

A History of the East Slavic Imperfect

Bill Darden

0. Introduction

In this paper I will focus on the history of the imperfect in East Slavic. I trust that no Slavic linguist doubts that there was in Proto-Slavic an imperfect tense. There is also no doubt that it no longer exists in East Slavic languages. Therefore East Slavic had an imperfect and lost it. It is likely that the imperfect was the first of the Proto-Slavic tense forms to be lost in East Slavic. It was replaced by the past tense formed with the suffix *-I-*, which comes from the Proto-Slavic present perfect. The question then is: when did the imperfect disappear? Did it disappear before the introduction of writing, or did it last long enough to be a part of the native language of literate East Slavs? If that is so, how do we determine how long it lasted in the colloquial language, when all the evidence we have is written documents?

There are marked differences in the distribution of tense forms that refer to past acts in Old East Slavic (OES), depending on the type of document. In religious texts and in chronicles, the dominant forms are the aorist and imperfect. In early narrative texts, the perfect never refers to an action in the narrative progression. Laws, treaties, deeds, wills and letters, generally referred to as "*delovye dokumenty*," show a markedly different distribution. The overwhelmingly dominant form which refers to past action is the perfect. Several scholars take the absence of aorists and imperfects in *delovye dokumenty* as evidence that such forms are either not part of 'actual' Old East Slavic OES or are high style forms. Uspenskij (2002:215) suggests that the imperfect and perhaps the aorist had disappeared from the language before the introduction of writing (what he calls the first South Slavic influence). Zaliznjak (1995) is so sure that the writers of birchbark letters had no imperfect in their language that when he finds one, he uses that as evidence that the writer was a cleric or someone who had command of the high-style language. Avanesov and Ivanov (1982: 84) put in bold print their assertion that the imperfect did not exist in the colloquial language in the 12th century, but they immediately hedge on this claim, because of the formal innovations in the OES imperfect which I will discuss below.

There is a logical problem with assuming that the absence of a particular construction or form in a finite corpus says anything at all about the dialect in question, much less about OES as a whole. The absence may be accidental. We need to show that because of the semantics of the utterances, the form should have been used. Uspenskii cites no examples of perfects used in narrative function before the thirteenth century. The earliest document that he cites which has examples of nonnarrative perfects in uses which seem to compete with aorists and imperfects is the *Pouchenie Vladimira Mononaxa*, which is a fourteenth century copy of an early twelfth century document.

The best arguments for the inherited status of the East Slavic imperfect were raised by Durnovo (1924: 321, 326). He pointed out that innovations in the form of the imperfect had created uniquely East Slavic forms. The East Slavic innovations include: (1) the consistent coalescence of the vowel sequences *-ѣa-* and *-aa-*, with the result of *-ѧ* - being *-ѧ-* (spelled with the letters *ѧ* or *ѧ*), as opposed to South Slavic *-ѣ:* (2) the replacement of the sequence *-ѣta*, *-ѣte* in the second and third dual, second plural endings by *-sta*, *-ste*; (3) the elimination of the expected results of the consonant plus jod

sequences in the imperfects of -i- stem verbs, replaced by consonant plus æ, and (4) the optional addition of -t plus front jer in the third person singular and plural of the imperfects.

There is a fifth argument that Maslov (1954) could have raised, had he been interested in the issue. Maslov demonstrated that the function of the perfective imperfect is the same in Old East Slavic, Old Czech, and Old Croatian, and agrees with the few forms found in Old Church Slavic. The perfective imperfect is so rare in OCS that it is very difficult to believe that its use could be learned by simply reading and copying the OCS documents. Professional Slavists did not begin to figure this out until the early twentieth century. If East Slavs used it in a way that is arguably Common Slavic, then this use was almost certainly inherited.

Perfective imperfects, according to Maslov, were used to describe repeated sequences of events where the earlier events are completed before the following ones, and the actions are such as would be described with perfective verbs as single events. The perfective is also used with negation, with the nuance that a specific act was deliberately not performed, and in modal use--as potential in the past. Actually, essentially all of Maslov's examples of repeated sequences with perfective imperfects are slightly modal--at least in the sense that Howard Aronson (1977) argues that the modern Bulgarian perfective imperfect is modal. They are introduced by clauses beginning with "if, or with relative pronouns or adverbs which can be translated as "whoever, whenever, wherever," etc. "Whoever, whenever," etc. introduce the semantics of an *any* quantifier ("anybody who, anytime that"). *Any* quantifiers treat events as individualized but potential, which makes sense for perfective verbs. Perfective nonpasts have a similar function in modern Russian. The connection of "any" with negation is obvious in English, but is not necessarily modal.

There are counter arguments that can be raised. Uspenskii (2002: 220) suggests that the differences in form of the East Slavic imperfects arose because they were unfamiliar with the form. He presents no other case where the east Slavs added to or otherwise changed forms which they found unfamiliar in OCS, but which did not exist in their native language. What they generally did was either replace the forms by native forms or adapt the OCS forms as copied, according to the way they pronounced the letters in native words. Thus the instrumental singular *-омъ* of o-stem nouns was generally replaced by *-ъмъ*, while the acc. pl. of jo-stems, OCS *ѧ*, was adopted as a variant ending, but with the pronunciation of that letter as it appeared in words they knew, [æ]. The adoption was based on their own oral reading, so that it could then be represented in the various other ways that they spelled [æ], i.e. *ѧ*, or in a position of neutralization after a palatal, as ѧ.

We might assume that the coalescence of vowels and the phonetic realization of that process were the result of original or continuing influence of Bulgarian. Bulgarian also eliminated the -j- alternation. The beginnings of this are found in Surpasliensis. The epenthetic / after labials is systematically eliminated, and there are two examples of the elimination of the d > žd alternation (Ivanova-Mirčeva and Xaralampiev, 1999: 139): *prixoděaxQ*, *ne raděaxQ*. The change of -šeta to sta, etc. is widespread in South Slavic, and is not consistent in East Slavic, so it might really be irrelevant. The process of coalescence of vowels took place in Bulgarian as well, and had started in Old Church Slavic, with -ѣa- > є. Since the phonetic value of the letter є in Bulgaro-Macedonian

was probably [æ], we might assume that the East Slavs merely borrowed the form orally, and spelled it with their letters for [æ], namely *ѧ* or *ѧ*. However, *ѣ* was otherwise borrowed as *ѣ*, even when the OCS word containing it was foreign to East Slavic. Thus in Ipatiev'skaia we find from **peln-* OCS borrowings *плѣнениѧ*, *плѣноваху*, compared to OES *пополониша*, *полонѣнныи*. When the texts deviate from the Church Slavic spelling of *ѣ* they spell it with *e*, as in *пленаху*. Nevertheless, one could still hypothesize that the imperfect was the sole case of a phonetic borrowing of *ѣ* as [æ].

