

Notes on medieval Novgorod sociolinguistics

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[Note on the 2009 version. This article appeared in *Russian Linguistics* 21/1, 1997, 23-47. Apart from a single addition to a footnote (marked as such) the present version is identical to the printed text. In one case the cyrillic glyph used in the printed article proved to be absent from the available fonts and had to be replaced with a standard shape (it is the <у> of целую та, original p. 35). Neither point affects the argument in any way. In addition the endnotes (pp. 44-46) have been changed to footnotes and the page numbers of the original edition have been added, as in the following example: “was |25| standardized”, meaning that “was” is the last word on p. 24 and “standardized” the first on p. 25.]

1. Introduction

Owing to the growing amount of text on birchbark and the increasing sophistication of the synchronic study of the language of the Novgorod birchbark documents it is becoming possible for the first time to discuss the sociolinguistic situation of a medieval Russian town. Andrej Zaliznjak's marvellous new book on the medieval dialect of Novgorod (1995) provides an opportunity for such a discussion because it summarizes coherently and authoritatively what is now known about the subject.¹

2.1 Outline of Zaliznjak's conception

Zaliznjak discusses the linguistic situation in and around medieval Novgorod in terms of the following “идиомы” (pp. 3-5)²:

- (1) Church Slavonic.
- (2) “Standard Old Russian”, described as “некоторая образцовая форма древнерусского языка, применявшаяся (хотя бы в некоторых ситуациях) на всей территории древней Руси”. In Novgorod, “Standard Old Russian” was used primarily “при составлении официальных документов”.
- (3) “Древнепсковский диалект”, which is “вероятно” also the dialect of portions “западных новгородских пятин – Шелонской и Водской”.
- (4) The totality of “East Novgorod dialects”, subdivided into: (a) the dialects “коренных новгородских земель к северо-востоку и к востоку от Новгорода”, and (b) the area “позднейшей новгородской колонизации на северо-востоке”.
- (5) The dialect spoken in and around the town of Novgorod. Basically this is a variety of (3), with occasional features that coincide with the corresponding features of type (4a) and are interpreted as the outcome of influence of (4a) on a dialect that

¹ I am indebted to Andrej Anatol'evič Zaliznjak for his willingness to exchange letters about issues connected with the medieval Novgorod dialect, to Jan Ivar Bjørnflaten for lively discussions about the connections between isoglosses, tribes, and длинные курганы, and to Henrik Birnbaum and Jos Schaeken for comments on early versions of this article.

² Throughout the article unspecified page references are to Zaliznjak (1995).

originally was indistinguishable from (3). The Novgorod dialect “приобрел также функцию койне, т.е. идиома наддиалектного характера, который мог в той или иной мере использоваться на всей территории древненовгородского государства, особенно в городах.” |24|

2.2 Discussion

Although Zaliznjak’s conception represents a considerable advance on earlier views, it contains conspicuous flaws: it is in some respects highly speculative; it reflects a Stammbaum view of linguistic differentiation; it is cast in a terminology that suggests the presence of much more solid knowledge than is actually available and it contains misleading ambiguities.

Among the positive elements I would like to single out first the explicit attention for sociolinguistic processes among different varieties of Russian.

Equally important is the awareness of the previous existence of two distinct groups of dialects, both of which were continued in medieval times by dialects spoken in or near Novgorod:

- Marginal northwestern dialects continued by (3) and (5) and characterized by the absence of the effects of the Second Palatalization and other features that will be taken up below (section 3.2-3).
- Non-marginal dialects spoken everywhere else, in particular (2) and (4). These were closer to the Slavic average than the northwestern dialects by having carried through the Second Palatalization.

In the sequel these two groups will be referred to as “(P)” and “(Q)” respectively. Since the Second Palatalization took place in the Common Slavic period, at least one of the isoglosses delimiting (P) from (Q) arose in Common Slavic times. Hence there never was a homogeneous Common East Slavic language in the traditional sense of a unitary dialect that spawned the attested linguistic variety by processes of differentiation (pp. 45-46, 135). Given the present state of the evidence this conclusion is, I think, inescapable.

Turning now to elements of Zaliznjak’s conception which I find more difficult to accept, I would like to draw attention to the following points:

- (a) The classification constitutes a closed system consisting of a fixed number of allegedly distinct units. Considering the continuous nature of most dialectological and sociolinguistic formations and viewed against the background of the fragmentary evidence this is unrealistically rigid and bound to give rise to both artificial problems and spurious certainties. Even the facts available at present cannot be fitted in without strain.
- (b) The classification does not express directly the distinction between (P) and (Q). In view of the central place of this distinction in Zaliznjak’s conception this is awkward and confusing.
- (c) The concept of “Standard Old Russian” suggests all kinds of phenomena that are unlikely to have existed in medieval Russia, such as conscious standardization of the vernacular, or formal teaching in supra-dialectal varieties of Russian. The term is obviously anachronistic: what medieval vernacular language of Europe was |25|

standardized to such a degree that the modern concept of standard language was applicable?

- (d) The term “Standard Old Russian”, besides referring to an “образцовая форма древнерусского языка”, often denotes quite a different phenomenon, as in “комплекс фонетических особенностей, отличающих севернокривичский диалект, в частности, от стандартного древнерусского” (p. 45, cf. also pp. 130, 135). Here the term refers to all spoken dialects that do not continue (P). Such ambiguity is bound to confuse the issues.
- (e) In other cases, too, heterogeneous phenomena are subsumed under single headings. Unit (5) comprises both the Novgorod town dialect and the alleged Novgorod *koinē*. As a matter of fact the concept of ‘Novgorod *koinē*’ is used freely as a mere synonym of ‘Novgorod town dialect’ (e.g. p. 127). This is misleading, because the very point of the concept of *koinē* consists in the possibility to differentiate between a specific local dialect on the one hand, say the town dialects of Athens or Novgorod, and the supraregional forms of speech primarily (but never completely) reflecting those dialects on the other, e.g. the Attic *koinē* and its medieval Novgorod counterpart (to the extent that the latter existed).
- (f) Several of the complexes of dialects that play a role in Zaliznjak’s conception are referred to by means of the names of early medieval tribal formations. Types (3) and (5) are together referred to as “the dialect(s) of the (Pskov or northern) Kriviči” whereas (4a) is referred to as the dialects of the “Il’menskie Slověne”. This terminology rests on a three-way identification of certain linguistic facts (the distinction between (P) and (Q)) with certain historically attested tribal formations (the “Kriviči” and “Slověne” referred to by medieval sources) and certain archeological facts (the “культура длинных курганов” and the “культура сопок” of Russian archeology).³ In the present state of our knowledge these identifications are altogether too speculative to merit being communicated to the reader in a way suggesting that they represent established knowledge. Major problems caused by them have not been faced. To give an example, the identifications produce the wrong dialects in the wrong places: if the Kriviči and the Slověne really spoke dialects of (P) and (Q) respectively, we would expect descendants of (P) in Smolensk (the center of Kriviči territory according to the *Повесть временных лет*) and (Q) in Novgorod, which the sources never connect with the Kriviči and which is explicitly reported to have been founded by Slověne. Since what we find is exactly the reverse, spectacular processes of prehistoric dialect shift must be postulated for both Novgorod (from (Q) to (P)) and Smolensk (from (P) to (Q)) only to maintain the identifications.⁴ To add to the confusion, the term Kriviči is used in an ambiguous way that prevents the reader from perceiving what is actually going on. Whereas sometimes it refers primarily to the speakers of (P) and the carriers of the early phase of the “культура длинных курганов” (linked primarily with Pskov and secondarily with the Novgorod area), it can also refer to [26] the late phase of

³ On the archeological aspects of the identifications see Sedov (1982, 158-195; 1994).

