and newspapers could be brought into play to ensure they filled it.

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[27] *PSZ* vol. 31, no. 24516 (9 Feb. 1811); vol. 32, no. 25516 (14 Jan. 1814); no. 25746 (10 Dec. 1814); and vol. 38, no. 29328 (23 Feb. 1823), sections 12, 20; *Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii*, 2d collection, 55 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830–1885) (henceforth *PSZ* 2), vol. 3, no. 1893, pp. 14, 15 (22 Mar. 1828).

[28] *PSZ* 2 vol. 5, no. 4036 (27 Oct. 1830); *PSZ* 2 vol. 12, no. 10304 (3 June 1837).

[29] *PSZ* 2 vol. 5, no. 4036, section 12. The 1837 decree put the list slightly differently: "Notices of fugitives, when those notices come from the government; notices of arrested vagrants, with a description of their features, notices of found corpses, also with a description of their features"; *PSZ* 2 vol. 12, no. 10304, section 88.

This was the goal in theory, but the practices of individual newspapers were far more varied than this neat set of descriptions suggests.[30] A comparison of the newspapers published in five provinces (Iaroslavl, Kiev, Kostroma, Tver, and Viatka) shows this clearly.[31] In some ways, especially when the notices are taken all together, they seem clearly to meet the stated goals of the decrees establishing the newspapers. All three types of notices (seeking the lost, reporting on arrested vagrants, and reporting on found bodies) appear, but most notices reported on people who had been found, not on those who had been lost. Only in the Iaroslavl newspaper did a majority of notices seek people: 93 percent of its notices, compared to 24 percent in Kiev province, 5 percent in Kostroma, 2 percent in Viatka, and none in Tver. Moreover, these notices seeking people (like those reporting on those who had been found) were virtually all placed by courts or other administrative authorities—in the wider sample there is only one notice placed by an owner seeking a runaway serf.[32] In addition, the provincial newspapers published notices from two sources. They announced events within the bounds of their own provinces— bodies discovered there, vagrants locally arrested—and they also reprinted reports from elsewhere. In this, they were establishing the kind of network of information that would allow for the proper and prompt identification of individuals across provincial borders.

Looking at the individual newspapers, however, shows that the network was differently constituted in the different provinces. The Kiev newspaper was the most complete in its coverage in that it included the most notices and the widest range of sources. It reported on found dead bodies, on arrested vagrants, and on efforts to find people, and printed notices from its own province and reprinted notices from as far away as Orenburg province. The paper's practice also suggests that Kiev was better tied into the larger network of newspapers than were the other provincial capitals. There are only four duplicates among the cases, and in each of these the Kiev paper published a notice from another province one week before the Kostroma paper did.[33] This

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[30] Susan Smith-Peter has discussed the ways that practices varied in the unofficial sections of the *Vedomosti*, which covered a far wider range of topics, in "The Russian Provincial Newspaper and Its Public, 1788–1864," *Carl Beck Papers* 1908 (2008): 8–12. These variations, however, appear in the official sections, which suggests there was a greater degree of local variation in even supposedly uniform "official" discourse.

[31] The discussion below is based on an examination of all notices that include physical descriptions published in January and July of 1840 across the five provinces, and in the January and July issues of the Kostroma newspaper from 1838 (the year it began) to 1855 (the year Nicholas I died, which is often viewed as the start of the era of the Great Reforms).

[32] "O bezhavshem krest'ianine Artamonove," *KostromaGV*, Pribavlenie (4 Mar. 1844): 34.

[33] These are the cases of Ivan Mikhailov, a vagrant "not knowing his descent" captured in Viatka province, reported in *Kievskie GV* (12 Jan. 1840): 48–49; and *Kostromskie GV* (20 Jan. 1840): 269–28; and of Abdul Altigramov, Fedor Pavlov, and Ivan Iakovlev, vagrants captured in Nizhnii Novgorod, reported in *Kievskie GV* (7 July 1840): 1085–86; and *Kostromskie GV* (20 July 1840): 226–28.

suggests that Kiev received (or perhaps just processed) news sooner than did the more remote provincial papers, a fact all the more notable given that the sources of these reports—Viatka and Nizhnii Novgorod—neighbored Kostroma and were much farther away from Kiev. This may simply be because Kiev was by far the biggest city of any of the five provincial capitals and therefore had both a more prominent place in the transportation network of the empire and a larger and apparently more responsive administration.

In contrast, the Kostroma and Viatka newspapers above all published notices of bodies found and vagrants arrested in other provinces, while local notices are nearly absent.[34] Both of these provinces were places of outmigration, and Kostroma peasants and serfs, in particular, had long-standing traditions of working part of the year off the land. This relatively mobile population could easily go missing, for running away was often based on the happenstance of location both in Russia and in other societies of unfree labor.[35] As a result, and given that placing notices seeking runaways was not a regular practice, local serf-owners might have been especially interested in reading accounts of arrested vagrants in hopes of recovering their own property.