The addition of the -*t* plus *jer* in the third person, however, is a clear East Slavic innovation. The claim that East Slavs might have added -*ть* to the third person imperfect because they did not know the form, rather than because they thought it belonged there, is silly. This certainly does not explain why they added this element in copying Church Slavic documents.

Overall, I think that the case against an inherited East Slavic imperfect is very weak. The question is how to investigate that claim, or, having rejected the claim, how to determine when the imperfect changed or was eliminated from the living language. What I propose to do in this study is to look at the history of the imperfect and its interaction with the perfect in original East Slavic documents. I will try to determine the chronology of the spread of the leveling of the consonantal alternations, and the length of time of preservation of the correctly used perfective imperfect. I will also look for early attestations of the spread of the perfect into uses which I would expect the imperfect or aorist. This study will only add to our knowledge, rather than provide a final answer, since I have not looked at all the original East Slavic documents.

There are several methodological points that I would like to make before I introduce the evidence.

0.1 Texts

For data, I use the Lavrentovskaja and Ipat'evskaja letopisi (with variants in Ostrovskij 2003), both the starshij and the mladshij editions of the Novgorod First Chronicle, the versions of the Tale of Boris and Gleb, the Miracles of Boris and Gleb, and the Life of Feodosii found in the Uspenskij sbornik, and the birchbark letters found in Zaliznjak (1995), with one additional example from Zaliznjak (2004). I have also looked at the examples used as arguments in various historical grammars. The chronicles are available as digitized texts, so I have been able to at least look briefly at every imperfect that is spelled out in the chronicles. The Uspenskij sbornik has a word index, which I used to examine all the words which have consonantal alternations in the formation of the imperfect. I also used the word index to check for perfective imperfects in the life of Feodosii..

0.2 Dating linguistic forms

The dating of attestations in copies of documents is always a problem. I will accept without comment the dates given for the birchbark letters in Zaliznjak. For items from chronicles and compilations, there are three possible dates, with attendant doubts about our precise knowledge of each: the date of authorship, the date of compilation, and the date of the copy. The relevance of these dates depends on whether we think we are dealing with an innovation or a preserved archaism. If we are dealing with an innovation, such as the spread of the perfect, then we can not be sure that innovation occurred before

the date of the copy. If we have several manuscripts which agree, the innovation is likely to go back at least to the date of the divergence of the manuscript versions. In the case of the Primary Chronicle, an agreement in the form of an innovation between the Lavrentovskij and Ipat'evskij versions is either a statistical accident or goes back to about 1119, when the manuscript traditions diverge. In the case of the other chronicles, there is no clear idea of the date of the divergence of the ms. families. The earliest copies of the Kievan Chronicle and the Galician-Volynian Chronicle are in Ipat'evskaja, in a 15th century copy. The Lavrentovskaja, containing the Primary Chronicle and the Vladimir-Suzdal' Chronicle, is from the late 14th. The Starshij izvod of the Novgorod 1st Chronicle is from the 14th century, while the earliest copies of the *Mladshij izvod* are from the 15th century. The *Uspenskij sbornik* is in a copy from about 1200. The Tale of Boris and Gleb has to have been written after 1019 (Jaroslav's victory over Svyatopolk), and may date from late in Jaroslav's term (1050's). The tale of the miracles of Boris and Gleb is later. The life of Feodosij cannot have been written before 1074, when he died, and is thought to have been written in the 1080's.

I will assume that the proper use of a perfective imperfect is a preserved archaism. When we find one in a chronicle, I assume that it was preserved at least up to the date of authorship of the document. It is very unlikely that any chronicles were written before the reign of Jaroslav I, 1019-1054. Shakhmatov thought that the first compilation was in the late 1030's. To be conservative, I will assume that the earliest date of writing of a chronicle account of a year after 1020 is the year under which it is noted.

Even if we can determine the date of attestation, we have to decide how to interpret the data. Since the ultimate result was the replacement of the imperfect and aorist by the perfect, we can look for the first evidence of the process in the spread of the perfect to new functions. To notice that, we would like to have a clear idea of what the original function of the perfect was. We cannot assume that we know what a perfect should mean. To detect the spread of the perfect at the expense of the imperfect or aorist, we must also know the function of those tense forms.

We have no reason to expect the replacement of the imperfect and aorist by the present perfect to be instantaneous, or even rapid. We should expect it to first compete with the older forms in certain uses, then more generally, and finally to replace them. The discovery of a perfect where we might expect an imperfect does not mean that the perfect has replaced the imperfect in that function, only that it is in competition with it. It certainly does not indicate that the imperfect has disappeared in all functions.

We know from English that there are many sentence types and contexts where both the present perfect and the simple past are allowed, and sometimes even native speakers have a hard time explaining the reasons for picking one over the other. This clearly does not mean that one of the forms is moribund. From Bulgarian, we know that the forms of the perfect and the aorist or imperfect can continue in new functions. For Bulgarian Aronson (1967) and for Macedonian Friedman (1977: 115) have argued that the erstwhile present perfect is now the unmarked past, but within their evidential category, the aorist and imperfect have functions similar to those they had in Old Bulgarian.

In looking at the texts, the innovations that I will discuss are (1) the morphological leveling of the consonant-jod alternations in the imperfect; (2) the first instances of perfects in competition with imperfects and aorists, and concomitantly (3)

evidence of new functions of the perfect. The only conservative archaism that I will look for is the proper use of perfective imperfects.

0.2 Determining aspect and derivational source

Aspect in early Slavic was more fluid than it is in the modern languages. I have tried to be as conservative as possible in identifying perfective imperfects, which means that I have almost certainly missed some. This is particularly a problem with imperfects from i-stem verbs. A form like *pristavljaše* may be an imperfect from the perfective *pristaviti* or the derived imperfective *pristavljati*. There is a systematic ambiguity, and that may have been part of the motivation for eliminating the consonantal alternation, producing a perfective *pristavjaše*. Unless an ambiguous form was in an absolutely clear perfective environment, or was conjoined with other perfectives, I have interpreted the form as from the imperfective verb. In fact, in the texts that I studied, I found only one clear case of a perfective i-stem with a consonantal alternation in the formation of the imperfect.

This policy obviously affects decisions as to whether there is a consonantal alternation in the formation of the imperfect of an i-stem verb. If there is or should be a derived imperfect with the alternation created by the process of imperfectivization, then I treat the form as imperfective and ignore the alternation, i.e., unless forced by the semantics, I would treat *pristavljaše* as imperfective, thus not having an alternation due to the formation of the imperfect. Since I found only one clear perfective with the alternation, I per force use imperfects from imperfective i-stem verbs in making claims about retained patterns of alternation.

