

Exploring the Land and Language of Pskovia

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It is already a truism to state that settings and research opportunities for Slavists have changed fundamentally during the last decade. And one of the ways the impact of the new opportunities is making itself felt is the possibility to undertake field-work which was unthinkable earlier. Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, hardly any western scholar had been allowed into the Russian countryside in order to interview local inhabitants or to collect dialectological data. But while such enterprises had been unthinkable for decades for Western scholars, field-work of this kind had, of course, been conducted by scholars within the Soviet Union itself. The field-work done by Soviet scholars had, however, been greatly hampered by the lack of appropriate equipment as simple as tape-recorders. Dialectological field-work in the former Soviet Union therefore appears to have consisted for a large part in manually noting down lexemes, i.e. *sobranie leksiki*, while longer texts have been collected by means of tape-recorders to a far lesser extent. It may not be wrong to assume that this is the reason for the heavy emphasis on lexicology in Russian dialectology during the last decades.

One among those who has conducted extensive field-work in the former Soviet Union, paying above all attention to phonetics, is Valerij, whom we are celebrating with this collection of essays. He has collected dialectological data in a number of areas, first of all in Belarus where he lived for a number of years, but also among the Albanians in the southern Ukraine, among the Ossetians in the Caucasus, in various areas in Russia proper, and extensively in Lithuania where he has studied Lithuanian, Polish and Belorussian dialects in the field. So when I met Valerij for the first time in Vilnius in the fall of 1991, I had the luck to meet an extremely experienced linguistic field-worker. And it soon turned out that we both shared an interest in the dialects of the Pskov area. For me this interest had previously been purely academic and theoretical as any thought of going into the field in the Rus-

sian Federation along the border with Estonia and Latvia was out of the question in Soviet times. But in 1991 the times were rapidly changing, although free travel in Russia was not yet officially to be reckoned with. Nonetheless, we started planning a research trip to the Pskov area the upcoming summer. In the meantime, El'cin declared free travel in Russia, thereby eliminating possible obstacles to the undertaking. So we started out in June 1992 with a car provided by the University of Oslo, equipped with tent and sleeping bags, tape-recorders, lot of batteries, 100 litres of gasoline in reserve, and what turned out to be of some importance, a far too small amount of Lithuanian canned food. This was of course above an expedition with linguistic aims. We were both eager to make recordings, as long and as much as possible of what could be regarded as the genuine local vernacular. This means for all practical reasons local speech according to the isoglosses depicted in the first dialectological survey of the Russian language area, *Opyt dialektologičeskoj karty russkago jazyka v Evrope s priloženiem očerka russkoj dialektologii*, published in 1915. As the land of Pskov is noted for a number of archaisms, its dialects even claimed to be based on a fourth, particular archaic branch of Slavic as distinct from the traditional partition in East, South and West Slavic, we were interested in making recordings of these archaisms and possibly to add others. But in addition to the linguistic aims of this expedition, it was of supreme interest for a student of Russia who for many years had struggled to acquire knowledge of her as she really is, not as the authorities thought she ought to be or as they wanted to present her, to get into Russian provincial towns and the countryside.

In order to reach Russia and the Pskov heartlands as soon as possible, we started out from Vilnius in a north-eastern direction, crossed into Latvia, just to the south of Daugavpils where the border between Lithuania and Latvia was still unmarked except by a couple of heavily armed guards. Our first experience of Russia was made in the *Pytalovskij rajon*, the former Latvian district of *Abrene*, in German called *Abrehnen*, ceded to the Russian Federation in January 1945. From the hilltop where the *Vyšgorodok* church stands, a beautiful flat landscape dotted with small groves of trees stretched out in every direction, just as the Russian countryside is supposed to be. We were, however, reminded of the fact that this was former Latvian territory by an elderly Russian for whom obviously everything foreign was Latvian and who therefore tried to greet us with the reminiscences of a Latvian learned at school as a child.

For the first night in the Russian countryside we put up our tent in the village of Fedosino in the region of Ostrov, just to the east of the interwar border with Latvia. It was the center of the *sel'sovet* and possessed a shop,

magázin according to the local pronunciation. It offered nothing except for heaps of bread, *buchanky*, and what to our surprise turned out to be good Moldovian red wine. The houses were typical Russian log houses, *pjatisienki*, with the oven in the middle, equally heating all parts of the house. Walking through the village in an early, warm summer evening, in a silence absolute but for some boys bathing in the river Utroja flowing seemingly motionless through the village, we found ourselves definitely in Russia. But Soviet reality was not far away. Our landlord in whose garden we were allowed to put up our tent, a man in his early fifties, was quite convinced that Soviet power was soon to be restored.

The next morning we soon learned that some of the villages in the neighbourhood were not accessible by cars as there were no roads leading to them. We managed however to reach some of them simply by driving across the fields, something that could be done at the time due to hot and dry weather.

Already after a few day's work in this area, we were able to draw conclusions that appeared to hold true for field-work in all the parts of Russia we happened to visit. It could first of all be concluded that the number of informants in each village was quite restricted as all non-locals had to be excluded in order to obtain genuine data about the local dialect. It soon became clear, however, that the younger and middle generations to a considerable extent had abandoned the local speech. It therefore turned out as a rule that only persons born before 1920 could be considered reliable informants as to the local dialect because only among people of this generation or older would generally memories of the traditional peasant life be preserved. And memory of the traditional peasant life seems to be a precondition for the ability to reproduce the traditional local vernacular. In order to have preserved such a memory, the informant must have been at least 10 years old at the time when *sognali nas s chutorov*, 'turned us out of our farmsteads', as the brutal collectivisation around 1930 was euphemistically phrased. There could be considerable variation, but as a general rule no informant born in the twenties commanded a variety of Russian wholly relevant for our purpose. But even if they were born before 1920, it was of crucial importance to what extent the informants had been exposed to other dialects or the standard language. So, if a person had lived for longer periods outside his native village, the reliability as an informant for our purpose was already weakened. It was therefore above all non-mobile local persons who were the best informants for the variety of speech we wanted to record. It therefore appeared clear that the optimal informants we sought were non-mobiles, *starožily*, *žichary*, born not later than 1920. And among these hardly any men could be found, due to the fact the women live lon-

ger than men also in Russia, but mainly due to the tremendous losses in the Second World War. So our informants turned out mainly to be women born before 1920, i.e. women now in their seventies, though we did meet informants in their eighties or even nineties as well. In addition to these informants it should be pointed out that people born after the twenties could provide valuable data about the local speech without speaking it themselves.