The Tver newspaper published only notices of arrested vagrants, which in some ways echoes the practice of Kostroma and Viatka. There was a significant difference in its practice, however: 80 percent of its notices were for vagrants arrested within the confines of Tver province itself. While the Kostroma, Viatka, and Kiev papers also included local notices, those were far outnumbered by reports from farther away—local notices comprised 2.5 percent of the Kiev notices, 8.2 of the Kostroma notices, and 1.7 of the Viatka notices. They also tended to be outliers among the reports; the four local Kiev notices were all of found dead bodies, while the local Kostroma notices were for one body, one found vagrant, and the only three wanted notices in the Kostroma reports. It may be that the Tver newspaper published primarily local reports because its editor viewed the paper's function as to present primarily local stories or notices from St. Petersburg rather than news from other provinces. Or perhaps Tver simply attracted more vagrants because it was a major place of transit, with both the Volga and the main route between Moscow and St. Petersburg passing through it.

These practices evolved over time. In its January and July numbers, from 1838 to 1855, the Kostroma paper ran notices for 644 individual vagrants, fugitives, or corpses. In some ways, its practice was consistent over this longer period. It continued to publish a mix of all three kinds of notices (though

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[34] Both newspapers also cited their sources. They regularly reported that the notices they were reprinting came from other provincial newspapers.

[35] On examples in Russia, see Smith, "'The Freedom to Choose,'" 265–68; on the "accident of location" as a reason for running away in the antebellum United States, see Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 25.

with more notices of searches in the mid-1840s). Yet the rate at which it published notices changed dramatically over this period. In 1838, it published notices for 133 individuals, and the following year 153. That pace fell in 1840 to sixty-nine notices and continued at around that level until 1843. Then, in 1844, the numbers dropped to only ten. From that point onward, the Kostroma paper published notices for an average of only seven individuals in the yearly samples. This drop reflects another change in the paper's practice. Up until 1843, the newspaper regularly published a mix of notices from Kostroma province itself and other provinces, but that changed abruptly in mid-1843 when, at the start of August, it stopped providing notices of vagrants or other missing people from outside the province. From then onward, all such notices came only from Kostroma province itself, and the paper no longer served as a site for compiling information from across provincial lines. At least, it no longer did so when it came to policing individual identities. It did continue to publish notices of property transactions in other provinces, which makes the disappearance of the other notices all the more striking.

IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUALS

As different as the practices of the various newspapers were, taken together they show a consistent vision of a social world in which individual identities were based in social status and location. In particular, they emphasize the idea that individual identity in the Russian Empire involved a concept of belonging. This language of belonging is conspicuous in notices of arrested vagrants: "If the described people turn out to belong to someone, then the master or the society can turn to the appropriate authorities with clear legal proof for their return"; "the owners, or societies, should petition for the return of these people according to where they belong"; "if these people turn out to belong to some kind of society"; "if the arrested people turn out to belong to anyone."[36] Notices of found bodies were slightly different, in that they tended to address not just possibly relevant authorities, but also possible family members: "it is being advertised everywhere to the end, whether relatives of this boy turn up"; "it is advertised whether there turn out to be relatives or owners of the described body."[37] In all of these cases, the goal of the notices was to put people in their proper place, at least on paper. Not every person (even among the living) could actually be reunited with their owners of communities. In several cases, notices included the fact that vagrants had already been dealt with according to the laws, and that they had, as a result, been sent either into

[36] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Tverskie GV* (27 Jan. 1840): 23–24; "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (6 July 1840): 214–15; (13 Jan. 1840): 16–17, 16; "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (5 July 1840): 1085–86.
[37] "O naidennom mertvom tele," *Kievskie GV* (19 July 1840): 1150; "O mertvom tele," *Iaroslavskie GV* (5 Jan. 1840): 5.

military service or to Siberia for resettlement.[38] In such cases, the intent of the notices was to allow those left behind to update their records and authorities to remove people from their tax rolls before the next census—they would facilitate the ordering of legal documents and other papers.

The notices make abundantly clear how difficult it was to reunite individuals with their proper legal place and identity. The notices were efforts to identify individuals who lacked evidence to prove who they really were. Many include a note that a vagrant had been arrested due, in part, to "not having written papers."[39] Notices seeking people also often commented that people had gone off "without papers" or with papers that had expired.[40] Because such people had no papers, authorities had to rely on the stories they told about themselves. Often, however, authorities clearly found such self-accounts to be unreliable.