Maslov (1954) notes that stative verbs like *ležati*, *stojati*, *sěděti* retain their stative meaning with prefixes and are thus still imperfective. The same might be expected of motion verbs with directional prefixes, but I found only one case of this in an imperfect, *pred'idjaše* in a biblical-based passage:

Lav. 96 ведаše та Гсдь путемъ по пустыни къ Черымному морю . и предъидаше
предъ ними нощью столпъ угненъ а въ днъ wблаченъ
The Lord led then on a path though the desert to the Red Sea, and there went before them
at night a column of fire, and during the day (a column) of cloud.

It is worth noting that *pred-* in this case is a positional prefix, not a directional one.

There are four verbs that occur in the imperfect in contexts where I expect imperfectives: *sъkazati*'tell', *povědati*'tell, relate', *kupiti* 'buy', and *poslušati*'heed'. They are all attested in true present meaning or as present active participles with imperfective reading. *Sъkazati* has a present *sъkazaju*; *povědati* seems to have been originally paired with a clear perfective *pověděti*, and it is even possible that there was an imperfective *poslušáti* paired with *poslúšati*. I will assume that these verbs are at least bi-aspectual. Maslov suggests that the verb *dati*'give' is sometimes interpreted as imperfective in OCS. I found no such examples with imperfect *dadjaše*, etc. *Daxu* is imperfective, but I assume that that is a shortened **dajaxu*.

1. The early system

I am assuming that at the earliest period, in the texts that I am using, the aorist was the unmarked past. Its primary stylistic function was as a narrative past. The imperfect could indicate durative or iterative action overlapping with a point of reference in the past. Since the reference point could be provided by an aorist, the imperfect could indicate an action coordinated with another action in the past (the aorist). In narrative, the imperfect could also indicate a durative or iterative activity whose starting point is in the narrative sequence, but whose end point is not specified. I have already mentioned the primary function of perfective imperfects.

For the initial functions of the present perfect, I will use the functions that I found for the present perfect in the Primary Chronicle, discussed in Darden (1995). With one or two possible exceptions, the perfects are **present** perfects in the sense that they designate present results of past actions or are past actions relevant to specified present contexts. About two thirds of the present perfects in the Primary Chronicle are present resultative forms that are easily translatable as English present perfects. The label "translatable as English present perfects" may not be precise, but it is useful for English-speaking readers to start with this use and discuss deviations. An example of a "normal" resultative perfect is:

- 1) Lav. 42. конь оумерль єс а та живъ
The horse has died, but I am alive.

One of the differences between the Old ES perfect and the Modern English perfect is that in OES, a present perfect could be used for an action with a present result, even in a purely past context. An example is:

- 2) Lav. 52 мы же елико нась хрѣслиса єсмы клахомъса црквию стго Ильѣ въ сборнѣи цркви . и предлежащемъ чѣтнмъ крѣстомъ
Those of us who have been baptized (who were Christians would be more normal English) swore by the Church of St. Elijah in the Cathedral, and by the proffered honored cross.

One of the major differences in the use of the OES present perfect was in what I called the “logical resultative” use. In these cases, a clause with a present perfect provides evidence or justification for a statement or imperative in the narrative present. This is an evidential use which is natural for present perfects. An example with a “normal” perfect is:

- 3) и рече Свѣнелдъ и Асмолдъ кназъ оуже почаль потагнѣте дружина по кназѣ
And Sveneld and Asmold said “The Prince has already started, follow the prince, druzhina.”

OES perfects of this type sometimes cannot be translated as present perfects in English. Most of them are linked to imperatives. An example is:

- 4) Lav 86 рец же Володимеръ Нѣмцемъ . идѣте шпать тако ѿци наши сего не

пригали суть

Volodimer said to the Germans: "Go back, for our fathers did not accept this."

An example with a statement in the present tense is:

- 5) Lav 28 тѣмже Словѣнъску ѧзыку . оучитель есть Аньдронигъ апѣль в
Моравы бо ходіль и апѣль Павель оучиль ту . ту бо есть Илюрикъ егоже
дошѣд апѣль Павель ту бѣша Словене первое.
Thus the teacher of the Slavic people is the apostle Andronicus. For he went to
Morava and the apostle Paul taught there; for that place is Illiria, to which the
apostle Paul went; the Slavs were there first.

Perfects of this type could be the first step toward the reinterpretation of the present perfect as a past tense. In general, present perfects in the Primary Chronicle do not occur with adverbs which specify past times. However, in this evidential use, one can conceive of the relevance of an act with a specific adverb of time which could be used as a justification for a conclusion or order in the present. The closest thing to this in the Primary Chronicle is:

- 6) Ipat. 233 како ма хотать ѧти .ѡногды цѣловалі хрестъ рекуще . аще кто на
кого будеть хрестъ [Х. П на того да] и мы вси
Lav. 258 како ма хотать ѧти а who мнѣ цѣловавше [РА оногды целовала]
крѣсъ рекуще аще кто на кого будеть то на того будѣт крѣсть и мы вси
How could they want to seize me? They (have) just recently (onogdy) kissed the
cross, saying that if anyone attacks anyone, the cross and we all will be against
him. [The oath is reported two columns earlier, under the same year.]

There is one line in the Primary Chronicle that seems to have a perfect in a narrative passage. It is found under the year 1065, Ostrowski (2003: 1301), line 164,5 shows the following variants (somewhat simplified, to ignore superscripts):

Laur: в се же лѣтѣ Всеславъ рать почаль
Radz Всеславъ ж в се лѣтѣ рат почал
Acad Всеславъ же в се лѣто рат копилъ
Нур в то же лѣто . Всеславъ . сѣде рать почаль
Khleb в се же лѣто Всеславъ рать почаль

The variants found in the mladshii izvod of the Novgorod First Chronicle are:

Comm. В се же лѣто почати Всеславъ

N Acad: В се же лѣто нача всеславъ рать строити

Tols. В се же лѣто нача всеславъ рать строити

In the Strashii Izvod of the Novgorod Chronicle we find:

Почя Всѣславъ рать дръжати

All the reconstructions cited by Ostrowski reconstruct:

в се же лѣто Всеславъ рать почаль
However, the oldest version is supposed to have been copied into the Novgorod Chronicle. The Commissionnyi version has *поча рать копити*, and forms of both these verbs show up in versions of the Primary Chronicle, it is at least possible that the original version had both verbs, and the original is indeed *поча рать копити*.

2. Birchbark Documents, 11th-12th Century

Birchbark letters have many present perfects that refer to past acts, but in the early letters these perfects are in syntactic relationship to presents or imperatives, and typically justify orders, requests, threats. They thus fit into the category of "logical resultatives" which I used to account for some of the uses in the Primary Chronicle. However the justifications can be extended passages, and in some cases there are overt adverbs referring to the past. [In the following passages I will transliterate *ѧ* as *æ*, *ѩ* as *ja*.] The page numbers are from Zaliznjak (2004).