⁴ See also Vermeer (1995, 114-116). Zaliznjak now seems to be aware that there is a problem (p. 135), but gives no indication about how it is going to be solved.

the “культура длинных курганов” and the historically attested Kriviči of the *Повесть временных лет* (who centered on Smolensk, where (P) has never been spoken). For further criticism of this I refer to Vermeer (forthc. 1).

2.3 Three basic linguistic continua

Stripped down to essentials, Zaliznjak’s conception distinguishes three sets of linguistic formations we can reasonably assume to have been distinct at some stage:

- (P) The set of marginal northwestern dialects which do not show the effects of the Second Palatalization. These are Zaliznjak’s (3) and (5).
- (Q) The set of dialects that underwent the Second Palatalization. These are (2) and (4) and genetically related formations not covered by (2) and (4) and sometimes referred to as “Standard Old Russian” in the second of its two meanings.
- (R) Church Slavonic. This is (1).

In my view, (P) and (Q) should be viewed as continua, within which internal variation is to be expected as a matter of principle, unless one or another of them should unexpectedly turn out to have been homogeneous.

3.1 The problem of the rise of (P)

Two facts that are independently known about (P) can be invoked to explain its rise. First, it is geographically marginal. Second, it is attested in an area where a large part of the pre-Slavic population spoke Finnic. Accordingly the substratum underlying (P) differed markedly from the ones (if any) underlying (Q).

However, Zaliznjak is convinced that all that is not sufficient and that an additional factor must have been at work to differentiate (P) from (Q): for a time the Slavic dialects spoken in the northwest must have been cut off physically from other varieties of Slavic. In this, he basically follows the archeologist V.V. Sedov, who holds that in the Pskov-Novgorod area (to use an anachronistic term) a Slavic-speaking community arose at a relatively early stage (fifth to seventh century, Sedov 1994, 9) as a consequence of interaction between Slavic immigrants and the local non-Slavic populations. For a time subsequent to the arrival of speakers of Slavic there was no geographical continuity between the Pskov-Novgorod Slavs and their southern relations.

In my view, it has not been demonstrated that the properties of (P) necessarily presuppose a lengthy period of isolation and by that token independently support Sedov’s conception, which, consequently, rests only on archeological evidence. This point needs some discussion.

So far, the status of (P) vs. (Q) has been evaluated primarily on the basis of lists [27] of distinguishing features. Those lists are impressive and suggest that (P) and (Q) are separated by a yawning chasm. That impression is however premature because the status of the features has not been analysed: are they innovations or archaisms? are they mutually independent? what sequence of events (linguistic or otherwise) has given rise to them?

3.2 Distinguishing features of (P) attested in early textual material

The most recent list of features delimiting (P) from (Q) is Zaliznjak's (pp. 36-44). Two types can be distinguished: those that are convincingly attested in early textual material and those that have so far been found only (or nearly so) in spoken dialects held to continue (P). The former are:

- (a) Absence of the effects of the Second Palatalization (pp. 37-38).
- (b) Retention of stem-final *x in *vx- 'all', where the remainder of Slavic shows the effects of the Third or Progressive Palatalization (pp. 38-39).
- (c) Rise of the *o*-stem Nsg in *-e* (pp. 82-87, 102, 108).
- (d) Replacement of the "hard" ending *-y with the corresponding "soft" ending *-ě in the \bar{a} -stem Gsg (p. 80), the \bar{a} -stem NApl (pp. 81-82), and the *o*-stem Apl (p. 92).
- (e) Replacement of "hard" endings by their "soft" counterparts in several other instances: the plural and dual of the imperative (p. 122), the Nsg msc of the present active participle (pp. 122-123), pronominal endings, e.g. тнхъ instead of *тѣхъ (pp. 111-112).
- (f) Elimination of final *-tь* (or *-tъ*) in all third person singular and plural endings in which it was inherited (pp. 109-121). Zaliznjak has shown that in athematic verbs final *-tъ* appears to be optional (pp. 120-121). I think it likely that the same may turn out to hold for derived imperfective compounds with *-aje-* presents. Four Novgorod birchbark letters combine absence of final *-tъ* in a non-derived verb with its presence in a derived imperfective compound:
 - 247 (A): поклѣпаєть (identification not completely certain) vs. дѣє.
 - 61/68 (D): восопрашеєть < vosprašeetъ > vs. будь < bude >.
 - 97 (F): продають vs. бѣє.
 - 307 (G): переписывають < perepisyvajutъ > vs. бѣю (2x).⁵

These four examples are suggestive because the converse distribution is not attested at all. As a matter of fact, there are only one or two attestations of a third person of the present tense of derived imperfective compounds in which final *-tь* (or *-tъ*) is absent (636 and perhaps 422).

- (g) Presence of the reflex *-kl-/-gl-* < PSI **-tl-/-dl-*, contrasting with *-l-* in (Q). Within (P) both reflexes are attested from early times on. As is well known, the former is amply attested in Pskov. The Novgorod evidence, however, is [28] controversial. Zaliznjak states: "В др.-новг. койне сосуществовали оба типа рефлексов" (p. 40). By invoking the concept of *koinē* the question as to which reflex was the one native to Novgorod is avoided. If *-kl-/-gl-* were a regular feature of the Novgorod town dialect one would expect attestations in one or more of the following texts, all of which use the local Nsg in *-e*:
 - 663 (C): ралл (not **ралаал), alongside the Nsg in *-e* (3x) and the Gsg in *-ě* (2x).

⁵ The capitals (A) through (G) denote the periods distinguished by Zaliznjak (see below, section 4.3). Pointed brackets are used to transcribe forms that look unusual owing to the orthographic conventions of birchbark Russian or to straightforward mistakes of the persons who wrote the texts.

- 510 (D): ρозвьѡли (not **ρозвьѡгли) <rozveli>, alongside the Nsg in *-e* (3x) and the NApl in *-ě* (1x).
- 19+⁶ (G): мѡла (not **мѡгла) <myla>, alongside numerous examples of the Nsg in *-e* and other local features, e.g. the Gsg in *-ě* (1x) and absence of final *-ть* (3x); on the non-local *-s-* in *все* see below, section 4.8.

So far, *-kl-/-gl-* has been identified tentatively in a single late Novgorod birchbark letter: 25 (G): вѡр[лѡсе] ‘вѡлсѡ’. Since the text is damaged, the relevant form cannot be interpreted with certainty. More importantly, this single attestation does not suffice to prove that the Novgorod town dialect had *-kl-/-gl-*. Toponyms show that rural dialects with *-kl-/-gl-* were widespread among descendants of (P) and it is quite conceivable that in birchbark letter 25 such a dialect is reflected.⁷

3.3 Distinguishing features of (P) attested in modern spoken dialects

In addition to textual evidence, evidence from spoken dialects has also been adduced to provide distinguishing features of (P). In my view, such evidence is perfectly admissible as long as there are valid reasons for believing that it does not reflect secondary or otherwise recent developments.