The problem of unreliability began with names. In almost every case, vagrants were at least identified by name, usually a first name and a patronymic, occasionally with a family name/*prozvanie* as well, but there were variations even here.[41] A few of the men arrested for vagrancy were deaf or otherwise did not speak, so if they had names they had no way of telling authorities.[42] (In one case, a man arrested in Vladimir province was suspected of faking his deafness, but nonetheless failed to provide a name.)[43] A few others had reported first names, but no more. In these cases, notices usually stated that they "did not remember their parentage" or "did not know their patronymic and origins."[44] One man arrested in Tver province gave both first and family names—Aleksei Voronov—but "does not remember his patronymic."[45] In still other cases, men had been living under more than one name, and notices listed their various aliases: "Akim Kirilenko, also known as Ivan Ivanov," "Fedor Trofimenko, also known as Lutsenko and Babenko," or "Vasilii or

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[38] "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (12 Jan. 1840): 49; "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (6 Jan. 1840): 6.

[39] "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (12 Jan. 1840): 49; "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (13 Jan. 1840): 16–17; "Gubernskie pravleniia v vedomostiakh svoikh publikuiut, poimany za ne imenie pis'mennykh vidov brodiagi," *Viatskie GV* (20 Jan. 1840): 17–19.

[40] "Ob otyskanii raznykh lits," *Kievskie GV* (19 Jan. 1840): 91–92, 92.

[41] This followed general patterns at the time; family names were universally used by the nobility, but rarely by peasants and only sometimes by townspeople. For a discussion of naming practices in Russia at that time, see Alexander M. Martin, *Enlightened Metropolis: Constructing Imperial Moscow, 1762–1855* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 244–48. On names and the question of identification more generally, see Jane Caplan, "'This or that Particular Person': Protocols of Identification in Nineteenth-Century Europe," in Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds., *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 49–66.

[42] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (20 July 1840): 226–28; (25 July 1842): 231–34; (30 July 1843): 287–88.

[43] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostroma GV* (26 July 1841): 219.

[44] Ibid. (13 Jan. 1840), 16–17; (20 Jan. 1840), 26–28; (27 Jan. 1840), 35–36; (24 Jan. 1842), 28.

[45] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Tverskie GV* (27 July 1840): 198.

Grigorii Ivanov Karneichuk (he also goes by Burkovskii and Kanoniuk.)"[46] Already, here, the idea that individuals might be identified in more than one way begins to appear.

The uncertainty of individual identity was emphasized even more by the ways in which notices described the legal identities of those arrested. Many gave some vision of who those arrested for vagrancy were by stating their legal place of residence and status. These descriptions could be a basic description, like Grigorii Ivanov, fugitive peasant, but often they gave more complete information.[47] Those arrested for vagrancy were most often serfs, like Dmitrii Ivanov, "a peasant from Lukianovskii district, the estate of Mr. Parfentii L'vovich Lamanov, the village of Shutilovo."[48] Others were runaway soldiers, like Osip Stepanov, "a soldier from the Tver garrison battalion."[49] Still others were state peasants, like Izot Ivanov from Sebezhskii district, Vitebsk province, or Osip Kharitonov from Iaroslavl district and province, both arrested in St. Petersburg province.[50] While many notices described a full legal identity including a status and a specific place or a specific owner, others claimed only partial knowledge. Ustin'ia Gordeeva stated that she "ran from her mistress living in St. Petersburg, the widow Mar'ia Evdokimovna, but does not know her [mistress's] family name, or her husband's rank, name, patronymic, or family name, but remembers that her mistress lived in her own house on the Petrograd side across from the Peter-Paul Fortress and has a son Platon, a daughter Iulia, and a serf woman Luker'ia whose patronymic she does not know."[51]

Others simply did not know, or claimed not to know, what their proper place was, like a man described as "a peasant claiming not to remember his heritage [*rodstva*]."[52] One such man claimed simply that he "was not registered in any status [*soslovie*]."[53] There were also cases in which individuals told more detailed stories that suggested that they had indeed slipped through the system of registration and therefore lacked a proper place and legal identity. A vagrant found in Orenburg province, known simply as Nikita, claimed that he had lived since childhood in the woods at the monastic retreat of three elders. He did not know his full name or age but had heard the elders say that they had found him as an infant in a swamp near the mountains. The elders had now all died, and since then he had lived alone until he began to run into trouble with local

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[46] "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (26 July 1840): 1194; (5 July 1840): 1085; "O poimannyikh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (10 Jan. 1842): 10–14.
[47] "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (12 Jan. 12, 1840): 49–50.
[48] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (3 Jan. 1842): 5–6.
[49] Ibid. (5 July 1841), 193–95.
[50] Ibid. (1 Jan. 1843), 7–8.
[51] Ibid. (10 Jan. 1842), 10–14.
[52] "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (5 July 1840): 1085.
[53] Ibid. (26 July 1840), 194. He also went by two names: Maksim Lavrenenko and Mikhail Shkorovarov.