2.1 Normal Perfects

1) p 249 #752 (1180-1100)

tobě triščdъ а въ sju nedělju съть do тънъ zъla
to you three times this week. What toward me bad feeling

imeesi ože e[s]i kъ тънѣ ньprixodilъ а æzъ тæ esmѣla aky bratъ
have you, that you have to me not come, and I you have treated like a brother.

sobě ci oužе ti esmъ zaděla sъljuci a tobě vědě æko estъ ne godъnъ
Already have I offended you sending (letters)?, To you I know it is displeasing.

aže by ti godъnъ to [iz] ocsju by sæ vutъrgo pritškль
If you were pleased, then from eyes you would have torn yourself away and come.

2) p 293 #421 (1120's-1130's?, possibly second half of 12th Cen.)

ot Brataetъ kъ Nežilou poidi sunu domovъ Svobodne esi paki ne
From Brataeta to Nezhil Come, son, home. Free you are. (If) back you don't

ideši a paslou n тæ æbъtъnikъ ...æ zaplatilъ k grvnъ a ty svbonъ
come, I will send after you a jabednik . I have paid 20 grivnas and you are free

2.2 Present result/ justification/ logical result

3) p 267 #644 (1110-1130)

ot Nězeke ko Zavid...

čemou ne vosoleši četo ti esemo vodala kovati. æ dala tobě
Why not you send what to you I have given to forge. I gave it to you ,

a Něžætě ne dala ali čimo esemo vinovata a vosoli otroko
but to Nezhæte I didn't give it. If in something I am at fault then send an official.

Vodale mi esi xameče a či za to ne dasi a
You gave me a metal plate. If because of that you will not give (it), then

vosoli mi věstъ a ne sestra æ vamo ože takо dělaete
send me the information. But no sister am I to you, that you act this way,

ne ispravítъ mi ničeto že.
you won't do for me anything.

4) p. 259 #238 (end of 11th cen. - mid 1110's)
..... nesъdicevi polъ pætě rezaně a mъně esi vъdale dъvě kouně.
.....to Nes"dic 4 1/2 rezanas, while to me you gave two kunas.

съто је за тъноju tvoriš за тъноju осмъ kounъ i grivъna.
Why do you say I am obligated for eight kunas and a grivna.

poidi је въ gorodъ mogou sæ sъ toboju æti na vodou.
Come to town. I can with you take the water test.

5) p 257 #109 (end of 11th to mid 1110's)
Gramota ôtъ žiznomira kъ mikoule
Gramota from Zhiznomira to Mikula

koupilъ esi robou plъskove a nyne mæ vъ tomъ æla kъnægyni a nyne
You bought a (female) slave in Pskov, and today me about that accosted the Princess.

sæ droužina po mæ poroučila a nyne ka posъli kъ tomou mouževi
Today the družina vouched for me. Today send to that man

gramotou e li ou nego roba a se ti xočou kone koupivъ i
a gramota (asking) Has he the slave?. And this I want you to do: buy a horse and

kъnæžъ moužъ vъsadivъ ta na sъvody a ty ače esi ne vъzalъ
put one of the prince's men on it . they (go) to the hearing, and you, if you haven't taken

kounъ texъ a ne emli ničъto že ou nego
the money, then don't take anything from him.

3. 3 logical result/justification with past time adverb

6) p. 261 (end of 11th -first third of 12th) document on lead plate #1.

Ot Nosъka kъ Mѣstаtě.

from Nosъk to Mestæta

zaožeričь otrokъ

official from Zaozero ?direct object?

loni krili

last year [they] bought [perf].

soužьdaļьсь xodoutiničь

Xodutinich from Suzdal

vъzъmi dově grivъně na namъ.

should collect two grivnas as a loan payment

The function of the two noun phrases is not at all clear, but the verb phrase is clear. The use of the past adverb *loni* 'last year' makes it difficult to analyze *krili* as a present perfect. We apparently have to say that it is now a past tense used to present evidence or justification for the [nonpast] imperative *vъzъmi*.

2.4 Narrative Perfects

Gramota 724, dated between 1161 and 1167, is a long report in which an agent explains why he was unable to collect the expected tribute from a group of people. We could claim that the whole thing is a justification, but some of it seems to be a clear narrative, using perfects. This then may be the earliest use of perfects for narrative. I will present one sentence in which a perfect replaces an expected imperfect, with no discernable present result, and a short narrative sequence.

p. 350 #724 (1161-1167)

ostatъ dani ispraviti bylo imъ doseni

they were to send the rest of the tribute before autumn

We could expect an imperfect of the verb *byti* in this sentence. The narrative section is:

po tom prišli smerdi ot Anъdrěja. mužь prijali

then came smerds from Andrei. They took a man

i dane otjali ljudье i osъmъ vysjagla.

and people took away the tribute and eight left.

2.5 Aorists / imperfects

It is not true that there are no imperfects or aorists in birchbark letters, but there

are very few. Zaliznjak takes the presence of such forms as evidence that the writer is using the high style. There are three relevant examples. (The letters within square brackets are only partially readable, while those in parentheses are reconstructed.) Two of them have perfects alongside aorists or imperfects. We could consider the perfects to be intrusions from the colloquial language into high style writing. We might also assume that the writers know what they are doing, and try to figure out why they use each form.

If we accept the claim that there was a stylistic (or grammatical) use of the perfect for the presentation of evidence and justification, then we can posit a rational distribution for the perfect versus the imperfect and aorist. The aorists and imperfects are in objective statements about the past, while the perfects are in passages which provide justification or evidence.

1) p. 246 # 605 (end of 1080's - c. 1133)

poklanaenie ôt Efrem kъ bratou moemou Isouxiě.
Greetings from Efrem to my brother Isuxija

Ne rasprašavъ rozgněvassæ Mene igumene ne poustile, a æ
Without investigating you got mad [aorist]. The abbot did not allow [perf] me, although I

prašalъsæ, nъ posъlalъ sъ Asafъmъ kъ posadъnikou medou
asked [perf], but he sent [perf] (me) with Asaf to the posadnik for honey

dělæ a prišla esvě oli zvonili. A čemou sæ gněvaeši a
and we came back [perf] when (vespers??) were ringing [perf] Why are you angry?

æ vъsъgda u tebe. A soromъ mi ože mi lixo mъlvlæše i
I am always with you. I am shamed that you spoke [imperfect] evil of me

poklanaeju ti sæ bratъče moi to si.xotæ mъlvi ty esi moi a æ tvoi
I bow to you my brother, then at least say that you are mine and I am yours.

