

[Note on the 2009/2014 version. This review appeared in *Russian Linguistics* 21/1, 1997, 89-94. Layout apart, the text is identical to the printed version. The page numbers of the original edition have been added, as in: “linguistic [90] matters”.]

Зализняк, А.А., *Древненовгородский диалект*, Москва, Школа “Языки русской культуры”, 1995, стр. 720.

The title of Zaliznjak’s *Древненовгородский диалект* monumentally understates the scope of the book by conveying the suggestion that it is merely a description of the medieval dialect of Novgorod. It is much more. It is primarily a carefully updated and superbly structured edition of all worthwhile birchbark documents known at present (Novgorod ones and others), surrounded by much useful auxiliary material, among which a synchronic description of the medieval Novgorod dialect happens to be included.

At present over 800 birchbark documents have been brought to the surface (of which some 760 in Novgorod) and it has become difficult for the non-specialist to get and stay oriented amidst the wealth of intricate material, in particular because the nine volumes of the Academy edition (*Новгородские грамоты на бересте*) are all to varying degrees obsolete and a considerable body of secondary literature has arisen in recent decades.

While the texts have become ever more difficult of access, the language of the birchbark letters has started to contribute fundamental new elements to our knowledge of medieval Russian, so that the subject can no longer be ignored on account of its alleged marginality.

Древненовгородский диалект is a resoundingly successful attempt to make the birchbark material accessible without sacrificing standards of rigour. The book is strongly to be recommended to anybody who is interested in the past of the Russian language.

The central part of the book (pp. 211-580), which contains the texts, is structured in such a way as maximally to facilitate access to them:

First, texts that contribute little or no linguistic material have been either left out or relegated to separate sections, where they are merely listed, usually without comment. This leaves extra space for the approximately 400 items which constitute the hard core of birchbark literacy and are treated in depth.

Second, the texts are presented as much as possible in chronological order. It is fascinating to read through the entire corpus in one sitting and see the language evolve from a marginal Common Slavic dialect to a stage already reminiscent of modern Russian.

Third, texts that are mutually related by involving the same persons are presented together.

Fourth, all texts have been provided with excellent translations.

Fifth, all texts have been provided with commentaries, which are constructed according to a fixed (but not rigid) model that enables the reader to find similar informa-

tion always in the same place. The commentaries concentrate on linguistic [90] matters, but discussion of extra-linguistic points is included whenever necessary.

The central part of the book is surrounded by sections containing auxiliary material:

- A brief general introduction (3-8).
- A description of the medieval Novgorod dialect, primarily on the basis of the Novgorod birchbark letters (9-210), but by no means shunning the information provided by other sources. The description is a continuation of the relevant sections of NGB 8 (89-181) and NGB 9 (190-321), to which reference is made all the time.
- Several registers, most important of which is a vocabulary in which all attestations of all attested lexical items are identified (590-687). The vocabulary is an expanded and updated version of the one that was first published in NGB 8 (260-306), with additions and corrections in NGB 9 (322-343).

As was to be expected, Zaliznjak does not limit himself to merely reporting knowledge that was already available elsewhere. *Древненовгородский диалект*, though suitable as an introductory handbook of the more ambitious kind, is also a research monograph in which new results are reported. The remainder of this review is intended to draw attention to some of those results.

The texts.

Of the Novgorod birchbark documents unearthed between 1990 and 1993 (those numbered from 711 through 752) hitherto only a preliminary edition of some twenty selected highlights has been available (Janin and Zaliznjak 1994). *Древненовгородский диалект* not only treats those texts much more adequately, but also adds some twenty others, leaving only four items inaccessible, undoubtedly tiny fragments of negligible importance (712, 716, 738, 751).

New readings and interpretations of known birchbark texts are legion, ranging from minor details in the majority of items to the complete overhaul of such texts as 193, 234, 241, 377, 482, and 496.

The identification of groups of texts written by a single person (called “blocks” in berestology) is advancing apace. The principal novelties are the following: 607 and 562 have turned out to be fragments from a single text that can now be read in its entirety (pp. 228-229); the following blocks are new or have been expanded: 683/685/721 (Domaněg, pp. 268-269); 686/730 (p. 322); 573/606 (p. 371); 649/650 (p. 372); 522/523 (p. 380); 293/295 (p. 388, with reservations); 218A/220/196 and 218B/215 (pp. 401-404); 498/499 (p. 471, with reservations). Conversely, it has turned out that 121 was written by two hands (p. 250).

Historical phonology.

Two new observations are particularly intriguing:

First, it has turned out that a small number of Novgorod birchbark texts reflect PSI [91] sequences of the type **T_{br}T/T_{br}T* as *Tr_бT/Tr_бT*, in which the jers are subsequently

treated as strong, e.g. ДЛЪЖЬНЪ (336), МЛОВИЛА (731). The same reflexes are attested in some modern dialects of the area. More details are promised for the near future (pp. 41-43).