Our first recording were therefore made of elderly women in the region of Ostrov in the very core of the Pskovian lands. This is a region of farmland where one of the main products traditionally has been flax. Ostrov itself is one of the historical towns, *prigorodki*, of the Pskovian lands, and as the name itself indicates, originated as a fortress on an island in the river Velikaja. According to *Živopisnaja Rossija* [1881, 483], *Sam gorod ves'ma predstaviteljen*, 'the town itself is very impressive', a point of view which hardly can be shared today. Through the region and the town of Ostrov passes the railway which connects St. Petersburg with Western Europe. The villages in this region seems to a large extent to have been abandoned by the younger generations, leaving the oldest generation behind to work the collective farms. This in turn meant that the villages were often in a depressing state of decay, where helpless elderly people are living in conditions hard to describe. Far from helpless were, however, Marfa Fedorovna, born in 1898, and her son, Ženja, with whom she lived together in a tiny homestead in the even tinier village of *Grjazivec*. With these warm and lively people we stayed for a couple of days, putting up our tent in their garden and recording them at length as ideal informants, their vernacular constantly impressing us with features none of us had heard before. One of the first of these was, when we were talking about the dry weather and the consequence for the crops: *nikavó ne rast'ó na pole*, for CSR *ničego ne rastět na pole*.

From Ostrov we drove to the north towards Pskov along the main road leading from St. Petersburg to Kiev, *Kievskoe šosse*, constructed in the 1850s. And here, just to the south of Pskov, the rolling landscape dotted with trees gives way to a more densely forested countryside, the southern outskirts of the taiga. Before entering Pskov, the river *Čerecha* is crossed. Testifying to the treatment of the affricates in the land of Pskov, cf. Čekmonas [1997], this toponym is recorded on older maps as *Cerecha* as well as *Terecha*. Just a few kilometres closer to the city there is a sign indicating that the river *Keb'* is not far away. As this obvious Balto-Finnic toponym¹ has been preserved without palatalised initial velar, it represents

¹ Vasmer [1971, 286] collates it with Estonian *keeb*, gen. sg. *keeva*.

a problem. If the approach of Stieber [1979, 69–70] is to be adhered to, this toponym just as *Seliger*, which serves as his example, indicates that the Slavs arrived in this area after the first palatalization had ceased to operate. But as other toponyms indicate that the first palatalization did operate at the time when the Slavs were migrating into present day Russia, cf. *Lučesa* taken over from Lithuanian *Laukesā*, or even *Ižora* further to the north, probably derived from Finnish *Ingerinmaa*, this position seems hard to support. It is more probable that the toponym was preserved in its original shape due to a more numerous Balto-Finnic population here than elsewhere, or, as it has been maintained by Gerd [1995, 64], that the area around Pskov was Slavified at a much later date than the remaining Pskovian lands.

The mediaeval city of Pskov, the God-redeemed, *Bogospasaemyj*, or the God-preserved, *Bogochranimyj grad Pskov*, one of the oldest cities in the East Slavic lands, is mentioned in the chronicles for the first time *sub anno* 905 when it is stated that Igor got his bride Olga from the city of Pskov. As *Olga* as well as *Igor* are evidently of Scandinavian origin, *Helga* and *Ingvarr* respectively, this information in the chronicles testifies to Varangian, i.e. Scandinavian presence in the land of Pskov by the end of the 9th century. As the principality of Kiev started to disintegrate already in the 12th century, Pskov became a part of the *Gospodin Velikij Novgorod*, the republic of Novgorod. In 1348 the city of Pskov, dominating the westernmost strip of the East Slavic lands at that time, stretching from the northern end of the Peypus Lake all the way south to Opočka, to the border of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, became independent from Novgorod. In many ways demonstrating similarities in administrative structures and cultural life with Novgorod, Pskov managed to maintain its independence for some years after Muscovy's annexation of Novgorod. Pskov was incorporated into Muscovy in 1510 when the bell of the *veče* was taken down and transported to Moscow. With the incorporation of Pskov and Novgorod, Muscovy became even more culturally isolated than before since these two independent cities to a considerable degree had acted as mediators of influences from the West to the East. After the loss of its independence Pskov was turned into Muscovy's western border-city, placed on the north-western end of the East Slavic lands. To the west and the north-west lay the lands of the Balto-Finnic Estonians, dominated for centuries by the Teutonic Knights. After the conquest of Livonia by Peter the Great and the end of the Great Nordic War in 1721, the strategic position of the city was greatly reduced and it sank into provincial obscurity. Its position was greatly enhanced, however, in 1777 when Pskov became a provincial capital, a position it held until 1917 when Czar Nikolai II renounced the imperial crown at its railway-station. In 1919 the city was captured and held by the Estonian army for three months. Due to that cir-

cumstance among others, the Dorpat Peace Treaty assigned the *Pečorskij uezd* to Estonia, with the consequence that the border between the Soviet Union and Estonia in the interwar years passed just a few kilometres to the west of the city, rendering important parts of the historic land of Pskov as Izborsk and Pečory with its magnificent monastery, to independent Estonia. In Soviet times the city was practically closed to foreigners, allowing tourist only occasionally to visit it, while the countryside remained inaccessible. It was therefore with excitement that we drove into this city which in nice summer-weather looked quite pleasant, with an enormous number of white churches on exuberant green grass and with the golden copula of the Troitskij-cathedral in the Krom, the local Kremlin, gleaming in the sun.