This letter is clearly written by one monk or monk-in-training, addressed to another. As such it could be considered an attempt at high style language. There are very few traces of the Novgorod dialect (the use of -e as the nom. sing.masc. in *poustile*.) The one imperfect is imperfective *mъlvlæše* and shows the conservative preservation of the jod alternation, with the epenthetic *I*. The perfect in "*prišla esvě oli zvonili*" has a adverbial clause of time referring to the past, and in that clause *zvonili* can be taken as a perfect replacing an expected imperfect.

However, there are stylistic differences between the uses of the perfects, versus the aorist and imperfect. The aorist and imperfect may be what the speaker thinks are objective truths, although they represent his interpretation of facts known to both him and his addressee. The perfects are all new evidence justifying his interpretation and his acts, and they lead to a nonpast imperative: *xotæ mъlvi ty esi moi a æ tvoi*.

2) p 293 #487 c. (1125-55)

..[vъ]læšь [standard velæše] děæti a ty čъrъso silu děæšь [standard děæše]
(?He?) would order [imperfect]to do, but you ? though force? would do [imperfect]

ažь by ty dbromь žila bratom...

O that you would with kindness live with brother (?dual)

other side

....[po]ži[v]i žь sъ Gurъdъmь žь so Lukoju a vozyvaxo [standard vъzyvaxъ]
.....live with Gurgii and Luka, and I called [imperfect/imperfective aorist]

tæ sъstroju nъvѣstokoju

you sister-sister-in-law.

This letter has two clear (imperfective) imperfects, and one form which could be an imperfect or an imperfective aorist. Zaliznjak (1995: 123) suggests that it may have been written by a priest. There are significant differences between this letter and the previous example. The spelling in particular reflects the merger of the front jer with /e/ and the back jer with /o/ which is characteristic of the colloquial language of the north. If the writer has learned the church language well enough to use a "high style" verbal form, he has not learned it well enough to spell those forms correctly. The only evidence that this is high style is the imperfects themselves.

There is an imperfect from the verb byti in Gramota 831, from the second quarter of the twelfth century: It is a long letter, in which the author presents evidence that he has been done an injustice, all in perfects, whereas the imperfect seems to report the objective emotion of the writer. Much of it is damaged or destroyed. I will present the relevant parts which are translatable in more or less whole sentences

3) p. 302-3 #831 (ca. 1125- 1150)

оть kouzъme i ot deti ego kъ ragouilovi ko starъšoum[o](u)
from Kuzma and his children to Raguil the Senior (official)

----- (ko)gъvou tobe vo poloutorъ [grivъ](ne)-----[i sire]
-----?cow [acc] to you for 1 and one half grivnas ----and ?cheese?

a to grivъnoju kril(ъ esmь i) dъsætъ sigovo i pol[ъ]tъ vo dъsætъ kouno
while I bought (it) for a grivna and 10 sigs, and a side of pork worth 10 kuns.

a popovi twoemou korъvou vo [grivъ]nou a a troke two[e č]istilo esmь
and to your priest a cow worth a grivna, and [to?] your agent(s) I have made an account

i daælъ dary a sъ esi poælъ ou тъne roubou
and given gifts, but you have taken from me a [female] slave.

i parъboko vo sъmi grivъno a drougouju robou vo dovou grivъnou

and a slave child at seven grivnas and a second slave at two grivnas

da blagoslovi tæ bogo a sъ na mæ četo vozdiraeši i na moe deti
God bless you, why are you abusing me and my children

koto li na mæ tæžou djet[ь]-----
Who is bringing action against me-----

[tæ bъ postrъčъtъ oužъ na mæ i na moe deti
incites you against me and my children.

[large part missing and some uninterpretable]

ni æ tobe kobæžanina ni æ to[бъ] skoud[dъ]tina a i gorzъno mi [be]šъ
(standard bæše) tou.....
neither am I a kobjazhanin to you nor a skudjatin (beggar), and it was very ?? to me.

To sum up, we find evidence from birchbark letters that by early in the twelfth century the present perfect could take adverbs indicating a past time reference. This means that we could consider the perfect a past tense, but it may still have been restricted to uses with present relevance--for present results, and for representing evidence or justification for imperatives or statements in the present tense. There is at least marginal evidence that the imperfect and the aorist still had normal usage through the first half of the twelfth century, and no evidence for perfects used in narrative until the second half of the twelfth century.

There are very few imperfects, but none happen to be perfective, and the only form that could show the jod alternation does.

3.0 Poučenie Vladimira Monomaxa

As I noted above, Vladimir died in 1125, so if this document is authentic, the original must have been written in the first quarter of the twelfth century. It survives in only one copy, from 1377.

3.1 Imperfects

There are no forms relevant to the consonantal alternations with -i-stem verbs.
There is one interesting imperfect from a prefixed verb:

ѡцъ мои дома съда . изумъяше . є . тазыкъ
My father, sitting at home learned 5 languages

This looks like a perfective imperfect, but it does not fit with any of the meanings I have discussed. Technically **iz-umě-aše* should yield *izuměše*, but it would not be unusual to rebuild the imperfect from the present tense stem *iz-uměj-*. The verb clearly

indicates repeated successful actions of learning, but there is no sequence, and no nuance of modality. This kind of meaning does no violence to the basic meanings of the imperfect or the perfective aspect, but it would normally be expressed by a derived imperfective from *izuměti*. There is no attested derived imperfective from that verb. If the derived imperfective were *izumějati*, the aspect of this imperfect would be ambiguous.

3.2 Perfects

The *Pouchenie* is known for having many perfects which would be translated in languages like English with simple pasts. However, none of these pasts have narrative function. What this document shows is significant competition between perfects and aorists in nonnarrative function. After an introduction which uses aorists, the work switches to what would be called a legitimate *pouchenie*, or instruction, to his children and to any readers. The overall context is mostly present, with many imperatives. The perfects that occur in this part are normal, fitting into the categories I discussed above.

He then says; А се вы повѣдаю . дѣти моиа трудеъ свои . шже са єсмь тружаль . пути дѣя и ловы. "Now I will recount to you, my children, my works, which I have accomplished in my travels and hunting trips." He then provides a narrative of his life, all in aorists. There is then another shift in style and content. Instead of providing a sequential narrative, he begins to list his accomplishments. Most of the verbal forms are perfects, but some are aorists or imperfects. It is not unusual in English to use the present perfect to list accomplishments, but the time period of reference must be from some time in the past up to the present. Vladimir seems to locate some of these purely in the past--in the time he was at Chernigov. Since all of these accomplishments are meant to serve as examples to his children, we could say that there is necessarily present relevance, and an intended nonpast result, but it is clear, since he uses both aorists and perfects, that the two are in competition in this context.

А се тружахъса . ловы дѣя . понеже съдох в Черниговъ . а и-Щернигова
This I did, hunting, after I took over in Chernigov. and from Chernigov

А вышед и д[о . . г]о лѣта по сту оуганива[ль] и имъ даром . всею силою
going out ?up to now ? about 100 I chased and took easily, with my own strength
кромѣ иного лова . кромѣ Турова . иже со ѿцмъ ловилъ єсмь всакъ звѣрь
besides other hunting outside of Turov, in which I took all manner of beasts.