- (h) (P) has been argued by Sergej Nikolaev (1988, 133-137) to have had specific reflexes of PSI **tj/dj*. Some dialects appear to reflect *tj/dj* as *k* and *g* before back vowels and Nikolaev assumes that **tj* and **dj*, rather than merging with **č* and **ž*, first yielded **k'* and **g'*, which were subsequently depalatalized by following back vowels. There is a chance that one of the reflexes surmised by Nikolaev is attested indirectly in birchbark letter 717, in which *ноу҃҃҃҃҃* <nugъně> appears to be used in the meaning attested elsewhere for *nužъně*, suggesting the existence of **nug'a* <**nudja* ‘nuža’. Apart from this unique instance there is as yet no textual evidence for reflexes of the type **tj/dj* > **k'/g'* (> **k/g*) and although the modern dialectal facts are suggestive, weighty arguments against Nikolaev’s interpretation have been adduced by Kryš'ko (1994a, 32-42) and Straxov (1994, 253-268, 278-287); in view of this, Nikolaev’s hypothesis cannot at present be regarded as more than an interesting idea.⁸

⁶ The addition of “+” to the number of a birchbark letter shows that the set of texts written by the same person (“block”) is intended, in this case not only 19, but also 122 and 129.

⁷ For the same reason the 1412 charter (see pp. 573-578) cannot compensate for the virtual absence of *-kl-/-gl-* from Novgorod birchbark letters.

By the way, the most natural explanation of the attested distribution regards the western reflexes *-kl-* and *-gl-* as an early innovation caused by the Baltic substratum; in the east, where Baltic was absent, the original sequences were retained until they were simplified (> *-l-*) jointly with (Q). The view that at an early stage the western reflexes were found in all of (P) and that they were eliminated subsequently through piece-meal importation of the reflexes found in (Q) ultimately represents an artifact of the Stammbaum view of dialectal differentiation.

⁸ Unfortunately Straxov’s criticism is couched in a polemical tone calculated to hurt his opponents personally and to damage their reputations; what is even worse, his text contains [45] political slurs that are unacceptable in a scholarly publication. [In hindsight I realize I should have been more restrained in my criticism here and I’m downright ashamed for using the word “unacceptable”. Who made me the pope? Addition 2009, WV.]

- (i) There is evidence that in the northwest the reflex of PSl. *ě has retained its value as a low front vowel [ä] and was never raised the way it was elsewhere.⁹ [29] According to Zaliznjak, “в др.-новг. койне, по-видимому, существовали оба типа рефлексов” (p. 44). No evidence is given and as in the case of the reflex of *-tl-/-dl- the concept of *koinē* is used to avoid the important question as to which reflex was the one found in the Novgorod town dialect.¹⁰
- (j) Nikolaev (1989, 189-190, 198-219) has adduced several accentual phenomena he considers characteristic of (P). Since he merely enumerates them and fails to explain why they cannot have arisen later, they cannot (or not yet) be regarded as established features of (P).

3.4 Evaluation

Elsewhere I have tried to reconstruct the mechanisms responsible for the rise of the properties of (P) that were enumerated as (a) through (e) (Vermeer 1986, 1991, 1994, 1996). The reconstruction, which as far as I know is the only one that has been proposed so far, has interesting consequences for our understanding of the degree of separateness of (P):

First, the absence of the effects of the Second Palatalization and the retention of unpalatalized *x in *vьx- turn out to reflect a single phonological development. Hence (a) and (b) should not be regarded as originally distinct isoglosses.

Second, the development responsible for (a) and (b) consisted merely in the delay of the monophthongization of diphthongs until after the later Common Slavic wave of palatalization had taken place. Considering the properties of the substratum language, the delay was a natural thing to happen. The reconstruction implies that both the monophthongization and the palatalization reached (P) and it is wrong to state that the palatalization just “failed to reach” the Novgorod-Pskov area, which, if true, would have provided support for the hypothesis of geographical isolation.¹¹

Third, most of the morphological replacements that are so characteristic of (P) presuppose a phonological system that permitted sequences of velars and front vowels. (P) had such sequences, but in (Q) the Second Palatalization had eliminated them. It follows that the morphological substitutions that took place in (P) could not penetrate into (Q) for internal reasons and that it is superfluous to assume that the effect was produced by geographical isolation.

It turns out that the features enumerated as (a) through (e) reflect a single isogloss, which moreover arose as a consequence of the same Common Slavic developments that also affected (Q).

⁹ As is well known, two marginal areas of Slavic (Lechitic and Bulgarian/Macedonian) have retained the archaic value and it would not at all be surprising to find a similar archaism in other marginal dialect areas, such as (P). By the way, the assumption that retention of a low reflex of PSl. *ě was also characteristic of the northern and western dialects of Slovene has proved untenable (Vermeer 1982, 99-101).

¹⁰ Cf. Krys'ko (1994b, 19) for some further criticism of Zaliznjak's approach to this point.

¹¹ The idea has been criticized by Živov (1988, 148n), Lunt (1989, 38, 41, 43, 44, 46, 54), Birnbaum (1991, 201-203) and implicitly by Bjørnflaten (1995, 45-48). In my view all of this is misguided (most of it rests on misunderstandings) and I intend to return to the point elsewhere.

As for (f), the ample parallels elsewhere in Slavic show that it is an unspecific innovation, which provides poor evidence for the assumption that a lengthy period of geographical isolation is necessary to explain the rise of (P). The other features are even less impressive: for (g), the available evidence indicates that it was present only in part of (P) and hence should not be regarded as a feature delimiting (P) |30| from (Q); on (h) the jury is still out; (i) is an archaism which, moreover, has not been adequately substantiated; the isoglosses making up (j) have not yet been shown to be old.

Given the present state of the evidence, the isoglosses delimiting (P) from (Q) do not necessitate the assumption of a lengthy period of geographical isolation.

3.5 East Slavic innovations linking (P) and (Q)

There is another side to the matter. Zaliznjak rightly points out that (P) and (Q) have jointly undergone numerous innovations, e.g. the rise of the type *ozero/odin*, **TelT* and **TьlT* > **TolT* and **TьlT*, the development of word-initial **orT*, **olT*, the rise of *-ě* from a certain type of nasal vowel in endings, **o* > *u* and **ę* > **ä* (cf. p. 34).

Obviously, any hypothesis that assumes a substantial period of geographical isolation during the very period when some or all of these innovations were taking place should face the problem as to how these common features arose. To the extent that that has not yet been done, we have to conclude that the assumption that (P) was isolated for a time from the main body of Slavic is not only superfluous but also premature.

4. Medieval Novgorod sociolinguistics as reflected on birchbark

We now turn to the problem of the relationship between local (dialectal) and non-local (standard, literary) elements in the language of birchbark texts written in Novgorod.