Second, Zaliznjak finds evidence that initial **s* and **k* may have devoiced a subsequent **d* in the sequences **sъd-* and **къd-*, producing such forms as imperative *сѣтѹман* < **sъdum-*, Npl *сторѹви* < **sъdorv-*, Gsg *стежира* < **sъdě-*, *кте* < **къde* or **къdě* (pp. 68-69). Although at first sight such a development would seem to differ rather ominously from the Slavic average, it is at least conceivable against the background of the radically different consonant systems of the Finnic substratum with which North Russian was interacting at an early stage, not to speak of the parallels found here and there in West Slavic, notably in forms like *strowy* attested in Polish and Sorabian and in the progressive devoicing of **v* and **n* in Polish.

Inflexional morphology of the noun and related subjects.

The Nsg msc of the long form of the adjective has now surfaced and turns out to be (as one would have expected) *-ei*, as in *кѹторѹи* (725). In other Novgorod and Pskov sources the ending is attested erratically but convincingly (pp. 102-103).

From the fourteenth century onwards, possessive adjectives in *-ov-* and *-in-* can have *-i-* in those case forms in which ordinary adjectives have *-y-*, e.g. (p. 107), e.g. Isg msc *за лѹкои за стѣпановимъ* (519).

The seemingly awkward GLdu *тнѹ* (replacing earlier **toju*), which has to be read in 644, turns out to have convincing parallels in other sources (p. 113).

As is well known, in the earliest period toponyms could be used in the bare locative in the meaning 'in' and the bare dative in the meaning 'into' or 'to', e.g. *къиѣвъ* 'in Kiev' (675), *къиѣвоу* (424) 'to Kiev'. The details governing the use of this feature and in particular the limitations on its use have now become much clearer. It has turned out that the singular of toponyms with a Nsg in *-a* is always provided with a preposition, probably because it did not permit differentiation of Dsg from Lsg, e.g. *въ роуѣ* (526, eleventh century). The archaic construction disappears around 1200, only to resurface for a fleeting moment in a late fourteenth-century text that was obviously written in bilingual Finnic/Slavic surroundings (2) and testifies to profound structural influence of Finnic on the local variety of Slavic (pp. 141-143).

Loss of gender in the plural.

In the course of time, the morphosyntax of nominal systems approaches closely the one to be observed in the modern language. This includes a clear tendency towards loss of the distinction between the genders in the plural, accompanied by the rise of a distinction between male persons (or just persons or living beings) and others. [92]

The inherited masculine Npl endings (*o*-stem *-i*, *u*-stem *-ove* and *i*-stem *-bje*) tend to be replaced by the corresponding Apl endings (*-ě*, *-y* and *-i* respectively). In this way the identity of masculine and feminine that had been present in the Apl already since Common Slavic times, was extended to the Npl. Use of the Apl endings in the nominative is convincingly attested as early as the twelfth century, but the original Npl ending *-i* remained in active use at least until the fourteenth century (pp. 91-92, 98).

One wonders if the choice between Npl and Apl endings was really free. The (limited) evidence rather appears to indicate that the nominative endings became restricted to nouns denoting persons and, later, animals. Discussion would go beyond the scope of this review, but the material given on pp. 91-92 is quite suggestive, especially if one discards examples from Pskov, leaves aside 717 (which obviously is not written in the Novgorod dialect, e.g. оу манастири with оу instead of въ), and keeps in mind that the gender of дѣти is problematic. By the way, contrary to what is sometimes believed this feature not limited to West Slavic, but attested also in South Slavic (see Vermeer 1984 for a description of such a system).

The distinctiveness of the neuter gender in the plural is compromised from an early stage on by the existence of “collectives” in *-a* that function as plurals of masculine nouns denoting human beings, e.g. ЛИТВА vs. ЛИТВИНЪ. As is well known, such collectives often take the msc plural ending *-i* of the *l*-participle, but *-a* is by no means avoided, e.g. дружина (са) ... пороучила (109) and ЛИТВА вѣстала (590) (p. 165). Since the copula is not expressed in the third person (pp. 160-163), these forms are ambiguous: they can be interpreted as feminine singulars, but also as plurals that are neutral with respect to the distinction between masculine and neuter (because the preterite can take both *-i* and *-a*), all the more so because the presence of attributive adjectives with the ending *-a* or *-aja* can be combined with a plural verb as in вѣють челоуѣ корила погоскаа, кюлолакаа и кюринескаа (248).

Given this background it is hardly surprising that there is evidence for the rise of a plural paradigm that combines a NApI in *-a* with oblique endings of the type *-амь/-ami/-ахъ* (pp. 94-95). Convincing examples of the extension of the *-амь/-ami/-ахъ* endings to *o*-stems appear in the second half of the fourteenth century; it may be no accident that so far the only examples are suffixed nouns denoting persons (pp. 93-94).

The use of pronominal forms.