Bashkirs, at which point he started traveling about looking for a safe place, until authorities in Orenburg finally arrested him for vagrancy.[54] Aleksandr Mikhailov Gorin, age twenty-six, arrested in Penza province, had a full name but no clear idea of where he belonged. He stated that he had fled Siberia with his father after having been exiled there from Simbirsk province, but more than that he did not know.[55] A mute man arrested in Vologda province was unable to give any account of himself, but had with him supplies—skis, a pot, a packet of salt, an axe—that suggest that, like Nikita, he had been living in the woods.[56]

The notices also made clear that self-identifications were sometimes unreliable. Notices almost always included words that emphasized that legal identities were self-reported. Those arrested for vagrancy "claimed to be," "called themselves" or "presented themselves as."[57] Furthermore, local authorities often reported not only what vagrants claimed to be but also that they had already investigated those claims and found them to be false. They published notices that Pavel Vasil'ev Solntsev, arrested in St. Petersburg province, had, for example, "called himself a native of Kazan' province, Spasskii district, the village of Danilovka [belonging to] Mr. Evgraf Alekseevich Danilovskii, but according to information we have gathered, his statement is unconfirmed"; or that Zakhar Semenov, arrested in Nizhnii Novgorod province, had "portrayed himself as a peasant from Osinskii district, of the Iugovskii metalworks, but the statement turned out to be a lie."[58] In some cases, authorities were even more direct about what their investigations had found that disproved such statements. Vasilii Grigor'ev, arrested in Kostroma province, claimed to be a household serf from Orenburg province and district belonging to one Ivan Vasil'ev. However, reported the Iurevetskii district court, "according to information collected about him it turned out that he does not belong to the abovementioned serf owner, and even that no serf owner Vasil'ev turned up in that district."[59] In another case, Petr Timofeev, arrested in the town of Sergach, Kostroma province, claimed to be a household serf from that region, belonging to one Vikentii Osipov Bogushevskii. In this case, "serf owner Bogushevskii disclaimed ownership of this man."[60]

In other cases, vagrants had tried on multiple identities, with each found to be fictitious. In 1840 the Kiev newspaper reported on two such men. One, arrested in Viatka province, "claimed to be a court peasant [named Ivan

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[54] Ibid. (19 Jan. 1840), 93.

[55] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (27 Jan. 1840): 35–36.

[56] Ibid. (25 July 1842), 233.

[57] The words used varied: *nazyvavshiisia, pokazavshiisia, skazyvaiushchii, pokazal sebia, nazval sebia, imenuiushchiisia.*

[58] Both in "O poimanykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (11 July 1842): 216–18.

[59] Ibid. (15 Jan. 1844), 26.

[60] Ibid. (17 Jan. 1842), 21–22.

Pavlov Vichkov] … and then Ivan Ivanov Zolotukhin, a household serf … but his claims turned out to be false." Another, arrested in Kaluga province, went by two names—Aristarkh Artem'ev and Konstantin Ivanov—and tried on two identities: a household serf belonging to a serf owner based in Maloiaroslavskii district, and then an *odnodvorets* from what he called Kishinev province.[61] Others made similar attempts, like Anton Lazarev, fugitive soldier, who later claimed to be Vasili Sergeev, a serf from Tver province belonging to Anna Vorob'eva.[62] In one case, someone arrested for vagrancy put forward a different gender: Aleksandr, who claimed to be the son of a count, turned out to be Aleksandra dressed in men's clothing.[63]

A few of the notices give us a sense of what went on in the process of trying to identify those arrested for vagrancy. The time from arrest to publication in the newspapers could be quite long. Only a few of the published notices give any real account of dates, but those that do report on arrests that had taken place at least several months and more often a year or more before. The Makarev district court placed a notice in the Kostroma paper (that is, in its home province) in July 1842 about a man arrested in May 1841.[64] The following year they sped up their timeline, publishing a notice in July 1843 about someone arrested in January. This latter account gave more information about the legal process faced by those arrested. Mikhail Danilov Vysokov had been arrested on 13 January and "turned out to be a vagrant." Apparently, that meant that he claimed no specific identity and so there was nothing to investigate. Instead, on 26 March, he was sentenced to twelve strokes with the knout, following which he was to be sent into the military or, should he prove physically incapable of serving, to exile and resettlement in Siberia.[65]

If some claims turned out to be lies, that implies that other claims had been investigated and found to be true. At times a set of notices of vagrants arrested in a single province might include statements that certain claims were false, while letting others pass without such comment, implying that they had *not* turned out to be false.[66] However, if those vagrants' true identities had been discovered and confirmed, presumably by writing to their supposed owners or town or village societies, then why were the notices even published? There was no need to publicize the vagrants if they had been accounted for. Or was there perhaps doubt about the reliability of owners and local societies? After all, would not a serf-owner or a tax-paying society be happy to agree that someone, perhaps especially someone who had already been sent off to

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[61] "O brodiagakh," *Kievskie GV* (5 July 1840): 1084–85.

[62] "O poimannykh brodiagakh," *Kostromskie GV* (20 Jan. 1840): 26–28.

[63] Ibid. (25 July 1842), 231–34.

[64] Ibid. (4 July 1842), 231–34.

[65] Ibid. (30 July 1843), 287–88.