In Zaliznjak's conception texts are either written in dialect or "oriented towards Standard Old Russian". Numerous texts, however, contain both local and non-local elements and Zaliznjak's conception implies that they have to be regarded basically as failures: as texts that were intended to be "oriented towards Standard Old Russian", but did not make it. Although this is possible, I find it unattractive, because it does not explain the regularities that can be observed in the actual use of non-local elements.

4.1 The Novgorod town dialect: general properties

If the earliest Novgorod material available at present is representative, the Novgorod town dialect was a descendant of (P) displaying in addition to the common characteristics enumerated in section 3.2 the following local features: *-l* < **-tl-/-dl-*, "второе полногласие", absence of "шоканье", generalization of the "hard" *ā*-stem DLsg ending **-ě* to the "soft" paradigm. These features are attested |31| in texts of all periods and it is likely that with respect to them the spoken town dialect was basically stable throughout the period between the earliest and the latest texts (mid-eleventh to mid-fifteenth century).

This does not mean the linguistic situation was static. During the same centuries the dialect took part in such more general East Slavic innovations as the elimination

of the jers (pp. 47-54), the reduction of word-final unstressed *-i* (pp. 54-55), the loss of the dual (pp. 77-78), the introduction of the masculine Apl endings into the nominative under certain conditions (pp. 91-92, 98, see also Vermeer *forthc.* 2), the gradual disappearance of the clitic personal pronouns (pp. 149-151) and several others.

4.2 Mixed features in Novgorod birchbark texts

The texts testify to the gradual introduction of features of non-local origin into contexts that clearly display evidence of local Novgorod colouring. Such texts tend to use, e.g., the Nsg in *-ь* alongside such Novgorod regionalisms as the Gsg in *-ě* or the stem form *vx-*. Among Zaliznjak's most important contributions to our understanding of medieval Novgorod sociolinguistics is the demonstration that in some cases the distribution of local and non-local features in Novgorod texts had stylistic implications:

- The familiar Varlaam charter (written not long before or after 1200) consists of two sections, the first of which enumerates pieces of land that are to be transferred to the beneficiary of the deed; it is written in dialect; the second section calls down evil on those who might want to remove those pieces of land from the jurisdiction of the beneficiary and contains such non-local features as the Nsg in *-ь*, the stem form *vs-* and several Church Slavonic forms, see further pp. 374-377.
- The biblical story about “Abram” being given the name of “Abraham” (Genesis 17:5) is attested in religious texts of Novgorod origin in such a way that the name of *аврамѣ* (with the local ending *-e*) was replaced with *аврамъ* (with the non-local ending *-ь*), see further p. 84.

In these two examples the non-local features can be explained as intrusions from Church Slavonic motivated by the religious nature of the texts. However, this explanation is unattractive in the case of birchbark letter 724 (C), which is devoted to a secular subject and contains no intrusions from Church Slavonic. Zaliznjak has shown convincingly that the main text of the letter, which is written in *книжный* orthography with only a sprinkling of *бытовые* elements, avoids local features altogether, whereas the postscript, which is written in an orthography rich in *бытовые* elements, readily admits Novgorod regionalisms. In other words: *книжный* orthography implies a preference for non-local features.

In my view a similar example is provided by birchbark letter 142 (E), in which [32] Esif selects the local endings *-e* and *-ě* in the main text of the letter (*самѣ*, Gsg *маркъ* <markě>), but the non-local endings *-ь* and Apl *-y* in the words he tells Onfim to pronounce in a formal setting (*докончаль*, Apl *наклады*).

These two texts appear to show an awareness of a stylistic difference between Novgorod regionalisms and non-local forms that cannot very well be explained as intrusions from Church Slavonic.

Zaliznjak has shown that in the texts, different non-local features are treated differently. To give an example, the percentage of texts with the local Nsg ending *-e* diminishes with the passage of time from 80% to 58% (p. 83), whereas texts with forms that show the effects of the Second Palatalization in stem-final position constitute a negligible minority in all periods (p. 38). One wonders what was going on here and in

the sections that follow I would like to compare in some detail the distribution and clustering of three features.

4.3 The corpus

Not all birchbark texts found in Novgorod are relevant. In principle, two types of texts have to be excluded from consideration:

First, texts in Church Slavonic. These can easily be isolated and will be disregarded in the sequel.¹²

Second, texts not written by carriers of the Novgorod dialect. Ideally, all letters found in Novgorod but written by speakers of other dialects should be eliminated from a discussion about the linguistic situation in Novgorod. Unfortunately, however, apart from a single clear case (246), it is virtually impossible to distinguish in a principled way between texts written by speakers of dialects reflecting (Q) (e.g. 109?) and texts in which speakers of the Novgorod dialect have successfully managed to avoid all local features (e.g. 9?). For this reason even texts that can be argued plausibly to have been written by carriers of other dialects have not been excluded in advance from the basic material.

It has become traditional to treat birchbark texts found in Staraja Russa as if they were Novgorod texts because the dialect they reflect does not differ from the one written in Novgorod. However, since use of non-local features has not yet been attested in Staraja Russa and since it is conceivable that the sociolinguistic situation obtaining there differed from the one found in the large urban centre of Novgorod the texts found in Staraja Russa will not be taken into account.

The presentation of the evidence as carried through in sections 4.4-8 is based on the texts treated in Zaliznjak (1995); the minor fragments not included there have not been taken into account. With negligible exceptions Zaliznjak's interpretation of individual forms has been adopted. The material is divided into the seven chronological groups Zaliznjak adheres to, but for practical reasons his indications in the Cyrillic alphabet have been replaced by indications in the Latin alphabet (see Table 1). 33

Table 1. Periodization of birchbark texts

<i>Zaliznjak</i>	<i>Period (in Zaliznjak's words)</i>	<i>This article</i>
Раздел А	XI – 1 четв. XII в.	A
Подраздел Б I	ок. 1125 – ок. 1160 г.	B
Подраздел Б II	ок. 1160 – ок. 1220 г.	C
Раздел В	20-е – 90-е гг. XIII в.	D
Подраздел Г I	ок. 1300 – ок. 1360 г.	E
Подраздел Г II	ок. 1360 – ок. 1400 г.	F
Раздел Д	XV в.	G

¹² The texts are enumerated by Zaliznjak as the basis for his “Словоуказатель к берестяным грамотам с церковнославянским текстом” (pp. 684-687; perhaps 203 should have been added). I have also disregarded the lists of names loosely connected with the activities of Olisej Grečin, even if they contain local features: 504, 506, 522+, 541, 542, 544, 545, 551, 553, 554, 555, 557, 595 (cf. pp. 380-381).

It goes without saying that the chronological indications are approximate.

4.4 Local *-e* versus non-local *-ъ*

In this section we shall be looking at the Nsg endings *-e* and *-ъ*. Although much of this is available in one way or another in Zaliznjak's discussions of the same material (НГБ 8, 129-134, НГБ 9, 206-211), it is inevitable to cover part of the same ground again: first, in Zaliznjak's most recent treatment the facts of the individual texts are not explicitly related to his statistics; second, comments on individual texts will be necessary and mean something only when viewed against the background provided by the other texts; third, an accurate picture of the msc Nsg is necessary as a starting-point for a comparison with other features.