When dealing with the dialects of the land of Pskov, there might be reason to recall Ševčenko's Law of the Dog and the Forest. It goes as following: "A dog approaches a virgin forest, goes up to a tree and does what dogs do against trees. The tree is chosen at random. It is neither more or less significant than any other tree. Yet one may reasonably predict that future dogs approaching the same forest will focus their attention on that particular tree. Such is often the case in scholarship: the scent of an argument on one issue draws scholars into more arguments on the same issue"². The same may appear to hold true also for the dialect of Pskovia. It is probably true, as has been stated by Gerd [1995, 59], that among the various East Slavic dialects it is hard to find one more thoroughly studied than the one of Pskovia. Still it is the one about which the arguments still run high and which seems to attract the lion's share of attention not only among Russian scholars, but also among western ones. There are of course various reasons for this lively interest in the dialect of Pskovia. First of all attention has to be directed to the fact that Pskov is one of the few cities of Russia which has a mediaeval literary tradition of its own. It is therefore possible to follow linguistic evolution in Pskovia for more than three quarters of a millennium. While the dialects of Pskovia attracted attention in the beginning of this century as demonstrated among other by the works of Černyšev [1931/70, 1936/70, 1929], it was after 1945 that the intensive study of the dialects of this area started. This is above all connected with B.A. Larin who in the forties took the initiative to establish the archive for *Pskovskij oblastnoj slovar'* (POS). And the preliminary work of collecting data for this regional dialectal dictionary started in the late forties. The work was undertaken mainly by the University of Leningrad and the Pedinstitute in Pskov. Since then huge amounts of data have been accu-

² Quoted from Franklin-Shepard [1996, xxi].

mulated in Pskov and St. Petersburg. These archives have in their turn formed the basis for an impressive output of scholarly works. Since the early sixties a number of conferences have been held, dedicated to the study of the Pskovian dialects, and altogether 7 collections of scholarly articles have been published³. But most important of all is the on-going publication of the regional dictionary of the Pskov dialects, *Pskovskij oblastnoj slovar'*, of which 12 volumes so far have appeared. It was with this background quite natural for us to head for the Pskov Pedinstitute and the *Kafedra russkogo jazyka*, its Department of Russian Language. In its new premises in the building of the former party secretariat for propaganda we met Professor L.J. Kostjučuk and her 15 colleagues. As unannounced visitors from abroad, interested in a subject considered by them as relevant only to a small number of philologists in Russia, we were enthusiastically received. Our visit was regarded as so extraordinary that a meeting with the students was called where we were asked to comment on the reason for our interest in the local dialects. We were immediately granted access to the huge dialect archive from which we eagerly copied relevant data, including the various designations for the flail, corresponding to CSR cep and other alleged archaisms, cf. *kep*, *kevca*, *kedit'*, *kedilka*, *kež*, i.e. lexical items demonstrating that the Common Slavic sound change traditionally called the second palatalization of velars had never taken place in the land of Pskov.

But as this was as much a journey to discover 'unknown lands' as a linguistic expedition, we longed to get to Izborsk, situated some 30 km to the west of Pskov. Arriving there, we found the house of Valentina Rozova, director of the local museum, a charming and cultured lady, a typical representative of the Russian intelligentsia. As her daughter turned out to be an enthusiastic archaeologist working in the Pskov museum, our knowledge and sentiments for Russia were nourished in a way hard to imagine more stimulating. As Izborsk in so many ways is connected with the beginnings of Russia, any visitor walking around among its sights gets the strong impression of roots, of genuineness. Izborsk, mentioned in The Primary Chronicle already *sub anno* 862 in the Calling of the Varangians as one of the three places where the Varangian kings, *Truvor*, settled, conveys the sensation of a sanctuary when the *Truvorovo gorodišče* is visited. The *Truvorov krest* is equally impressive, although it is obvious that in both cases the connection with *Truvor* is a recent folkloristic invention. The fortress on the *Žerav'ij* hill is not less impressive, making itself felt all over Izborsk and thereby defining the atmosphere in the town.

³ The last one was held outside Russia, in Norway in the fall of 1995. The papers presented at the conference are now published [Бьёрнфлатен 1997], containing also a contribution by Valerij [Чекмонас 1997].

If Pskov is historically a border-city, Izborsk is even more so. This town is established virtually on the border line between the Slavic and the Finno-Ugrian worlds. The fields outside the town have names such as *aslavjanskoe pole*, the Slavic field, or *čudskoe pole*, the Chudian, Finnic field. Just beneath the fortress the Slavic springs, *slavjanskije ključii*, indicate that in these places what has been Slavic was kept apart from what was not. In our days, the non-Slavs closest to Izborsk are the Setu. Although their origins are obscure⁴, the Setu are considered an ethnographic group linguistically closely related to the Lutheran Estonians, while professing the same Orthodox faith as the Russians. They live in a small number of villages to the west and north of Izborsk and numbered in 1975 6780 persons, having declined from 18675 in 1908 [Raun 1991, 532]. But despite their small number, their presence in the former *Pskovskaja gubernija* made up the major argument for the Estonians in 1919 to claim the predominantly Russian area of Pečory. Today's *Pečorskij rajon* therefore became a part of Estonia in the interwar period with a population two thirds Russian and the remaining Estonian, including the Setu [Raun 1991, 528]. The center of this region is the town of Pečory as it is called in Russian, as opposed to Petseri in Estonian and Petschur in German. The town owns its origins to the famous Russian Orthodox monastery, the *Pskovo-Pečerskij monastyr'*, founded, as the name indicates, in the caves under the town, in 1470, and expanding into a major establishment in the following century, gradually acquiring the shape of a fortress, which appears to have been of no avail when the Swedes attacked and sacked it for the first time in 1592. The subsequent attacks by the Swedes in 1611 and 1615 did not prove successful [Морозкина 1986, 117].