. а се в Черниговъ дѣялъ єсмь . конь диких своима рукама свазаль єсмь
This I did in Chernigov. I roped wild horses by hand in the forest
. въ пушах . 1 . и . 2 . живыхъ конь . а кромѣ того иже по Рови ѣзда ималъ
10 or 20 live horses, and in addition, riding along the Rov', I captured
єсмь своима рукама тѣ же кони дикиѣ . тура ма . в . метала на розѣх и с
with my own hands the same kind of wild horses. Two bison tossed me on their horns
конемъ . шленъ ма ѿдинъ боль . а . в . лоси ѿдинъ ногами топталъ . а
with my horse a deer gored me, and two moose, one trampled (me), while
другыи рогома боль . вепрь ми на бедрѣ мечъ ѿталъ . медвѣдь ми у
a second gored me. A boar ripped the sword from my thigh. A bear
колѣна подъклада окусили . лютыи звѣрь скочилъ ко мнѣ на бедры . и
took a bite from the saddle blanket at my knee, a wild beast jumped on my thigh and

коњ со мною поверже . и Бѣ неврежена ма съблуде . и с кона много
threw me and my horse. And God kept me unharmed. Many times from my horse
падах . голову си розбих дважды . и руцѣ и нозѣ свои вередих . въ
I fell. Twice I broke my head, and I injured my arms and legs. In
оуности свои вередих не блюда живота своєго . ни щада головы
my youth I injured (myself), with no care for my life, not sparing my head
своєа .

Єже было творити штроку моєму то сам єсмь створиль
What my servant had to do, that I did my self.

The sentence: лютии звѣрь скочиль ко мнѣ на бедры . и коњ со мною поверже . is particularly interesting, since a perfect is conjoined with an aorist in the same verb phrase. It is possible that the switch to an aorist was encouraged by the fact that the next clause has God as its subject. In a previous passage a mention of God is also accompanied by a switch from perfect to aorist:

мировъ єсмь створиль с Половечьскими кнази . безъ ѿдиного . ѣ . и при
I made peace with 19 Polovtsian princes, both under my father's rule
ѡци . и кромѣ ѿца . а дата скота много . и многы порты своѣ . и пустиль
and without my father, giving a lot of stock and cloth, and I released
єсмь Половечскіх кназъ лѣпших изъ ѿковъ . толико шарукана . вѣ . брата .
the best Polotsian princes from chains, this many: 2 brothers of Sharukan',
Багубарсовы . г . Швчны братѣ . д . а всѣх лѣпших кназии инѣхъ . . рѣ . а
3 sons of Bagubars, 4 brothers of Ovcha, and in all 100 of the other best princes
самы кнази Бѣ живы в руцѣ дава . Коксусъ . с синим Акланъ . Бурчевичъ
God gave the Princes into my hands alive: Koksus and his son Aklan, Burchevich
. Таревскыи кназъ Азгулуи . инѣхъ кметии молодых . єї то тѣхъ живы .
the Tarev prince Azgului, 15 other young nobles, then those alive
ведѣ исѣкъ вметахъ в ту рѣчу
I took, killed and threw into the river.

However, earlier he does have God as the subject of "normal" perfects:

все же то даль Бѣ . на оугодѣ члвкомъ

All of this God has provided to men for their enjoyment.

Гсъ нашъ показал ны есть на врагы побѣду

Our lord has shown us victory over our enemies

A superficial analysis of this text could yield a conclusion that there are certain contexts (narrative) for which the aorist is normal, others for which the perfect is normal, and an intermediate range where both are possible. It is in this range that questions of high style might be relevant. There is no evidence that narrative itself is inherently high style. Narrative certainly does not have to be the exclusive property of the written language.

There is still the problem that we have only one copy, from the 14th century, so we cannot be sure of the twelfth century text.

4.0. Narrative texts

The chronicles and the *Uspenskij sbornik* contain long narratives which are rich in aorists and imperfects. Instead of discussing them individually, I will discuss them as a group in terms of issues that can be raised about the history of the imperfect. These are:

- (1) The history of the elimination of the alternations in imperfects from i-stem verbs.
- (2) The fate of the perfective imperfect.
- (3) Changes in the use of the perfect, which include evidence that the present perfect had become a past tense, and the spread of the perfect into narrative function.

4.1. The leveling of the alternations in the imperfect from i-stems

Although I will be discussing the loss of the alternations in the imperfect, the alternations themselves are relevant to the question of whether the imperfect is a native OES form, or a learned importation from OCS. For stems with final -ti-, -di-, there were distinctive differences between Church Slavic and OES. In OCS the /t/ was replaced by /št/, which was borrowed into OES as /šč/, spelled ѿ. The /d/ was replaced by /žd/ in OCS. The proper OES alternations were /t/ > /č/, /d/ > /ž/. Applying the criteria that I explained in § 0.2, I did not find a single example of a distinctively OCS alternation in an imperfect--except in late copies of the chronicles that follow the spelling conventions of the second South Slavic influence. This even applies to the texts in the *Uspenskij sbornik* which were originally copied from Church Slavic. [It does not apply to all copied texts. The Ostromir Gospel has *preščaaxo* from *prětiti*.]

This is not as significant as it may seem. I did not find any examples of /t/ > /č/ either. All the /t/s are leveled into the imperfect, as in *prětæše* from *prětiti* (Usp. 176v30). There are plenty of examples of /d/ > /ž/, and none with /d/ > /žd/, but /žd/ was not an acceptable cluster in OES before the loss of the jers, so they commonly borrowed /žd/ as /ž/.

I earlier mentioned the fact that Bulgarian, as well as East Slavic, eliminated the alternations in the formation of the imperfect from i-stem verbs. To my knowledge no one has ever proposed a connection, but it is something that occurred to me in trying to think of counterexamples to my own position. The *Uspenskij sbornik* provides us with a very old copy of a collection of both original OES texts and texts originally copied from OCS. The original OES texts are the Tale of Boris and Gleb, The Miracles of Boris and Gleb, and the Life of Feodosii. The Tale of Boris and Gleb has only one relevant example, and it has the alternation: *IjubIjaše*. The Miracles of Boris and Gleb has eight forms with the alternation eliminated, nine with the preservation of the alternation. The Life of Feodosii has 20 examples with the leveling, 29 with the conservative alternation. The copied texts have a quite different pattern. There are 11 forms with the leveling, versus 65 forms with the alternation preserved. The levelings are certainly more prevalent in the original ES texts. This is then consistent with the claim that the leveling is an internal East Slavic development.