The following instances of Nsg (or presumed Nsg) in *-ъ* are not relevant and have not been taken into account:

- Attestations of *u*-stems, e.g. *synъ, polъ, bobrъ, solodъ* (see p. 95).
- Religious words, in particular *bogъ*.
- Words used in introductory formulas, e.g. *poklonъ, prikazъ* (see p. 83).
- The form *bilъ* in the meaning 'requested', with *čelomъ* added (as in 303 and 309) or implied (as in 471), cf. p. 557.

Similarly the very rare attestations (real or presumed) of *-e* after stems ending in a "soft" consonant (389, 417, 496, 162) have not been taken into consideration (on this see pp. 85-86 with references).

A (1040-1125)

<i>-e</i> (7):	247, 607+, 238, 736A, 644, 424, 119.
<i>-ъ</i> (3):	109, 525, 336.
<i>-e/-ъ</i> (3):	752, 736B, 605.

B (1125-1160)

<i>-e</i> (7):	633, 421, 632, 683+, 665, 384, 679. 34
<i>-ъ</i> (2):	675, 710+.
<i>-e/-ъ</i> (0):	–.

C (1160-1220)

<i>-e</i> (29):	723, 105, 509, 235, 748, 165, 225, 231, 155, 627, 638+ ¹³ , 682, 731, 115+, 163, 663, 603, 581, 725, 705, 601, 660, 222, 7, 430, 454, 571, 688, 729.
<i>-ъ</i> (8):	9, 113, 732, 502, 548, 531, 296, 546.
<i>-e/-ъ</i> (3):	724, 550, 439.

¹³ It has turned out recently that the person called Serafijan, who wrote 643 and 666, also wrote 638, 672, 681, and 700 (Zaliznjak, letter of February 11, 1996). This is a major discovery, which casts a new light on several important texts, notably 638.

D (1220-1300)

- e (16): 112, 510, 600, 200, 636+, 706+, 61+, 351, 141, 483, 148, 411, 409+, 407, 582, 197.
 -ѣ (12): 420, 615, 213, 218A+, 211, 198, 377, 482, 69, 72, 378, 708.
 -e/-ѣ (1): 215+.

E (1300-1360)

- e (15): 67, 53, 289, 288, 415, 580, 99, 102, 32, 698+, 319, 343, 368, 499, 570.
 -ѣ (14): 195, 138, 140, 144, 389, 500, 354+, 98+, 101, 345, 445, 54, 55, 393.
 -e/-ѣ (3): 344, 142, 417.

F (1360-1400)

- e (19): 610, 528, 536, 534, 532, 253+, 272, 370, 178, 167, 260, 30, 50, 136, 131, 248+, 20, 416, 701.
 -ѣ (12): 578, 477, 697, 446, 261+, 318, 283, 282, 314, 749, 4, 618.
 -e/-ѣ (4): 689, 362, 130+, 366.

G (1400-1460)

- e (15): 169, 521, 43, 19+, 27, 11, 359, 471, 413, 310, 154, 243, 466, 12, 244.
 -ѣ (13): 519+, 14, 3, 311, 157, 301, 313, 494+, 352, 22, 127, 312, 373.
 -e/-ѣ (7): 25, 23, 300, 161, 307, 540, 496.

We see that roughly speaking until the beginning of the thirteenth century attestations of -ѣ constitute a small minority; in the course of the thirteenth century the ending gains ground and at later stages local -e and non-local -ѣ are almost, but not quite, evenly matched (cf. p. 83).

If one takes a critical look at the texts involved, the predominance of -e in the [35] early period turns out to be even more spectacular. Of the six items that have -ѣ (solely or alongside -e) in period (A), 109 does not display a single dialectal feature and is generally regarded as reflecting a dialect continuing (Q); 605 was written by a monk; 752 contains Slavonicisms, which make it likely that it was written by a nun; 525 is a small fragment that cannot be interpreted; 336 displays a unique combination of features, which may reflect either incompetence or a rural dialect continuing an aberrant variety of (Q); this leaves 736B as the only early letter in which the ending -ѣ is attested against a background of Novgorod regionalisms and which shows no evidence of having been written by either a cleric or a person originally not from Novgorod.¹⁴

Period (B) yields two items with -ѣ. In 675, travel to or from Kiev, Velikie Luki and Suzdal' is implied and the letter may not have been written by an inhabitant of Nov-

¹⁴ Absence of direct evidence does not mean that a given text may not have been written by a cleric after all. Without the evidence of 710 it is unlikely that anybody would have suspected a cleric as the writer of 664; similarly, the recent extension of the Serafijan block (see the previous note) has shown that 638, which superficially looks like a regular business letter, was written by a person who was probably a cleric, judging by his name as well as by the subject of 681.

gorod at all.¹⁵ The person who wrote 710+ is on record as having written a letter on behalf of somebody else (typically a cleric's task) and uses the formula "и целую тѣ", which also points to a cleric.¹⁶

Period (C) is different. True, here too several texts can be discounted: 9 uses bookish orthography and may have been written by a cleric on behalf of Gostjata; 546 is a label featuring the name of a person known to have been a cleric; 502, which talks about a person from Polock coming to Novgorod, is not written in the Novgorod dialect; 113, 732 and 296 are fragments that show no positive evidence of having been written by carriers of the Novgorod dialect; in 550 the only attestation of the ending -ѣ occurs in a name.¹⁷ However, 724, 531 and 439 are different:

- 724: Nsg in -ѣ (7x) alongside -e (2x); Gsg/NApl in -y (2x) and -ě (2x).
- 439: Nsg in -ѣ (1x) and -e (1x), Gsg/NApl in -y (2x) as against once an *o*-stem Apl in -ě; in addition the text contains an attestation of the typically local stem form vx-. It is likely that the letter was written by the same person as 436+, which combines the non-local *o*-stem Apl in -y with the local stem form vx- (cf. Vermeer 1995, 119). In 439, the possibility of travel to Suzdal' is implied.
- 531: Nsg consistently in -ѣ (10x), but numerous local features, e.g. an \bar{a} -stem Gsg in -ě, an \bar{a} -stem NApl in -ě (alongside once non-local -y), absence of final -тъ in an *i*-present, the ending -ja in the present participle рѣка.¹⁸

From stage (C) onwards, texts that prefer -ѣ to -e constitute a regular element of the Novgorod legacy. A minority of texts have both endings and the choice does not always seem to be arbitrary:

- Some texts clearly prefer one of the possibilities and have the other one only once or twice in proper names, the Nsg ending of which may be lexically conditioned and hence not indicative of the linguistic preferences of the person who wrote a letter. Clear cases are: 417 (7x -ѣ; 1x -e in a name in a controversial reading), 366 (8x -ѣ; 1x -e in a name), and 300 (2x -e in verbal forms; 1x -ѣ in a name). The same tendency may account for the apparent inconsistency of 362 (1x -ѣ in a past tense, 1x -e in a name) and 540 (2x -ѣ in past tenses; 1x -e in a [36] fragmentary word that may very well have been a name). Given these facts it is hard to tell what to make of 161 (4x -ѣ, 1x -e, all five attestations in names) and 496 (7x -e and 1x -o in names; 1x -ѣ in the numeral одинъ).