It was while visiting the town of Pečory and examining the local bookshop that we came across two dull and unimpressive volumes that caught Valerij's attention: *Administrativno-territorial'no delenie Pskovskoj oblasti*, where all villages, or inhabited places, *naseleennye punkty*, were listed. To Valerij's alert mind it instantly occurred that these volumes could provide us with the tools for checking on the uneasiness that we had started to nourish quite soon after our first investigations in the Ostrov region. How could it be that these dialects were so famous for their archaisms while none of them could be ascertained? Where were in fact the celebrated archaisms of Pskovia? Using the notes of all the fixations of the most fa-

⁴ The ethnonym *Setu* appears to have been given to them in the last century by the Estonians living to the west of them in the province of Livonia. In contrast to the partitive singular of the demonstrative pronoun *see*, 'this', which in Estonian is *se*, the Setu had the form *setu* which is claimed to have given rise to their present day ethnonym [Raun 1991, 514].

mous archaism, *kep*, vs. CSR *cep*, that we had made in the archives in Pskov, we were now able to identify the places of fixation on the map and to check them out. When it turned out that a number of those places where the archaism *kep* was recorded lay just within the range of some tens of kilometres, we could hardly wait to finish the modest meal which the local restaurant was offered. The clo-sset villages where according to the POS archive the lexemes *kep* had been fixed, lay to the east of Pečory along the shores of the Pskov Lake all up to the Estonian border. In these villages we instantly sought out the oldest, non-mobile informants available who could be expected to provide the data we were looking for. Our suspicion was strengthened already in the first village where Valerij demonstrated his formidable communicative ability. It turned out that the informant born in 1914 had never heard of *kep*. As a response to the question *Čem vy molotili?*, the answer was plainly *molotilkam*⁵. It even turned out that the informant did not know the CSR word *cep*, as the designation for the flail in this village was simply *molotilka*. Based on this experience we started from that time to ask every informant about the flail and its designations. The curious picture occurred that we were nowhere able to find an informant who knew the lexeme *kep*. That might of course be due to chance or failing memory of our informants. But the crucial issue here is that in the areas where according to POS *kep* was fixed, other designations for the flail were at hand. It appears obvious that it is hardly plausible to find an archaism based on **koipos* when this designation for the object is absent. For if in the appropriate villages the flail is called *molotilka*, *palka*, *privjaz/priuz* or *ručnik/rutnik*, the designation *kep* can hardly be expected to turn up⁶. When this circumstance became clear to us, our first thought concerned the reliability of the data accumulated in the POS archive. It seemed hard to believe that the relevant data were simply non-existent, due to mistakes by the collectors, who often had been students from the University of St. Petersburg and the Pskov Pedinstitut acquiring linguistic practice by collecting dialectological data in the villages manually by means of a pencil and a notebook. It appeared quite unbelievable that Gluskina and other scholars who had accorded these data⁷ the utmost importance had relied upon the fixations of them in the archives without checking on their very

⁵ Here as in the major part of the western and northern parts of the Russian language area the dative and instrumental plural merge in one form indential with the dative plural. This is a feature of the dialect of Pskovia which was present everywhere. A person without pretensions towards the standard language will never say anything else than *rabotat' rukam*.

⁶ Cf. the instructive paper of Karmakova [1991] which presents data in full accordance with our finds.

⁷ For further details with relevant references, cf. Bjørnflaten [1997].

existence. The status of these data became even more precarious when we were able to state that *kep* according to the archives was fixated in villages where the mere technique of threshing by means of the flail was absent. In many areas the threshing is done simply beating the sheaves against a stone or wooden structure, a process which is described by a verb *stjabát'*. If it is claimed that an instrument *kep* is used in an area where 1) the flail is not designated by means of a lexeme based on **koipos* or 2) where the process of threshing is not done by flails at all, it seems appropriate to have serious doubt about the reliability of the data of the POS archive. This was one of the enigmas that we encountered on our first journey to Pskovia. When, later the same year, in November, we were to meet again in order to work together for a few days around Pskov, Valerij phoned me in my hotel in St. Petersburg and exclaimed quite excitedly: 'I have found it! I have recorded *kep* in a village just to the west of Pskov, in the *Palkinskij rajon*'. So when I got to Pskov the following day, I was eager to listen to the recording made by Valerij. But an extremely sad face met me: 'I have by mistake erased it'. Well, the only remedy was to try to get a new recording, hoping that *djadja Nikolaj* had not left this world during the last few days. He hadn't, even though he was quite old, without, however, being able to tell exactly in what year he was born. When we found him the next day, in a freezingly cold afternoon this late November day, he was just about to go to bed. But nonetheless, he was sporty enough to talk to Valerij again. And extremely great was our surprise when it emerged that the same *djadja Nikolaj* did not have any recollection at all of an instrument or word that sounded like *kep*. Neither was he able to produce it when he was asked indirectly how the threshing was done, nor, when this procedure failed, did he understand what we had in mind when we directly asked him what the word *kep* meant. There was nothing we could do except thank *djadja Nikolaj* for his cooperation and continue wondering about Pskovian intricacies. Later, however, Valerij was exposed to a similar situation, where the informant first stated that *fčaryri k'apá malatli*, whereupon she was unable to repeat the word *k'ep*, referring exclusively to *privozy* which was the traditional designation for the flail in the village. As the result of further investigations in the same village, Valerij was able to conclude that it was only after 1945 that they starting threshing with flails, the traditional method being to *stjabát'*. This means that the lexeme *cep* was quite recent in the village. And when it at the same time could be ascertained that *k'apá* was used as a reply to the question posed by Valerij: *A capjam malatli*, it appears that the informant in fact wanted to use the same lexeme as Valerij, but substituted the initial /c/ with /k/. Later she corrected herself according to the linguistic norms of the village according to which the flail is called

privoz. Valerij has treated this phenomenon in an article [Чекмонас 1997а] where he indicates that a curious substitution takes place. That being true or not, it is obvious that if the designation for the flail, *cep*, occurred in the village after 1945, there can be no question of an archaism. So far it seems appropriate to state that fixations of *kep* in various villages in the Pskov lands require closer investigations.