[66] For example, a series of reports from Minsk province, re-reported in the Kostroma newspaper, in ibid. (30 July 1838), 269–70.

Siberia and thus was unlikely to be trouble, belonged to them, in order to settle their documents both favorably to their own interests and also fraudulently? The inclusion by the newspapers of these various statements further destabilized the notion of individual identity, and particularly individual legal identity, as a recognizable and documentable thing.

VERIFYING IDENTITIES

The regular practice of including physical descriptions of individuals was an effort to solve the problem of identity and identification. The descriptions follow a basic outline, with certain characteristics nearly always included and others never mentioned. They are attempts to identify individuals beyond what they said about themselves and perhaps what others said about them. Descriptions of individuals usually include a certain, finite number of references, making them feel more like early biometrics than the more narrative descriptions common to owner-placed advertisements seeking runaway slaves in the United States.[67] These were: age; height; face shape, coloring, and complexion; hair color, sometimes distinguishing between hair "on the head," eyebrows, and facial hair; eye color; the shapes of noses, mouths, and chins; and distinguishing features like scars, moles, and birthmarks. Ears are never mentioned except in cases of scarring or men who wore earrings. In a few cases, reference to general body shape appeared, but height was usually the only indicator of body size. In cases of corpses, and occasionally of other individuals, notices include descriptions of clothing. Very occasionally, they reference abilities of one sort or another, such as the person's literacy or languages they spoke other than Russian. Notices rarely include all of these identification marks, but most provide many of them.[68]

The obvious problem with using this set of characteristics to identify individuals precisely and uniquely was that there was only a limited number of variations within some of them. Height was often the most precisely identified feature; while a few notices listed height as simply "average," "short," or "taller than average," most included specific measurements in *arshiny* and *vershki*. The shortest woman was 2 *arshiny*, or 142 centimeters, or 4 feet 8 inches, the tallest 2 *arshiny* 5 *vershki* (160 centimeters, 5 feet 3 inches). The shortest adult man was also only 2 *arshiny* tall, while the tallest rivaled Peter the Great—2 *arshiny* 12 *vershki* (196 centimeters, 6 feet 5 inches). He was a dramatic outlier, however, and the average male height was 163 centimeters,

[67] See the website "Documenting Runaway Slaves," at http://aquila.usm.edu/drs/ (accessed 25 Aug. 2014). Even the one advertisement placed by a serf-owner trying to recover his fugitive serf adds almost no details about the man, stating simply that he was literate and that he had stolen from his owner upon his flight. "O bezhavshem."
[68] These resemble slightly earlier descriptions in the British press; see Mark S. Dawson, "First Impressions: Newspaper Advertisements and Early Modern English Body Imaging, 1651–1750," *Journal of British Studies* 50, 2 (2011): 277–306.

or 5 feet 4 inches. Faces were either pale or swarthy, and were clear, freckled, pimply, or pock-marked (and occasionally "noticeably pock-marked" or "slightly pock-marked"). Their shape was round, long, thin, or plump. Hair was light blond, blond, dark blond, red, or black. It might be described as curly or cut in a specific way, and for men who imitated Pushkin and wore dramatic side whiskers (*bakenbardy*) that trait was usually noted. Eyes were grey, brown, blue, yellow, or mixtures of these. Noses were wide or snub or long or with a hump, and chins might be round, long, or average. Scars were signs of accidents, or in some cases of prior punishment.

Taken together, these sources of description do describe individuals, but individuals who are at times hard to imagine as such. Nearly half the cases were grey-eyed (not including those with variations on grey eyes). Almost a third were blond, again, simply described as having *rusyi* hair, not including the light- and dark-blond variations; including those variations brings the numbers up to around 80 percent of the cases). About 20 percent of those described were blond and grey-eyed. If we expand to include variations on blond hair and grey eyes, this brings the percentage up to nearly half of the cases. Other features were also hard to classify in unique ways—noses, mouths, and chins were typically labeled as simply "moderate" or "average" or "normal," implying that there was nothing specific about them. All that said, there is a surprising amount of variation in the descriptions overall. So, for example, within the sample of 373 separate descriptions from 1840, none are identical.

Although an overall similarity marks the limits of identification in this period and context, the continued use of such descriptions demonstrates the ways in which biometrics were used as a method of imperial Russian social control and governmentality. This is most apparent in the fact that these kinds of descriptions are included in not only notices of people arrested, which had the advantage of an actual person at hand to describe, but notices seeking people, which were based on memory or existing records. Notices seeking people were in fact less precise than those describing people who had been found. Of found notices, 84 percent included an actual measurement of height, 12 percent included a text description (average, tall), and 3 percent made no mention of height. Lost notices usually also mentioned height (only 7 percent did not), but they were more likely to provide a less precise text description (29 percent).