¹⁵ In the ninth volume of НГБ (1993), E.A. Rybina discusses all birchbark letters that mention or imply travel to towns outside the Новгородская земля. Of these thirteen texts, none of which is younger than the thirteenth century and all but two of which are even older, seven display no Novgorod colouring at all (246, 109, 745, 524, 675, 502, 69), five are written in the Novgorod dialect (424, 105, 656, 723, 636), whereas 439 is linguistically mixed.

¹⁶ The formula is attested also in 682 (written by a nun), 549 (written by a priest), and 714 (a small fragment defying interpretation), cf. p. 38.

¹⁷ On the other hand, 682 (C), which has an attestation of шоканье, may have been written by a person from Pskov.

¹⁸ The traditional view that *grivene* is a Dsg yields the following translation of the final sentence: "Я шлю четырех дворян [взять с каждого из обвиняемых (?)] по гривне серебра" (p. 345). It is better to read *grivene* as an Apl, which yields a straightforward translation: "Я шлю четырех дворян за гривнами серебра" (Saša Lubotsky of the Leiden Department of Comparative Linguistics, personal communication).

- In some texts a stylistic difference may have been intended. This is fairly obvious in the case of 142 (section 4.2). Other examples are less certain (perhaps 130+).
- It is not uncommon for the beginning of letters to be more formal than the end. This tendency, which has been noted before (cf., e.g., Zaliznjak, p. 463), may account for the striking difference between the main text and the additions of 724 (see section 4.2). Similarly the person who wrote 25 starts off with a single attestation of *-ъ* and then shifts to *-e* (3/4x). Karp in his letter to Foma (23) uses twice *-ъ* in the main text and then three times in a row *-e* in the final sentence. The reverse pattern is exceptional or absent and indirectly these texts provide additional evidence that *-ъ* was perceived to be more formal than *-e*.
- The person who wrote 215+ (a block that includes 218B) cooperated closely with the person who wrote 218A+, who clearly preferred *-ъ*.

No preferences, tendencies or special circumstances can be observed in the case of 344, 689, and 307.

We have to conclude that until the final decades of the twelfth century the ending *-ъ* was virtually limited to texts written by clerics, where it can be regarded as an intrusion from Church Slavonic; then things changed and *-ъ* appeared in letters on secular subjects written by laypeople and soon gained a firm footing.

4.5 The possible survival of *-y* as a local feature

We now turn to the msc *o*-stem Apl and *ā*-stem Gsg and NApl endings, where local *-ě* is opposed to non-local *-y*. In all cases the ending that was originally limited to the “soft” paradigms (the *jā*- or *jo*-stems) has been generalized to the “hard” paradigms (the *ā*- or *o*-stems). This simplification is typical of Novgorod declension and in principle unproblematic (see Vermeer 1996, section 3).

It is legitimate to wonder if all endings involved are treated alike. Zaliznjak holds that *-y* survived optionally as an authentic feature of the dialect in cases where the NApl was not governed by a numeral (see his table on p. 79 and the discussions on p. 81, pp. 127-128 and p. 148).

In my view this assumption is not supported by the facts available at present. There are no convincing attestations of *-y* in texts preceding the final decades of the twelfth century. The earliest examples adduced by Zaliznjak are 439 and 531 (both C). As we have seen, these two texts use the non-local Nsg in *-ъ* and hence cannot be regarded as pure representatives of the Novgorod dialect. In other respects, too, 439 and 531 are strikingly innovative and hardly the type of text in which one expects archaic forms: they are among the earliest birchbark documents to show convincing instances of line-final word division after a consonant (Schaecken 1995: [37] 95); 531 has one of the earliest examples of *poklonъ* in an opening formula (p. 31); 439 contains one of the earliest attestations of the use of the preposition *въ* with a masculine toponym, instead of the earlier use of the prepositionless locative (see further pp. 141-143; for another important point see p. 151).

Incidentally, in 439 the form *коупленъзи* depends on the numeral ‘3’, thus contravening Zaliznjak’s rule. Note in this connection that the person who wrote 710+ (admit-

tedly a cleric) combines six attestations of the dialectal Gsg/NApl ending *-ě* with a single attestation of non-local *-y* in *гривьнѣ* preceded by the numeral ‘3’.

The later attestations Zaliznjak adduces are the following:

- 481 (D): Apl *кунѣ*; the text lacks diagnostic features; the final *-t* in *взъмутъ* may point to non-local preferences.
- 195 (E): Npl *добрѣ*. As Zaliznjak points out, “грамота не имеет специфических признаков древненовгородского диалекта”.
- 389 (E): Apl *коунѣ* is used alongside such patently non-local forms as Gsg *лоукѣ* and a Nsg in *-ѣ*, showing that the text cannot be regarded as a convincing sample of the Novgorod town dialect.
- 474 (F): Npl *[зоби]жонѣ* is used alongside Npl *дѣт[ъ]кѣ*, with the Novgorod ending *-ě*; unfortunately the text lacks further diagnostic features.
- 125 (G): Apl *кунѣ* is used alongside Gsg *маринѣ*, with the Novgorod ending *-ě*; the text contains no other diagnostic features.
- 3 (G): Apl (perhaps Gsg) *переварѣ*. As Zaliznjak points out, “грамота не имеет специфических признаков древненовгородского диалекта”.¹⁹

We can only conclude that at present the evidence does not support the assumption that the *ā*-stem NApl ending **-y* survived in the Novgorod dialect, so that *-y* has to be regarded as a non-local feature.

It is possible, on the other hand, that the pronominal msc Apl ending **-y* was not replaced with *-ě*. This would seem to account best for the presence of *тѣ* in 731 (C), a text that contains no non-local features.

4.6 Local *-ě* versus non-local *-y*

In this section texts are adduced that have at least one attestation of a case form in which local *-ě* competes with non-local *-y*: the *ā*-stem Gsg or NApl (pp. 80-81) and the msc *o*-stem Apl, including without comment examples that use the Apl ending for the Npl (a practice on which see pp. 91-92 and Vermeer forthc. 2).²⁰

A (1040-1125)

<i>-ě</i> (7):	247, 526, 613, 238, 736B, 586, 644.
<i>-y</i> (1):	109.
<i>-ě/-y</i> (0):	–. 38

B (1125-1160)

<i>-ě</i> (11):	421, 380, 503, 630, 422, 160, 665, 381, 164, 168, 631.
<i>-y</i> (0):	–.
<i>-ě/-y</i> (2):	84, 710 + .

¹⁹ In addition to these texts Zaliznjak also adduces 750 (E), in which I cannot find the alleged attestation of *kuny* (cf. also p. 627).

²⁰ The Apl in *-y* adduced for 496 (G) on p. 92 is confirmed neither by the text as given and analyzed on pp. 568-569 nor by the vocabulary (p. 616).

C (1160-1220)

- ě (41): 723, 656, 509, 335, 78, 240, 225, 228, 155, 624, 676, 640, 686+, 682, 657, 731, 115+, 87, 82, 663, 558, 550, 725, 671, 726, 601, 609, 648, 722, 713, 438, 153, 8, 219+, 170, 456, 573+, 575, 621, 649+, 677.
- y (4): 9, 231, 436+, 400.
- ě/-y (5): 724, 638+, 439, 531, 222.