From the *Pečorskij rajon* we started towards the north, again through Pskov and north along the eastern shore of Lake Pskov. In the beginning the roads follows the shore, providing beautiful views of the lake. Some 30 km to the north the road passes *Malaja Tolbica*, where father Boris until recently served as priest in the local church. Father Boris, whose acquaintance we made later, is a typical intellectual, *staryj intelligent*, still wearing an old bourgeois hat and the author of a learned book of Orthodox musical annotation and numerous articles in what had remained of the religious press.

Just a few more kilometres to the north of *Malaja Tolbica* lies the famous *Spaso-Eleazarovskij monastyr'*, founded in the second half of the 15th century. Even in its present desolate conditions, the church and the other buildings indicate a glorious past. In the first half of the 16th century, at the time when the Republic of Pskov lost its independence to Muscovy and for the few following decades, the *Spaso-Eleazarovskij monastyr'* was a centre of intellectual activity in the Pskovian lands. Following the annexation of Pskov by Muscovy, the *starec* Filofej here at the *Spaso-Eleazarovskij monastyr'* in 1523 first formulated the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome: *dva ubo Rima padoša, a tretij stoit, a četvertomu ne byti*⁸, 'for two Romes have fallen, the third stands and a fourth there will not be', a doctrine that was to have important repercussions in providing the ideological basis for the further transformation of the Principality of Muscovy into the Russian empire. The same monastery is equally famous for having provided the manuscript for the most celebrated and most disputed piece of old East Slavic literature, *Slovo o polku Igoreve*.

Further to the north the road crosses the peninsula *Želaček* which separates the Pskov Lake from the Peypus Lake, *Čudskoe ozero*, the Chudian Lake, as it is called in Russian. The river *Želča* divides it into two parts from east to west before it empties into the lake not far from the place where *Aleksandr Nevskij* in 1242 defeated the Teutonic Knights at *Voronij ostrov*. This is one of the most celebrated victories in Russian historiography for saving Russia from the western imperialists. What often seem to be forgotten is that by the same token the eastern and southern lands were left

⁸ Quoted after Uspenskij [1996, 95].

open and more or less defenceless against the advancing Tartars. This peninsula, which gives the impression of true backwaters, *gluš'*, even has got a place called by this name, as the village of *Gluš'* is situated midway between the two lakes. The peninsula is, however, a meeting-place of isoglosses in the Russian language area. The major isogloss that crosses the area in an east-west direction, is the *akan'e* isogloss. To the south of this line lies the *akajuščie srednerusskie govory*, the Central Russian dialects with akanye, to the north the *okajuščie srednerusskie govory*, or the Central Russian dialects with okanye. Of utmost importance is the fact that the *jakan'e* isogloss passes further to the north than the akanye-isogloss. This means that it is possible along the southern and eastern shores of the Peypus lake to record okanye dialects with yakanye.

On this peninsula the area of the Pskov dialect proper ends. The akanye isogloss lies between the village of *Aksent'evo* on the river *Černaja* and the village *Remda* on the river *Želča*. The area between these two rivers is not inhabited and is covered by forests, marshes and swamps. So *Aksent'evo* with its clear akanye is left behind and after some 10–15 km through the forest *Remda* shows up with okanye and a lot of other features which constitute the dialect of Gdov. Based on the preliminary investigations we made in the area, it seems reasonable to claim that at least the southern part of the Gdov dialect demonstrates a consistent drop of the present tense 3. pers. -r-, in the singular as well as in the plural. In that connection it should be pointed out that this area also contains the largest concentration of the Pskovian peculiarities, *polukar'* vs. CSR *polučat'*, *mesek* vs. CSR *mesjac*, *tokilo* vs. CSR *točilo*, *vechat'* vs. CSR *vešat'*, *kedir'* vs. CSR *cedir'*. From this area the isoglosses formed by these lexemes stretch towards the south, some all the way to Opočka, others not, while just a few are restricted to a small number of villages on the southern shore of Lake Peypus⁹. On the basis of these data, even our preliminary investigation on the peninsula of *Želaček* convinces us that it has much in store for Russian dialectology, as the area is quite small with a restricted number of villages, allowing for thorough investigation in the field, a task which has to be accomplished in the very near future if any informants at all are to be found there.

The villages along the southern and eastern shores of Lake Peypus lake differ greatly from those to the south of Pskov, in the Pskovian heartlands, as does the landscape, too. While in the south gentle rolling fields meet the sky, in the north the sky is met either by a sea made of water or by a sea made of pine trees, everything being so flat in many places that the soil that carries the trees imperceptibly turns into water. As for the villages them

⁹ For more details on this crucial issue, cf. Bjørnflaten [1997].

selves, they are much more intact than further to the south. This is due to the fact that Lake Peypus is very rich in fish, since it is quite shallow, never deeper than 10–12 meters, and therefore its water is easily warmed up and thereby provides ample food for a large variety of fish. At the beginning of this century it was possible every morning in St. Petersburg to buy fresh fish from Lake Peypus. But that is, of course, long ago. But it is nonetheless apparent that the fisheries provide the population with a relatively good income, a circumstance which has contributed to the preservation of the villages to a larger extent than further to the south. This means in its turn that it is easier to find good informants in this area than in many others. In 1993, on our second expedition, we therefore spent more than a week making recordings in all villages along the southern shore of the lake, from *Podborov'e* in the south to *Sosno* in the north. Besides these recordings made along the shore we made a number of recordings in the adjacent villages in the hinterland.