Continuing influence from Bulgarian is unlikely anyway. Moshin (1963) argued that ties between the South Slavs and the East Slav were cut off shortly after the Christianization of the East Slavs--because of the effective suppression by the Byzantines

of the Slavic church in the Balkans. Moshin argues that after the initial influx of South Slavic documents, there was no further influence of South Slavic literature on Rus' literature until the second South Slavic influence, beginning in the late 14th century.

Moreover, the pattern of leveling is different in Bulgarian than in East Slavic. In late OCS the epenthetic l after labials was systematically eliminated at boundaries. The leveling of the dentals was later. In East Slavic the elimination of the l is no more likely than the leveling of the dental alternation, and in fact the most consistent leveling is with /t/.

When we turn to the chronicles, we find interesting differences with respect to the leveling. The Novgorod Starshij Izvod has only conservative forms with the historically proper alternation. [It happens not to have any verbs with stems in -ti-.] The Primary Chronicle starts out with forms with the historically correct alternation. With one possible exception this practice continues to what in Ostrowski's is line 64, 6 (2003: 418). The possible exception is line 13,14 , where the Lavrentovskij version has приводаху, while all four other versions have привожаху (Ostrovski 2003: 68). After that the majority of the forms have eliminated the alternation. By my count there are 24 examples with no alternation, 12 with the alternation, and 9 with mixed data in the different versions. Later chronicles have similar variation between forms with and without the leveling, particularly among imperfective verbs. We should remember that this is a morphological leveling, not a sound change, so it is not expected to be regular.

The evidence would seem to indicate that a regular alternation existed at the earliest times, that the leveling of the alternation was in process in the 11th and 12th century, and that it began in the south. This is the kind of leveling that takes place in a language in active use, so we could use this as an argument that the imperfect was an active part of the oral language.

The major morphological effect of this change was to prevent the merger of the perfective and imperfective imperfects. Before the change *postavljati* and *postaviti* would both have an imperfect *postavljaše(tъ)*. After the elimination of the alternation the imperfective imperfect would remain *postavljaše(tъ)*, but the perfective would be *postavjaše(tъ)*. There are 22 perfective imperfects of this class in the corpus, and they very consistently exhibit the leveling. The only unambiguous example of a perfective verb with the conservation of the alternation is in the section of the Primary Chronicle which has no leveling:

Ipat. 10 аще кто оумраше твораху трызну надъ нимъ . и по семъ твораху
If anyone died, they would perform funeral rites over him, then they prepared
кладу велику . и възложать на кладу мртвѣца . и съжигаху . и по семъ
a big ?log? put the deceased on the log, burned it, and then
събравше кости вложаху въвъ ссудь малъ . и поставлаху на
they collected the bones and lay them in a small bowl, and put it on a
столпъ на путехъ
post on the roads.

This is a classic example of the use of perfective imperfects; except for твораху all the verbs are perfective, so we should interpret поставлаху as perfective.

There is one case in the Primary Chronicle where there is variation. It is in

Lav. аще кого видаше ли шюмна . ли в кое зазорѣ
If he saw someone either loud or in a scandalous situation,
не фсудаше но всѧ на любовь прекладаше
he did not condemn (him), but ?turned? everyone toward love.
The other variants have фсужаše.

The fact that the leveling was so consistent in perfective imperfects should be taken to indicate that the opposition of aspect in imperfects was important. To me, this certainly indicates a living imperfect in the native language of the writers.

4.2. The preservation of perfective imperfects.

The Starshij izvod of the Novgorod First Chronicle has no clear cases of perfective imperfects. It starts with the year 1016, with very brief entries through the eleventh century. There are no imperfects of any verb but *byti* until 1123, where we find:
лють бяше путь, оже купляху по ногатѣ хлѣбъ.
The way was harsh, such that they bought bread for a nogata

There are several instances in this chronicle of купляху used this way. This is not a normal use of a perfective imperfect, and I have elected to treat it as imperfective (cf. § 0.2).

The Mladshij Izvod of the Novgorod First Chronicle has more early entries, many copied from some edition of the Primary Chronicle. This version is available only in late copies (none earlier than the 15th century) and there is a lot of variation that indicates that the copyists confused the imperfect with the aorist. Under the year 971, for instance the Kommissionnyj copy has an improperly used perfective aorist:

Цесарь же созваши боляры своя в полату
Caesar called his nobles to the palace.

while the other copies, and the corresponding passages in the Laurentian and Hypatian chronicles, have an perfective aorist *созва*.

The only example that I found of a properly used perfective aorist not copied from the Primary Chronicle is:

Nov-M 109 [922]Игорь же съдяше в Киевѣ княжа, и воюя на Древяны и на Угличѣ.
И бѣ у него воевода, именемъ Свѣнделдъ; и примучи Углѣчѣ, възложи на ня дань, и
вдастъ Свѣнньделду.
И не вдадяшется единъ град, именемъ Пересѣченъ;
And one town by the name of Pereschen would not surrender to him

This passage deals with Kiev, and it might have come from a Kievan source.

There is an improperly used perfective imperfect only in the Commission version, which is not directly copied from the Primary Chronicle:

Nov-M 112 [945] Древляномъ же пришедшимъ къ Кыеву къ княгинѣ Ольги, и
прияше Олга въ честь деревьских муж.

I assume that this is a mistake.

In the end, we have no good evidence that the people who wrote original passages for the Novgorod Chronicle had native command of perfective imperfects.

Things are quite different in the south. There are plenty of properly used perfective imperfects in the Primary Chronicle, and many in the Life of Feodosii. In the Suzdal Chronicle, which follows the Primary Chronicle in the Laurentian codex, the last properly used perfective imperfects are under the years 1125 and 1127.

Lav. 294-5 югда в цркви внидашеть и слыша пѣнье и абыє слезы испущашеть whenever he entered a church and hearing the singing, immediately he would shed tears.

Lav. 297 не дадашеть на рать по Ирославѣ никому же молвити

He would not allow anyone to speak for a war against Yaroslav.

There is one other passage from 1151, but that is in a passage copied from the Kievan Chronicle:

Lav. 331 аможе хотахуть тамо поидахуть
Wherever they wanted, there they went.

When we look at the Kievan and the Galician-Volynian Chronicles, we find that perfective imperfects were properly used in the southern area through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Examples from the Kievan Chronicle are:

[1142]шнъ же Ватичъ не състоупашеть но даꙗшеть имъ . д' города .
He would not join (in battle) [perfective] with the Vjatichi, but gave them 3 towns

[1151]. аможе хотахоутъ тамо поидахоутъ

[1185] гдѣ послашетъ кого . бесъ пра . творахоутъ повелѣное имъ.
Wherever he sent anyone, without quarrel they did what was asked of them.