D (1220-1300)

- ě (20): 334, 718, 510, 293, 348, 213, 215+, 141, 377, 707, 483, 390A, 409+, 582, 52, 73, 224, 442, 614, 695.
- y (3): 147, 61+, 481.
- ě/-y (1): 218A+.

E (1300-1360)

- ě (17): 320+, 138, 67, 140, 5, 65, 53, 750, 417, 490, 59, 354+, 102, 92, 31, 55, 355.
- y (5): 195, 45, 389, 500, 445.
- ě/-y (2): 142, 589.

F (1360-1400)

- ě (23): 579, 568, 567, 687, 689, 253+, 370²¹, 178, 279, 130+, 275+, 260, 363+, 463, 42, 2, 248+, 4, 44, 179, 252, 492, 694.
- y (5): 528, 318, 366, 361, 20.
- ě/-y (2): 474, 261+.

G (1400-1460)

- ě (10): 519+, 521, 19+, 14, 301, 300, 693, 17, 242, 299.
- y (3): 3, 310, 352.
- ě/-y (2): 169, 125.

As in the case of the *o*-stem Nsg, the non-local ending is rare at an early stage and becomes more frequent later on. Here, too, a critical look at the examples is necessary to clarify some matters.

In period (A), *-y* is attested only in 109, a text that completely lacks Novgorod features. The only examples of *-y* from period (B) are a controversial reading (84) |39| and an isolated example (alongside 6x *-ě*) in a block of texts written by a cleric (710+).

As in the case of the Nsg, period (C) is different, although again several texts have to be discounted: 9 avoids local features; the single attestation of *-y* in 231 is uncertain; 400 is an incoherent fragment that may not have been written in the Novgorod

²¹ I do not agree that it is more likely that in 370 the Npl *okradoni* reflects non-local *-y* than dialectal *-ě* (both of which are in this text reflected as *-i*) because “иначе трудно объяснить переход [д’е] > [д’о]” (p. 494, cf. p. 99); since in the case of an alternation of *-e-* and *-o-* in the stem what one usually finds is analogical generalization of *-o-*, the form has to be regarded as inconclusive. |46|

dialect; 638 +, which offers a single attestation of -y in *кунѣ* alongside 3x -ě in other nouns, was written by a cleric; the attestation of -y in 222 is important because it occurs in a text that in other respects is written purely in the Novgorod dialect, but cannot be regarded as completely reliable because the ending is written in an unusual way: the first component of the grapheme *ѣ* is written not as *ѣ* but as *ь*, which is extremely rare to the extent that it is attested at all. This leaves convincing attestations in three letters we have come across already:

- 724, where the orthography shows independently that the choice of local and non-local alternants is stylistically conditioned (see section 4.2).
- 531, which consistently uses the Nsg in -ѣ, but offers a single attestation of -y alongside twice -ě.
- 439, which mixes local and non-local features in an unpredictable way; the same holds for 436 +, which was probably written by the same person.

As in the case of the Nsg in -ѣ these three texts are the harbingers of a period in which the non-local ending constituted a regular element of the Novgorod legacy. But there is an important difference: whereas by the final phase of the birchbark tradition, texts with -ѣ make up nearly half of the total, non-local -y gets stuck at around 25%. This striking difference between -ѣ and -y is foreshadowed by 736B, 710 +, 724, and 531.

As in the case of the Nsg, texts that use both the local and the non-local ending constitute a minority. In the seven texts involved it is only rarely that a possible system can be observed:

- 142. As we have seen (section 4.2), the difference appears to be stylistically motivated.
- 589. The person who wrote the two letters involved wrote down two different genitives of his own name: *жилѣ*, *жилъ*. As noted by Zaliznjak, the tendency to start a text in a more formal register than its continuation may be responsible for the difference.

In 218A +, 474, 261 + and 169 the choice between -ě and -y appears to be arbitrary. As for 125, it has a Gsg in -ě (*мадринѣ*) contrasting with NApl *кунѣ*. This could be put down to chance, were it not for the fact that we find the same pattern in two other texts:

- 531: NApl *кунѣ* alongside Gsg *анѣ* <aně> and NApl *гривенѣ* <grivěně>;
- 638 +: NApl *кунѣ* alongside Gsg *микитѣ* <mikitě>, *твърдатѣ* <tvьrdjatě> and *[дѣ]в[а]т[ѣ]* <devjatě>.

It may therefore turn out that *kuny* ‘money’ could occur lexicalized in the NApl |40| with the ending -y, in which case the use of -y in this word would not imply that the same person would also write, say, **ženy*, **družiny* in preference to **ženě*, **družině*.

4.7 The difference between the non-local endings -ѣ and -y

The facts examined in the preceding sections suggest that once the use of non-local endings in secular texts had become current around 1200, the non-local ending -ѣ

threatened its autochthonous counterpart *-e* much more aggressively and effectively than *-y* threatened *-ě*.

In order to get a better idea of what was going on we shall have to look at texts that have attestations of both types of endings. Since the number of such texts is smaller than in the previous samples whereas the number of relevant patterns is three times as large, I have combined Zaliznjak's seven chronological groups into three periods of variable length which we have already seen above show different patterns.

The early period: A-B (1040-1160).

-e & -ě (5):	247, 238, 644; 421, 665.
-e & -y (0):	-; -.
-e & -ě/-y (0):	-; -.
-ѣ & -ě (0):	-; -.
-ѣ & -y (1):	109; -.
-ѣ & -ě/-y (1):	-; 710+
-e/-ѣ & -ě (1):	736B; -.
-e/-ѣ & -y (0):	-; -.
-e/-ѣ & -ě/-y (0):	-; -.

The transitional period: C (1160-1220)

-e & -ě (9):	723, 509, 225, 155, 682, 731, 663, 725, 601.
-e & -y (1):	231.
-e & -ě/-y (2):	638+, 222.
-ѣ & -ě (0):	-.
-ѣ & -y (1):	9.
-ѣ & -ě/-y (1):	531.
-e/-ѣ & -ě (1):	550.
-e/-ѣ & -y (0):	-.
-e/-ѣ & -ě/-y (2):	724, 439.

The mature period: D-G (1220-1460)

-e & -ě (15):	510, 141, 483, 409+, 582; 67, 53, 102; 253+, 370, 178, 260, 248+; 521, 19+. 41
-e & -y (4):	61+; -; 528, 20; 310.
-e & -ě/-y (1):	-; -; -; 169.
-ѣ & -ě (10):	213, 377; 138, 140, 354+, 55; 4; 519+, 14, 301.
-ѣ & -y (6):	-; 195, 389, 500, 445; 318; 352.
-ѣ & -ě/-y (2):	218A+; -; 261+; -.
-e/-ѣ & -ě (5):	215+; 417; 689, 130+; 300.
-e/-ѣ & -y (1):	-; -; 366; -.
-e/-ѣ & -ě/-y (1):	-; 142; -; -.

In the early period the only well-attested combination is the one that displays only local endings (“-e & -ě”). As we have seen several times already, 109 and 710+ cannot be regarded as pure representatives of the Novgorod dialect; this leaves 736B as the only plausible exception. In the decades preceding and immediately following

1200 (period (C)), nearly all possible combinations of endings are attested, but the one displaying only local endings is as frequent as all the others taken together.