One of the reasons for selecting this area was the discovery I made on the basis of the dialectological archives in St. Petersburg [Bjørnflaten 1994, 15], that one of the most celebrated archaisms from the land of Pskov was restricted to 5 villages along the southern shore of Lake Peypus. Only in these villages are recordings made which indicate the preservation of velars before front vowels from diphthongs in the lexeme *kedir'* vs. CSR *cedit'* < **kojidiiti*. It is only in the villages of *Podborov'e*, *Podoleš'e*, *Kamenaja straža*, *Ostrovcy* and *Dragotina* that these alleged archaisms have been recorded. We were therefore interested in making new recordings of them, at the same time as we were eager to find out whether other archaisms could be ascertained in the same area. And it can instantly be reported that other archaic features on the same chronological level as the one allegedly reflected in *kedir'* were not found. A lot of peculiarities do, however, characterise the vernacular in these and the adjacent villages. One of those is, as reported above, in the complete drop of final *-t* in the present tense singular as well as the plural, as no such ending was recorded in the speech of some of the oldest non-mobile inhabitants in these villages. This can possibly be considered an archaism in terms of an old innovation in East Slavic.

It can, however, be concluded on the basis of the recordings made in the area, that the lexeme *kedir'* is a fact of the speech of these villages, even though it often required some degree of guidance in the interview to get to it. The best example is probably the following, recorded in the village of *Podborov'e* from Čuchnova Marija, born in 1929:

— [...] а потѡм воз'м'бш на зта | вол'бш кип'атк'а гор'ача | он ноч попр'ѣйе!
 потѡм прок'ѣдиш и кис'ѣл' в'ариш || от и фс'о || то с молоком | то со сла...
 | кой ѣе п'аск'а | так... | ай и так покушаниш ||

- Ну, хорошо, вы сказали: “Прокедишь и варишь”, а на чем кядить?
 — на ришатá | ришотб | на сáты | сáта | сáта йе такбáйе ||
 — А если б я вам сказал: “Мань, принеси кядилку!”
 — н’ет | к’адíлка йе дл’а | тóка была | н’е | ришотб дл’а кисил’á || а к’адíлка
 была дл’а молокá || молокб к’адíлк’и | от што йайб эдбш корбву | так
 как йайб кúшат’ ни к’адíфшы ||
 — А как как, какая это была кядилочка, расскажите, какая она?
 — да она такáйа мáлин’кайа | от полбжыш ф крýначки | крýнки йе | н’е
 бывá крýнки | в м’ан’á ишшб дв’е крýнки такйх йе | зты | ну | крýнки || не
 ст’акл’áныи | рáн’шы ф ст’акл’áныих | о то крýнки назывáйуца йань от и
 ф крýнку нак’эдши в фс’о || ну зтаку к’адíлку | от и фс’б | от так ||
 — Если вы говорите, если вы сами это делали: “Я молока... — что
 вы делали с этим — Я... кяжу” или... как говорите: “...или кядю?”
 — к’е...к’ежу || ну йа т’еп’ер’ ужб старас’ | так зубы ны... | в м’ан’á ни но ||
 йа к’áжу молокб | к’áжу | от ||

On the basis of this recording it seems beyond doubt that a verb *kedít* exists and that it is freely declined in the dialects. We were fortunately able to obtain more or less the same data from other informants, even though it was considerably harder to get the noun *k’adil’ka* recorded than the verb. When we asked to be shown the *k’adil’ka*, a small metallic strainer was produced, i.e. an industrial product. It was further explained the *k’adil’ka* could only be bought, nothing of that kind had ever been produced at home. This information seemed, however, not in keeping with the posited archaic character of the lexeme itself. And it was further maintained that this object was only used for filtering fresh milk. This information was so puzzling that we tried to find out about it whenever we came across an informant who knew about *k’adil’ka*. In one village we were presented with an explanation. The lexeme *k’adil’ka* comes from the noun *kadilo*, the thurible used in the church, because in the extremely hard times after the Second World War, this object was taken from the church as an instrument for filtering milk. It might appear incredible, but it can anyhow be maintained that *k’adil’ka* does not designate any old instrument belonging to traditional peasant culture in the same way as *cep* does it.

The villages along the shores of Lake Peypus are more intact than those in the south in the sense that they have been less affected by migration and are therefore more stable communities because the younger generations have not fled them altogether. But in contrast to the more southern villages they are culturally curiously one-dimensional. Everything is connected with fish and all attention is directed towards fishing. As an answer to how they made their living, the unanimous response was *ezdili v ozero*, as the fishing activity was generally referred to as *ezdit’ v ozero*. Other activities such as agriculture are very limited and when we asked, for instance, about weav-

ing, the answer was often that this was a kind of activity they knew very little of in the villages. The major village along the shore is the large village of Ostrovcy, first mentioned along with Podoleše *sub anno* 1462 in the Pskov chronicles when the area was attacked by the Teutonic Knights: *nemcy požgoša Ostrovcy i Podolešie i mnogich christian prisžekli i v polon svergli* [Пс.Лет-2, 53]. 'the Germans burned Ostrovcy and Podolešie and slaughtered many peasants and threw (them) into captivity'. These and later similar events indicate that the population in this area has been subjected to a number of catastrophes which make it hard to assume that continuity could have been preserved here since the very earliest Slavic immigrants arrived. And if such a continuity is hard to maintain, the less probable it is that Proto-Slavic archaisms should have been preserved in this very area. Some generations after the events referred to above took place, by the end of the 16th century, the same area was attacked and sacked by the Swedes, actions repeated also in the early 18th century. Reminiscences of these events can be ascertained by microtoponymics such as *švedskoe kladbišče*, the Swedish Cemetery outside the village of Mda, where we were told that remains of human bodies had been found. The same applies to *švedskajačasnja* the Swedish Chapel, in the village of *Raskopel'*. However, the fact that this chapel was now Orthodox does weaken the assumption that Swedes had been operating here.