At the same time, that most lost notices were able to include a specific number (64 percent) is significant because it shows that there were such records of 64 percent of the fugitives. Even after people had disappeared, they left behind descriptions of themselves with the same sometimes vague, but sometimes detailed information. Furthermore, this is true well beyond those who had interacted specifically with state institutions. Escaped prisoners and runaway soldiers were among those advertised for, and it makes sense that

the state institutions that oversaw them would have such statistics. Indeed, in one case, that of the runaway soldier Stepan Osipov, the notice specifically stated that it was not possible to give particulars of his appearance because the Khar'kov authorities who published the notice "had not received his *formuliarnyi spisok*," an official document about his military service that included a personal description.[69]

These soldiers and prisoners were not the only missing people to leave behind detailed descriptions. In fact, authorities were slightly less likely to include a specific height measurement of missing prisoners and soldiers than they were to include such a detail about runaway peasants (serfs and non-serfs) and townspeople. Notices included such detailed information about 82.5 percent of runaway peasants, 75 percent of runaway townspeople, 65 percent of runaway soldiers, and 61 percent of runaway prisoners. Moreover, all of the remaining peasants and townspeople had at least a basic statement of their height, while some soldiers and prisoners did not.

VERIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

These descriptions of those who had run away was possible because of a longer-term practice of using physical descriptions to confirm the alignment of individuals and their legal identities. The 1724 decree that established the practice of using passports to govern mobility also established the use of physical descriptions to try to ensure that those who held documents had the right to them. "As a precaution in case someone else through theft gets [a passport]," the decree stated, every document should describe the height, face, and permanent characteristics of its legal holder.[70] A decree of 1732 reiterated the demand that passports given to peasants and serfs include "beyond their names descri-[ptions of] their age, height, hair and eyes, and other features." The rationale was that this practice would help verify identities and thereby help root out "thieving and fugitive people."[71] By including such descriptions, a later decree explained, "the moment a [lost or stolen] passport comes to a different person, and is inspected by the Police, then it will immediately become apparent that the one who is holding it is a fugitive."[72]

Nor were passports the only documents to record such information; local town and village societies also gathered detailed information about their

[69] "Ob otyskanii begletsov i prestupnikov," *Iaroslavskie GV* (26 Jan. 1840): 38–42.
[70] *PSZ*, vol. 7, no. 4533, section 16.
[71] *PSZ* vol. 8, no. 6210 (4 Oct. 1732). Later decrees that reiterated the need to include such descriptions in passports and other documents include *PSZ* vol. 11, no. 8443 (14 Sept. 1741); and no. 8655 (1 Nov. 1742). This places the introduction of such practices slightly before similar descriptions became widely used in French passports. Vincent Denis, "Individual Identity and Identification in Eighteenth-Century France," in Ilsen About, James Brown, and Gayle Lonergan, eds., *Identification and Registration Practices in Transnational Perspective: People, Papers and Practices* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17–30, 26.
[72] *PSZ* vol. 28, no. 21939 (23 Oct. 1805).

members. Membership books and household registers played a major role in the definition and governance of such societies—an individual did not fully possess a legal identity unless his or her name was written down in such a book. These books were sometimes used as much to identify individuals through basic biometrics as through mere statements of their name and status. One such record was a large-scale "Notebook [*tetrad*] for 1795 for registering in the Moscow merchant society people of various statuses." The volume consists of a list of the names and information about the new merchants. It tells which *sloboda* (a subdivision of the larger Moscow merchant society named after now-archaic suburbs of the town) the new merchants were joining; which status they had left; either what village or town they came from or, in the case of freed serfs, the name and rank of their former owners; and the names of all their accompanying family members. It also includes not only their names and ages, but also detailed physical descriptions of each and every one. Indeed, the first few items take up only a few lines in the large book, while many pages are filled with descriptions of height, hair and eye color, general physical characteristics and distinguishing marks.[73] They are so prominent that they seem to be the primary purpose of the book: not just listing names, but making those names represent real, identifiable individuals.

This volume is just one example of the many ways in which town and village societies used physical descriptions of individuals as part of their control of their membership. Early in the nineteenth century, the Moscow merchant society continued to make collecting physical descriptions part of the process of registering in the society. The *ukases* that finalized the process included much the same information as the earlier "Notebook" had, though in less detail. The 1814 *ukase* for Akulina Panteleevna Burmakina, a peasant widow from Iaroslavl' province, includes the ages, eye and hair colors, and heights of the widow, her two sons and daughter, her two daughters-in-law, and her grandson.[74] Similar records of such characteristics appear throughout the files kept by the society. Melan'ia Zakharovna, the wife of the new merchant Ivan Ivanovich Khludov, was of medium height, with a pale face, grey eyes, blond hair, and pock marks.[75] Domnik Sikhler was described in more detail: "not short," pale face, grey eyes, blond but greying hair, and a shaved beard. His wife, Maria Frantsova, was short, with a pale face, a long nose, grey eyes, grey hair, and "a bit of a humpback."[76]