After the beginning of the thirteenth century the group displaying only local endings is still the largest, but several other combinations are also convincingly attested. Contrary to what one would expect, the second-largest group is not the one in which the non-local endings *-ь* and *-y* are clustered, but the one that combines non-local *-ь* with local *-ě*.

We have to conclude that the relationship between the two endings was asymmetrical in the sense that use of non-local *-ь* did not automatically imply a preference for non-local *-y* as well. This pattern is confirmed by a study of individual texts. There are several examples of texts that have multiple attestations of *-ь* (suggesting that the people that wrote them actually avoided *-e*), but do not avoid *-ě* at all. The clearest case is Mosii's testament (519 +, G, 7x *-ь*, 5x *-ě*). The same tendency is displayed less spectacularly in the following texts: 531 (C): more than 10x *-ь*; 2x *-ě*, 1x *-y* (in *коуны*); 213 (D): 4x *-ь*; 1x *-ě*; 138 (E): 3x *-ь*; 3x *-ě*; 354+ (E): 5x *-ь*; at least 1x (probably 3x) *-ě*; 4 (F), 6x *-ь*; 1x *-ě*.

The tendency is by no means limited to birchbark letters. Kliment's well-known testament (written before 1270), to give but an example, consistently uses the Nsg in *-ь* (in all some 10x), but does not avoid *-ě*, e.g. *оу козѣ, полъ гр(и)внѣ* <grivně>, although *-y* is more frequent.²²

It is interesting to add up the birchbark texts that are more tolerant of the local variant in the case of *-ě/-y* than in that of *-e/-ь* and compare the resulting figure with the texts in which the reverse is the case:

- *-ь* & *-ě* (10); *-ь* & *-ě/-y* (2); *-e/-ь* & *-ě* (5): total: 17.
- *-e* & *-y* (4); *-e* & *-ě/-y* (1); *-e/-ь* & *-y* (2): total: 7. |42|

As a matter of fact, texts that convincingly favour *-y* (as shown by multiple attestations) while at the same time tolerating or preferring *-e* are absent from the corpus.

In describing the selection of variants found in the fourteenth-century group of texts written by Grigorija (130+) Zaliznjak writes: “Григорий пишет на диалекте, но самой заметной его черты – И.ед. на *-e* – он старается избегать” (p. 505). This hits the nail on the head: different local features are avoided according to different patterns and the first feature carriers of the Novgorod dialect tend to avoid is the Nsg in *-e*.

4.8 The distribution of *vx-* and *vs-*

The local Novgorod stem form *vx-* behaves differently from the endings *-e* and *-ě*. Despite the small number of relevant texts a clear pattern can be discerned. The texts in which *vx-* and *vs-* are attested are the following:

²² Quoted on the basis of the text as given by Tixomirov and Ščepkina (1952).

A-C (1040-1220)

vx- (5)	736A (-e); –; 87 (-ě), 436 + (-y), 439 (-ъ/-e & -y), 670 (-ě).
vs- (1)	605 (-e/-ъ; pret.); –; –. ²³

D (1220-1300)

vx- (3)	211 (-ъ; pret.), 351 (-e), 390A (-ě).
vs- (1)	61 + (-e & -y), Kliment's testament (-ъ & -ě/-y).

E (1300-1360)

vx- (1)	98 + (-ъ).
vs- (1)	195 (-ъ & -y).

F (1360-1400)

vx- (3)	463 (-ě), 492 (-ě), 497.
vs- (8)	135, 257, 273, 279 (-ě), 366 (-ъ/-e & -y; pret.), 370 (-e & -ě), 446 (-ъ), 697 (-ъ).

G (1400-1460)

vx- (1)	297.
vx-/vs- (1)	359 (-e).
vs- (2)	19 + (-e & -ě), 496 (-e/-ъ).

Apart from *вѣсьгдѣ* in 605 (written by a monk) the earliest attestation of *vs-* is in a thirteenth-century text block in which non-local *-y* also occurs; the oldest but one attestation is found in an early fourteenth-century text which “не имеет |43| специфических признаков древненовгородского диалекта” (p. 432); the use of *vs-* in Kliment's testament (6 times) is in accordance with Kliment's consistent use of *-ъ* and clear preference for *-y*. On the other hand, 211 (D) and 98 + (E) suggest that as late as the second half of the thirteenth and even the middle of the fourteenth century *vx-* could be combined with such non-local features as the Nsg ending *-ъ* and (in the case of 211) the aorist.

A sudden change seems to have occurred around the middle of the fourteenth century. To the extent that *vx-* was still used, it was no longer combined with non-local features (cf. in particular 463, 492 and 359) and *vs-*, which now was by far the more frequent form, occurred freely in purely Novgorod contexts, as in 279, 370 and 19 + .

The distribution of *vx-* and *vs-* illustrates once again that the medieval inhabitants of Novgorod were faced not so much with a single choice between either dialect or “Standard Old Russian”, as with a plurality of choices that differed depending on the feature involved. Medieval Novgorod appears to have been characterized by the type of sociolinguistic situation for which twentieth-century Prague is notorious (cf. Sgall and Hronek 1992: 28-29 and *passim*).

²³ The abbreviation “pret.” signals the presence of an aorist or imperfect.

5 Spread of features from (P) to (Q) and the rise of modern Russian

The textual evidence and the modern dialects show that features that used to be characteristic of (P) have tended to be replaced with the corresponding features of (Q). But the reverse has also happened. The first to comment on this was probably S.M. Gluskina; in discussing the tendency towards analogical loss of alternations due to the Second Palatalization in Russian dialects continuing (Q) she writes: “быстрая и последовательная реализация этой тенденции в русском языке донационального периода может быть объяснена участием новгородско-псковского диалекта в формировании общенародного русского языка” (1968, 43).

In other cases, too, features that originated in (P) are found widespread in modern Russian dialects that continue (Q), among which the modern standard language is prominent, e.g. generalization of *-i-* in the imperative, generalization of stem-final soft consonants in the present gerund, absence of a distinction between Nsg and Vsg in the masculine *o*-stems.

In all cases morphological simplifications are involved. It stands to reason that wherever speakers of (P) and (Q) interacted, spread of the simpler variants would be favoured as soon as sequences of velars and front vowels became possible in dialects of (Q) bordering on (P), cf. Table 2. |44|

Table 2. Retreat or spread of features of the Novgorod dialect

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Retreat</i>	<i>Spread</i>
Nsg msc <i>o</i> -stems in <i>-e</i>	yes	no
Apl msc <i>o</i> -stems in <i>-ě</i>	yes	no
Gsg/NApl <i>ā</i> -stems in <i>-ě</i>	yes	no
<i>vx-</i> (as distinct from <i>vs-</i>)	yes	no
hard thematic imp. 2pl/2du in <i>-ite, -ita</i>	no	yes
pres.act.part. Nsg msc in <i>-а</i>	no	yes
2d pal. in stem-final position	no	yes
Nsg = Vsg in msc <i>o</i> -stems	perhaps	yes

The type of East Slavic continued by modern standard Russian can be regarded as a continuation of (Q) which has adopted a number of important morphological levelings from (P). Without being aware of the fact, speakers of modern standard Russian participate in the linguistic legacy of medieval Novgorod.

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