Leaving the northern shore of the peninsula the road to Gdov passes the village of *Zalachtov'e*, reminding us that the larger part of the today's *Pskovskaja oblast'* is ancient Finno-Ugrian territory, inhabited by Balto-Finnic tribes prior to the arrival of the Slavs in the latter half of the first millennium. It is very probable that the Balto-Finnic population in this area were the ancestors of the Vodians, now practically extinct, but in the first half of the present century still living along the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, in Ingermanland. That the Vodians have been a tribe to reckon with is indicated by the fact that one of the parts, *pjatiny*, of the Republic of Novgorod was called the *Vodskaja pjatina*. It is therefore very probable that the name of the village *Zalachtov'e* is left over from Balto-Finnic, probably from the ancestors of the Vodians, as the root of the toponym corresponds to Finnish *lahti*, meaning bay, and today's toponym means 'on the other side of the bay', constructed in the same way as numerous other toponyms in the land of Pskov and elsewhere in Russian and the Slavic world. Another possibility, as indicated by Mel'nikov [1984, 65], is that the toponym is a contamination of the Russian *zaliv*, meaning bay, and Finnic *lahti* with the same meaning.

So, when travelling in Pskovia, it has to be kept in mind that the major part of it is ancient Finno-Ugrian territory. But the name of the most important town on the eastern shore of Lake Peypus can hardly be interpreted

on the basis of Balto-Finnic. The name of the *prigorodok* Gdov has been compared to *Gdów* and *Gdańsk* in Poland, and not least with the Lithuanian name for Belarus, *Gudai*. All these toponyms have been connected with the Goths. So is also the case with Gdov, where an older form could have been based on **gōd-*, also referring to the Goths. As an old Germanic presence to the east of the Peypus Lake is hard to ascertain, this toponym might be connected not with the Goths, but with the Gotland, renowned for its trade and connections with the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea [Vasmer 1971, 577]. As the local inhabitants have not participated in the scholarly discussion as to the origin of the name of their town, they call it Vdov, probably as an abbreviation of **vō gōdov*, turning into **Vogdov* after the fall of the yers, associating it with CSR *vdova*, widow. And as a town of widows it has certainly been, as it is first mentioned in the chronicles in 1323 [Ис/Jer-1, 15] when it was taken by the Teutonic Knights. During the centuries it was a constant theatre of war. After the Great Northern War it lost its military significance and turned into a obscure provincial town, a characteristic which nobody would claim that it has not preserved to this very day. The town did, however, possess a huge church, a cathedral which the regime blew up in the beginning of the sixties. But as Valerij and I passed on a rainy afternoon, we felt no inclination to stop to explore it. We were more eager to get into the wilderness to the east of Lake Peypus, along a road leading from Gdov to Pljussa partly following an old *trakt* into the land of Novgorod.

Heading towards the basin of the river Pljussa we did indeed find ourselves deep in the wilderness. The road was in extremely bad shape and the forest seemed to be endless with few villages. In the few that we passed we soon discovered that many of the houses were bought by people from St. Petersburg and turned into summer-houses, and the presence of the huge city in the north east was gradually making itself felt. Having crossed the river Pljussa, we drove into the village of *Serbino* late at night. The position of the village was marvellous, high above the river Pljussa with forest in all directions. But its beautiful position had apparently been of no avail for the inhabitants, of whom all but a very few had left long ago. Leaving *Serbino*, we continued along the road leading from Gdov to Pljussa. And before reaching this small town, we were able to ascertain a lexical isogloss. Until we reached the village Dolžicy, we had recorded the lexeme *kež* with initial velar, but in this village and all the way further to the south, the same lexeme was pronounced with initial affricate, *cež*. As this lexeme constitutes one of the alleged archaisms of the land of Pskov, it is of interest to ascertain its isogloss. The lexeme is, however, known further to the north with initial velar. When I was making recordings some two years later, in

1994, among the Vepsians living along the river *Ojat'* on the isthmus between the great lakes Ladoga and Onega, I also asked about *kisel'*, without getting the answer I wanted, namely *kež*. When I so finally asked whether they knew any word *kež* I was told that was what was called *po-čudski*, i.e. Finnic, in this case it could only mean Vepsian. It appears therefore appropriate to ask whether the doublet *kež/cež* has come into being due to a Finnic substrate, as we know that the greater part of the land of Pskov originally was inhabited by a Balto-Finnic population, above all in the north where its assimilation of by the Slavs was not concluded by the turn of the century. The possibility of a substrate interpretation should therefore not be excluded out of hand. An alternative interpretation could be that in this case a kind of word-internal dissimilation has taken place. In an area where *cokan'e* must have been a feature of the vernacular, the initial affricate could have been replaced by the velar. This appears to have been the case with another doublet: *cevka/kevca*, the 'bobbin'. On the basis of the complete material of the POS archives it can be concluded that the suffix *-ka* is recorded exclusively with the root *cev-*, while the suffix *-ca* is recorded exclusively with the root *kev-*. There are few, if any examples such as **cevca* or **kevka*. Due attention has to be paid to these observations when discussing the possibility that *kevca* represents a Proto-Slavic archaism. But, of course, if *kež* as well as *kevca* can be considered to represent the Proto-Slavic roots **kojǫ-* and **kojv-* respectively, these arguments might not be considered conclusive. In order to strengthen the argumentation proposed here, attention has to be directed to lexemes which cannot possibly be considered Slavic. For if similar doublets are recorded with regard to lexemes which cannot be considered Slavic, the arguments in support of the archaic, Proto-Slavic character of *kevca* and *kež* is correspondingly weakened. According to Dal' and SRNG there is recorded a lexeme *kež* which means handle, *deržalka*, *rukojatka cepa*. The only etymological interpretation proposed for this word is found in Vasmer [1967, 221], where the suggestion is made that the word is a loan from Balto-Finnic, cf. Finnish and Estonian *käsi*, 'hand', possibly as an abbreviation of *käsipuu*, 'handle'. If this interpretation holds true, a major problem arises when a variant *cež* is recorded by Dal'. For if it can be ascertained that there exists a doublet *kež/cež* which for obvious reasons has come into being after the word *käsi* entered the Russian language, it becomes hard to maintain that the first doublet *kež/cež* represent an archaism. It might on the other hand be far more relevant to point out that Estonian *käsi* corresponds to Vodian *tšäsi*, as all velars before front vowels in Vodian, in contrast to the case in all remaining Balto-Finnic languages, are palatalised. And this change has in Vodian been very plausibly interpreted as due to Slavic influence [Posti

1958]. As velars in this position were still unchanged in the vernacular in the dialects of those Vodians in Ingermanland who was deported to Kurland in the 15th century, this change must have occurred in Vodian after that time due to extensive contacts with the Slavic neighbours to the south. These considerations do lend credence to the assumption that the alleged archaisms are rather recent innovations.