Similar physical descriptions appeared in all sorts of documents. A printed guide to letter writing for nobles included models of documents to give their

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[73] Tsentralnyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Moskvy (henceforth TsIAM) f. 397, op. 1, d. 121.
[74] TsIAM f. 2, op. 1, d. 87, ll. 1–1ob.
[75] TsIAM f. 2, op. 1, d. 1625, l. 18ob (1824).
[76] TsIAM f. 2, op. 1, d. 1709, ll. 9, 14 (1825).

serfs who wished to get passports, and they included physical descriptions of imaginary people. "Medium height, pale face, black hair, grey eyes, long nose, a mole on his left cheek, twenty-five years old," or "two *arshins*, seven *vershki* tall, pock-marked face, red hair, grey eyes, snub nose, forty years old."[77] When the Moscow townsperson society agreed to free one of its members, the document that proved that freedom included a physical description: Sila Petrov was medium height, with a pale face, straight nose, brown eyes, blond hair and beard.[78] Manumission documents given to freed serfs also often included such descriptions.[79] So, too, did some notices that gave those associated with the military freedom from that status—Aleksei Kuzmin Novoselov, a soldier freed from military service due to poor health in 1784, received a document stating that he "has no literacy, is of good condition, a bachelor, is characterized by a clear complexion, grey eyes, pale blond hair, is two *arshins*, 6⅞ *vershki* tall [about 173 centimeter, or 5 feet 8 inches], he is forty years old."[80]

    These records capture the duty or desire of local societies (and owners) to know their members (or property). Certainly some town societies, like the Moscow societies, noted down physical descriptions in part to show that these were actual people with real relationships with the town. Other societies tried to emphasize the importance of literally seeing their members to know that they were who they said they were. In 1816, the Iaroslavl' town duma argued with various other local authorities about its right to demand that any new townspeople appear in the town to be seen, and only then formally registered: "The town duma, as caretaker of the town, is obligated to see all of its citizens in person and to know their position and condition in consideration of their occupation and character."[81] Later, the Ministry of Internal Affairs admonished local town and village administration to be sure that they knew their local populations, and particularly who among those coming in to the town had the right to be there, and who was a possibly dangerous "fugitive or vagrant."[82] This also hints at something that, at least in part, lay behind these demands for information. Because fugitive serfs were not racially distinct from the larger Russian population, that entire population needed to be described and documented to prove they belonged. Winthrop Jordan notes, almost as an aside, that the

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[77] Ivan Morkov, *Vseobshchii striapchii, ili ruchnoi sudoobriadnik, soderzhashchii v sebe: formy, primery i obriady kak i na kakoi bumage pishutsia, ili sleduet pisat', a potom v kakie imenno iz Prisutstvennykh Mest po ustanovlennomu zakonam poriadku pred'iavliat' i podavat'* (St. Petersburg: Ivan Glazunov, 1815), II, 250–51.

[78] TsIAM f. 32, op. 9, d. 17, l. 4 (1813).

[79] TsIAM f. 32, op. 9, d. 6, l. 2a (1812); d. 9, l. 2 (1805); d. 138, l. 2 (1813); d. 145, l. 2 (1812).

[80] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv f. 491, op. 1, 2, d, l. 3 (1784); the same file contains a notice given to a soldier's wife allowing her to live and work in St. Petersburg, which includes her physical description.

[81] Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Iaroslavskoi Oblasti f. 79, op. 2, d. 149, l. 1.

[82] *Materialy dlia istorii krepostnogo prava v Rossii* (Berlin: Behr, 1872), 41–42.

transition from white indentured labor to black slave labor in the British colonies might not have been intended to be "an answer to the problem of identification"—that is, of recognizing potential fugitives—but that it nonetheless provided such an answer.[83] In the Russian Empire, the problem of identifying fugitives had no such solution. Documents combined with descriptions were an attempt to find one.

CONCLUSION

The descriptions in the provincial newspapers of the 1840s were based on a longer history of registration practices in the Russian Empire, but they also existed in an international context of growing interest in systems of identification, classification, and individualization. A Czech physician had suggested that fingerprints could be categorized in 1823, although the development of fingerprinting as a system of identification would not be fully developed for several decades. Alphonse Bertillon's system of "anthropometrical identification," and even the related discipline of graphology (identifying individuals by their handwriting), likewise lay in the future.[84] Meanwhile, at nearly the same time that the newspapers began to appear, Swedish scientists were using cranial measurements to classify people. Their goals were different, though, in that they sought to identify classes of people, and most importantly to distinguish Swedes from Sami in an effort to define their nation racially (and also, as it happens, to contrast proper Swedes with their enemy the Russians).[85]

These other practices show a crucial difference in the intent of the Russian system of identification. Russian authorities were not interested in creating racial or ethnic or moral categories out of these records (though one can imagine how they might have been used to do so). The local town and village authorities, at least, were using these methods to know their own people, but as individuals, not to create norms or averages or otherwise to define and classify the larger imperial population. In addition, the reach of the system of description was far wider, and not confined to records of criminals, mendicants, immigrants, or imperial others. It was in intent far closer to the totalizing kinds of identification practices of modern biometrics than to the classificatory urge of many near-contemporary figures.[86]