The distribution of the triplets *ja* vs. *jazь* vs. *azь* ‘I’ can now be seen to conform to the following (partial) regularities: *jazь* is obligatory when followed by *ti* and virtually obligatory in closing formulas beginning with *jazь tobě*. Otherwise *ja* and *jazь* appear to be in free variation, but the proportion of *ja*, which dominates at an early stage, falls off steeply in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As for *azь*, it goes without saying that it is used in such obviously Church Slavonic collocations as |93| *se azь*, but it occurs also, rather surprisingly, at the very beginning of sentences in texts in which a Slavonicism would seem to be out of place, so that Zaliznjak does not exclude “возможности пережиточного сохранения исконного безйотового варианта, соответствовавшего позиции после паузы” (pp. 113-114). In all three attestations found so far one would actually expect a conjunction, in particular *a*; perhaps *azь* is equivalent to **a jazь*; if it is, it may be the outcome of a local contraction and may have nothing to do with the Bulgarian cognate. One is reminded of examples of the type до сени ‘до осени’ and а ное ‘а иное’, which are quite frequent (pp. 57-58).

The use of the clitic and orthotonic pronouns is described very carefully. At the earliest stage the number of clitic forms is considerable. After about 1200 the only clitic pronouns to survive are those of the first and second persons singular: Dsg *mi* and *ti*

and Asg *mja* (and presumably *tja*, which happens not to be attested). The reflexive Asg *sja* (Dsg **si* is not attested at all and may never have existed) develops into an extension of the verbal ending, a fascinating process almost every step of which can be followed on birchbark. The modern forms *menja* and *tebja* appear around the middle of the fourteenth century and start encroaching on *mene* and *tebe* (pp. 149-154, cf. also pp. 114-115).

The verb.

Active participles are not attested in birchbark letters except for the nominatives of the short form, used by and large along the lines of the modern gerund, but agreeing with the subject in gender and number. Isolated examples of loss of agreement with the subject can however be observed in the twelfth century already and the modern stage (complete loss of agreement, resulting in adverb-like forms) had been reached by the middle of the fourteenth century at the latest (pp. 116, 166).

Zaliznjak draws attention to attestations of absence of final *-lʹ* in the msc sg of the preterit, e.g. *взѧ ѡсѣмѣ ‘я взѧл’*. This “*l*-less preterit”, though not frequent, is convincingly attested from the thirteenth century onwards (p. 125).

Although the number of attestations of derived imperfectives is still rather limited, it is not so limited as to hide the fact that derived imperfectives in *-ati* abandoned the ablaut alternation (*prošiti* → *prašati*) at some stage between the twelfth and the fourteenth century (*prošiti* → *prošati*). Given the absence of *akan’e* in Novgorod, this is intriguing. The earliest examples of the modern suffix *-yva-* appear in the first half of the thirteenth century (pp. 199-200).

Syntactic, semantic and lexical matters.

Asyndetic constructions turn out to have a distinct place, in particular in linking nouns denoting persons that belong closely together, e.g. brothers. Zaliznjak draws attention to the fact (very interesting from a stylistic point of view) that such ^[94] asyndetic constructions appear to have been considered unsuitable for use in opening formulas (pp. 172-173).

As is by now well known, main clauses preceded by subsidiary clauses are usually introduced by means of conjunctions. It now turns out that, yet again, the selection of conjunctions is subject to trends that evolve through time. Until the thirteenth century the conjunction *a* is normal; in the beginning of the fourteenth century *i* appears and virtually swamps *a*. Less frequent equivalents are: *da*, *to* (hitherto three examples, all of them early), *ino* (several late examples). Absence of a conjunction is rare, but nevertheless convincingly attested as early as the twelfth century; later on it becomes much more frequent. If a main clause is preceded by a construction featuring a gerund (rather than a finite verb) the selection of a conjunction (or absence of same) follows quite different rules (pp. 173-175).

In the early period, negative pronouns of the type “nothing” are obligatorily followed by *že*, e.g. *ниѣшто же* (109). In the second half of the thirteenth century *že* is dropped (pp. 177-178).

In the course of time heathen names (like *Žiznomirь*) disappear in favour of names of Christian origin (like *Mikula*). In a brilliant discussion Zaliznjak demonstrates convincingly that among the privileged layers of society the process went faster than among the less well to do (pp. 193-198).

Древненовгородский диалект is in some considerable measure a collective effort. Zaliznjak is a member of a devoted team and among the results and new observations he reports quite a few are explicitly credited to other investigators, such as (in alphabetical order and without pretending to be complete): G.A. Fedonina, P.G. Gajdukov, A.A. Gippius, V.L. Janin, O.A. Knjazevskaja, V.I. Povetkin, E.A. Rybina, M.N. Ševelva.

Zaliznjak's *Древненовгородский диалект* now enables anybody to become a berestologist within a matter of weeks. A.D. Košelev is to be congratulated on producing a beautiful book.

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