Having passed Pljussa, following the main road to Porchov, we soon found ourselves in the basin of the river *Šelon'*. The name of the river testifies to old dialectal features of the local vernacular. A typical feature of old Pskovian literature was *šokan'e*, i.e. the merger of /s/ and /š/, analogical to *cokan'e* where /c/ and /č/ merged. The latter is recorded over a larger area, while the former feature is restricted to texts from Pskov. It has therefore been proposed that the name of the river is based on *sol'*, 'salt', as it was an important waterway for the transportation of salt from Staraja Russa at the southern shore of Lake Il'men' into the land of Pskov. The town of Sol'cy also owns its designation to salt. This interpretation proposed by Popov [1981, 34] seems plausible, above all when it is taken into consideration that *šokan'e* still is a feature of the vernacular along the river *Šelon'*. In the village of *Boroviči* the *šepeljavost'* as *šokan'e* is called by Russian dialectologist, is rather conspicuous in contrast to the area which we just had passed through. But whether it is possible to conclude that /s/ vs. /š/ and /z/ vs. /ž/ really had merged phonemically, depends on further, more detailed investigations of the dialect of *Boroviči*.

Even though the upper reaches of the river *Šelon'* now belong to the *Pskovskaja oblast'*, this is historically Novgorodian land, and we did also get the strong impression that we had left the land of Pskov. Driving towards the south, we headed for *Novoržev*, a true Pskovian town. But before we reached it, we were provided with the opportunity to see the difference between the Pskovian and Novgorodian lands. Generally, the land of Novgorod is low, flat and the soil extremely moist, filled by marshes, therefore the vegetation in many parts of it is low trees and bushes. The land of Pskov is higher, drier with bigger trees and in some parts presents quite a hilly landscape. Just to the south of Porchov we passed along some of the higher parts, the *Sudomskaja vozvyšennost'*, the Sudoma heights, reaching 294 meters above sea level. Despite the apparent Biblical connotation, the toponym testifies to Finno-Ugrian presence in this area prior to the arrival of the Slavs as the last part of it is most reasonably interpreted as corresponding to Finnish and Estonian *maa*, 'land'. According to Vasmer the Finno-Ugrian population inhabited the area to the north of a line stretching from Pskov to Moskva. That means *Sudoma* is some of the most southern Finno-Ugrian toponyms in the Pskovian land. But it is not the southernmost

of the heights in it. Further to the south there arises the even higher *Bežanickij* height which reaches 324 m. These two heights are separated by the valley of the river Sorot' which flows from the east to west into the river Velikaja. According to Vasmer [1971, 246] this toponym corresponds to Lithianian *Sartai*, fixed in the hydronymic *Pasartè* as well. If this is the case, then the Slavs must have acquired this toponym **sart-* at a time when pleophony had not yet occurred or at a time when this change was still operating, i.e. not later than the end of the 9th century. In any case, this toponym testifies to the presence of Balts in this area prior to the arrival of the Slavs. Just a few kilometres to the south of the confluence of Sorot' with Velikaja, the river Issa meets it. If Vasmer again is to be accepted, this hydronym is based on Balto-Finnic *Isojoki*, 'Big river', recorded in many areas along with *Isojärvi*, 'Big lake'. If Issa really is Balto-Finnic and Sorot' Baltic, this area between and to the west of Sudomaa and the Bežanickij heights was the place where the Balts and the Balto-Finns met before the Slavs entered the area and erased any trace of the earlier populations in it.

In this valley of Sorot' the *Puškinskie gory* is situated. The town bore the name of *Tobolenc* until 1924 when it was renamed to commemorate the 100 years that had passed since Puškin was exiled to the *Michajlovskoe* estate just outside of it. The *Svjatogorskij monasryr'* where Puškin and many of his ancestors are buried and the Michajlovskoe estate were turned by the Soviet regime into a sanctuary, into a place to pilgrimage to pay homage to Puškin, as an icon of the humanistic values that the authorities claimed to represent. And the landscape is beautiful, the estate and its surroundings absolutely worth a visit and even a longer stay. As the surroundings are more or less untouched by modern civilisation, it is possible to stand in front of the modest *usad'ba* of Michajlovskoe and look out over a landscape which must be more or less identical with what one Puškin could see 170 years ago. No modern installations ruin the sight, to the right the lake of Petrovskoe is seen sunk in green.

After a long day at Michajlovskoe, we made some recordings in the nearby villages, above all in Kirrilovo where also Černyšev had worked. After that we drove to the opposite end of the lake and managed to find a place where we could drive all the way down to the shore. There we put up our tent, lit a bonfire and made our supper. It was a beautiful evening, the air soft and warm without any wind. As it grew darker we could see how other bonfires lit up on the opposite shore. There was even a man in a small boat in the middle of the lake, sitting motionless with a fishing rod in his hands. And we were sitting at the bonfire as we had been doing every evening for three weeks, discussing our day, what we had explored and what we had learned, and most of all, what we had not understood from

what we had learned, wondering what the land of Pskov might still have in store for us. As every evening the conversation was lively, inspiring as it always is with Valerij. Daring hypotheses were proposed as attempts to solve many of the riddles we had come across. And remembering the spell of a Russian summer night at the beach of the Petrovskoe ozero, I am very pleased to pay tribute to my companion, Valerij, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, because without him I would not have had the opportunity to discover Russia in the way I did.

Abbreviations:

CSR: *Contemporary Standard Russian*

POS: *Псковский областной словарь*, вып. 1-, Ленинград, 1967-.

SRNG: *Словарь русских народных говоров*, вып. 1-, Ленинград, 1965-.

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