[83] Jordan, *White over Black*, 108.
[84] Simon A. Cole, "Twins, Twain, Galton, and Gilman: Fingerprinting, Individualization, Brotherhood, and Race in Pudd'nhead Wilson," *Configurations* 15, 3 (Fall 2007): 232–33; Jean-Lucien Sanchez, "Alphonse Bertillon et *la méthode anthropométrique*," *Sens-dessous* 1, 10 (2012): 64–74; Roxanne Panchasi, "Graphology and the Science of Individual Identity in Modern France," *Configurations* 4, 1 (1996): 1–31.
[85] Greggor Mattson, "Nation-State Science: Lappology and Sweden's Ethnoracial Purity," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, 2 (2014): 320–50.
[86] On the urge to classify, see Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

The use of descriptions in the *Gubernskie vedomosti* also exposes other elements of the modern world of identification, in particular a shift from gathering information as a way of knowing people and linking them to their place of origin to putting that information into use, in this case to track people. It is an early example of the kind of "function creep"—the idea that data gathered "legitimately" for one purpose may be used for ends far from their initial purpose—that now troubles bioethicists as they grapple with modern biometric technologies.[87] The conflict between these two uses also mirrors other modern issues. One is the idea that biometrics strip away all but a few important features, rendering individuals less complicated and more easily visible by states; another is that they are "also an effective instrument for personal identification and there would be no right, no liberty, without certified personal identities."[88] In other words, biometrics both identify individuals and yet obscure their full individuality. They allow for control by states, but also allow individuals to claim their own identities against states.

The author of a 2008 article on biometrics and identities claimed that "today, we are governed by identity."[89] This claim is built on the idea that contemporary technologies of information and biometrics have created identity's increased importance. But for all that "scientific proofs in the form of biometrics currently rule the political agenda," the editors of a recent collection on the history of identification practices note that there has been a "long history" of "the use of the body itself as the source of a unique identifier … a history mainly of failure and dissimulation … [that can serve] as a window into how political and social frameworks of identity can be both internalized and evaded."[90] This example from imperial Russia is not simply an early example of a system of identification, but a demonstration of multiple ways in which that biometrical system could be mobilized to different ends by both states and individuals. For those holding passports marked with their personal characteristics, identification made those papers real and gave them not only the ability to move about in search of work but also the legal status to turn to authorities.[91] For the imperial state, it individualized its network of *soslovie* institutions. Not only did everyone have a place, but that place was marked out for them uniquely. Or at least this is how it worked in principle. In practice, some people left their official place without documents. Some

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[87] Mordini and Massari, "Body, Biometrics and Identity," 490.
[88] Ibid.," 495.
[89] David Lyon, "Biometrics, Identification and Surveillance," *Bioethics* 22, 9 (2008): 500.
[90] Ilsen About, James R. Brown, and Gayle Lonergan, "Introduction," in Ilsen About, James Brown, and Gayle Lonergan, eds., *Identification and Registration Practices in Transnational Perspective: People, Papers and Practices* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1–13, 1–2.
[91] This reflects an idea that the act of registration can be empowering and not just subjugating. See Simon Szreter and Keith Breckinridge, "Recognition and Registration: The Infrastructure of Personhood in World History," *Proceedings of the British Royal Academy* 182 (2012): 21–24.

were searched for and some were arrested. And others, like many of the individual vagrants described in the newspaper notices, created identities for themselves that were outside of the official regime, at least until that regime caught up with them.

Abstract: In the middle of the nineteenth century, in the Russian Empire, a new set of state-sponsored provincial newspapers began to include notices seeking fugitives and trying to identify arrested vagrants and found dead bodies. The notices were part of a larger effort to match individuals with specific legal identities based in social estate (*soslovie*). In principle, every individual subject of the Russian Empire belonged to a specific owner (in the case of serfs) or to a specific *soslovie* society (in the case of nearly everyone else). The notices were an effort to link people who had left their proper place to their "real" identity. To accomplish this, the notices also made use of a kind of simple biometrics or anthropometrics in order to move beyond an individual's telling of his or her own identity. By listing height, hair and eye color, the shape of nose, mouth, and chin, and other identifying features, the notices were intended to allow for more exact identification. This version of identification developed out of previous practices grounded in the documentary requirements of the tsarist state, and they were slightly ahead of their time in the context of nineteenth-century developments in the sphere of identification practices. They were also distinct from other kinds of anthropometric practices of classification developed at the same time or soon thereafter—where many sought to use physical measurements to classify people by race or by inclination to criminality, the Russian system had no such goals.

Key words: categorization, identification, individualization, documents, serfdom, social estate, Russia, empire