Examples from the Galician Chronicle:

1229. егда же си ѿстоупахо ѿ боа whи же належахоутъ на whы . а коли whи
When these retreated from the battle, they pressed on those, but when/if those
ѿстоупахоу. а whи належахоу на си за невидѣние не приять бы градъ
retreated, they pressed on these. Because of lack of visibility, the town could not be
taken.

1268 нача проливати крови много . оубивашеть бо на всакъ днъ по три по четыри
He began to shed a lot of blood, he would kill [imperfect] every day three or four

которого же дн̄и не оубыашеть кого печаловашеть тогда . коли же оубыашеть кого .

On a day when he did not kill [perf] anybody, then he was sad, If/when he killed [perf] someone

тогда весель башеть

then he was happy.

1283:не дадахоутъ ни из города вылѣсти в зажитъе . кто же выѣхашеть из города

They did not even allow them to get out of the town [for food?] whoever left the city,

. швы избиваша а дроузии поимаша а иныиа излоупивше . поущаю нагы.

Some they killed, others they took captive, and others they stripped and let go naked.

Overall, it seems that perfective imperfects were alive and well in the writing of chronicles in the Kievan and Galician areas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and I would say that that indicates that the imperfect was part of the native language of the writers. There is similar evidence for the existence of the imperfect in the speech of the writers of the Vladimir-Suzdal Chronicle in the first half of the twelfth century. We have no good evidence of the proper use of such imperfects by the writers of the Novgorod Chronicle. The few relevant birchbark letters may indicate the presence of imperfective imperfects in the Novgorod dialect in the first half of the twelfth century.

In discussing the chronicles, I have been careful to say that the generalizations apply to the speech of the writers. I had no *a priori* expectation that the writers of the chronicles would be local people. However, the geographical distribution of the linguistic phenomena invites speculation that they were. I will leave that at the level of speculation.

4.3. Intrusion of l-forms.

I have not done enough work on the evolution of the use of l-forms in the various texts. What interests me is the switch of the present perfect into a past tense form (initially in special uses), and the final intrusion of l-forms into narrative function.

We have seen the use of l-forms with past adverbs in the late eleventh-early twelfth century in the birchbark letters. Vladimir Monomax also uses l-forms as past tenses in the early twelfth century. The earliest attestation in a chronicle of an l-form with a past time adverb that I have found is in the Kievan Chronicle in the entry for 1159.

реѣ Ростиславъ посломъ . а вчера есмь оу васъ вчера быль . а чему есте не молвили . ко мнѣ

L-forms first intrude in narratives where we would normally expect imperfects. The first and most frequent verb in this function is the verb *byti*. This is understandable, since it is hard to maintain a resultative meaning of the verb 'be'. Another early verb in this function is *stojati*'stand', which in the case where it occurs, is a synonym of "be". The best examples that I found are:

Ipat [1173] туу же ѿради моложышъ кн҃зъ передъ своими полки

There he deployed the younger princes before his troops

ѡради же Володимера Переѧславьскаго . и Глѣба . и Мъстислава сна
He deployed Volodimir of Perejaslavl and Gleb and his son Mstislav

своего и Романовича Мъстислава . и Глѣба Гюрговича кнѧзя
and Mstislav Romanovich and Gleb Gjurgovich Prince

Доубровицького и Мъстислава Володимерича и Берендїєвъ с нимъ было 2000
Of Dubrovic and Mstislav Volodimerich and there were 2000 Berendei with him

Ipat 635-6 [1184] наворопници же перешедше Хороль взидоша на шолома
The advanced detachment crossed the Xorol' and went atop a ridge

гладающе кдѣ оуздать ѿ. Конъчакъ же стоялъ оу лоузѣ
trying to see them. Konchak was located in a meadow

Lav. [1185] Володимеръ же Глѣбовичъ внукъ Юргевъ . ъздаше напереду в Volodimer Glebovich, grandson of Yuryi, rode in front

сторожи^х с Переяславци . и Берендъевъ было с нимъ $\frac{2}{3}$.к . и . $\frac{1}{3}$.
with the guards from Perejaslavl', there were 20100/120000? Berendei with him

Lav. [1185] наши же погнаша съкуще ^и . ^з . ^{тысяч} руками изъимаша ихъ кназии
Our troops chased, killing them, they captured 7 thousand of them; there were
шдинѣхъ было Половыцьскы^х . ^у . и . ^з 1
417 Polovtsian princes

In each of these cases the time reference of the verb in the l-form is purely in the narrative, with no resultivity of any kind.

The earliest example I found of an l-form that apparently advances the narrative like an aorist is from the Galician Chronicle:

Ipat 725 [1208] Мика же оубодень [X, P variant оубоде] и Тъбаша и главоу емоу
сталъ

Mika stabbed Tÿbash to death and cut off his head.

Conclusion.

I started this research to satisfy myself that I was right in telling my students that the imperfect in OES was inherited, not imported from OCS. I did not expect to find substantial differences in form and usage of the imperfect in the different texts from OES. I certainly did not expect to claim that the imperfect existed anywhere in East Slavic as a live form in speech in the thirteenth century. I will, however, stick to the claim that the correct use of perfective imperfects should be a valid indicator of the presence of the imperfect in the speech of the writer, so I do claim that the imperfect existed in the speech of some people in Galich in the 13th century.

I also did not expect to have to admit that there might be no evidence for the imperfect in an area of East Slavic at the time of the first written evidence. Zaliznjak might be right, and the few imperfects in Birchbark letters might be the result of learning the religious or chancery language. In that case, I have no good evidence that the imperfect existed in the Novgorod dialect in the 11th century.

The evidence of the intrusion of l-forms into the language of the chronicles is necessarily open to doubt, since innovations may not be dated securely before the date of the copy. However, the degree of agreement between the versions of the Primary Chronicle encourages us to think that medieval copyists were fairly reliable. I picked the best examples of the l-form of *byti* for my examples, but there are so many examples of this in the twelfth century texts that there is little doubt that some of them must belong to the original, and therefore that at this time *by/l-* could be used as a neutral past tense.

What this research does show is that there are very definitely differences in the grammatical usage of individuals and probably of dialects in the 11th and 12th century. We cannot make generalizations for all of East Slavic based on one set of texts. That should not surprise anyone.

Abbreviations

- Ipat. *Ipatev'skaja Letopis'*. Polnoe Sobranie Russkix Letopisej, Vol II, Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskoj kultury. 2001.
Lav. *Lavrentovskaja Letopis'*. Polnoe Sobranie Russkix Letopisej, Vol I, Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskoj kultury. 2001.
Nov-M. *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis'*, Mladshego izvoda. Polnoe Sobranie Russkix Letopisej, Vol III. 101-428. Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskoj kultury. 2000.
Nov-S. *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis'*, Starshego izvoda. Polnoe Sobranie Russkix Letopisej, Vol III. 13-100. Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskoj kultury. 2000.
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