

## IN VINO VERITAS

### ANDREJ ANATOL'EVICH ZALIZNJAK ON BIRCHBARK LETTER NO. 39 FROM STARAJA RUSSA

Among the immense achievements of the eminent scholar Andrej Anatol'evič Zaliznjak we can count his groundbreaking work on the philological and linguistic interpretation of birchbark letters from medieval Rus'. Allow me to make a few short remarks on his comments on a birchbark find that deals with the transportation of wine, a commodity that seems most appropriate to be examined in more detail on this festive occasion.

The birchbark letter under discussion is no. 39 from Staraja Russa, which is dated stratigraphically to the last quarter of the fourteenth century. It was uncovered in 2004 on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, an anniversary date that is well known to berestologists. As A. A. Zaliznjak recalls in the edition of St.R. 39 (*ВЯ*, 2005/3, pp. 27-29): "Грамота была найдена 26 июля, в день празднования находки берестяной грамоты № 1, и упоминание в ней шести бочек вина было с большим энтузиазмом встречено собравшимися на праздник." (p. 27).

Here is the Russian text of the letter according to the edition (*ibid.*): "Поклон от Григория Ермоле и Озекею. Я послал тебе шесть бочек вина, [уровень] – как палец достанет, так что ты это хорошенько проверь. А продай как и те, на тех же условиях; а продал – так ты это [полученное] отошли. А моим ребятам (?) денег не давай – пошли вместе с долгом." In English the text would read as follows: "A greeting from Grigorij to Ermola and Ozekej. I have sent you [sing.] six barrels of wine, filled to a finger's length from the top; you make sure to check that carefully. Sell them like the others, at the same rate. After you've sold them, send [the proceeds]. And don't give my lads [?] the money, but send it with the debt."

My first remark concerns the mentioning of wine, a product that was imported either from the West (ultimately, the Rhinelands) or from the Byzantine Empire. According to A. A. Zaliznjak this is the first time that wine is brought up on birchbark ("В берестяной грамоте вино упоминается впервые", *ibid.*). Here I must say he underestimates the Old Novgorodians' interest in wine. In a birchbark letter that is almost three centuries older than St.R. 39, namely no. 586 from Novgorod (dated around 1100-1120), we already encounter wine in a short list of goods that also includes cherries, vinegar, and flour, as well as a frying pan and, not to forget, Ivan's sheepskin coat: "Вишен, вина́, уксус и муку, Иванову шубу и сковороду" (edition in *ДНД*, 2004, pp. 266-267).

My second remark deals with Grigorij's concern that all the wine he is sending actually arrives at its destination. He specifies the depth to which the six barrels are filled: 'filled to a finger's length from the top', literally 'as the finger grasps [gets, reaches]' (*какъ palěcě xvatī* "как палец ухватит [достанет]", *ВЯ*, 2005/3, p. 28). A. A. Zaliznjak brilliantly points out that this passage explains the semantic connection between two very different meanings of the verb *хватить*, namely 'grasp, grab' and 'be enough, sufficient': "Грамота наглядно показывает, как проблема "достаточно или недостаточно" может сводиться к тому, схватит ли рука (палец, инструмент) находящийся на некотором расстоянии предмет (или поверхность). [...] Очевидно, именно из таких измерений родилась возможность на вопросы типа *Полна ли уже бочка? Не надо ли еще долить?* отвечать словами *Уже хватит!* или просто *Хватит!* Это легко приводит к переосмыслению *хватит* как 'достаточно', после чего уже открыта дорога для сочетаний типа *мне хватит* (которые ранее, разумеется, были невозможны)." (*ibid.*). As a matter of fact, the same semantic evolution holds for the verb *достать* 'get, reach' and the adverb *доста-*

точно 'sufficient, enough': "Заметим, что и слово *достаточно*, означающее то же самое, имеет сходную семантическую историю: оно прозрачным образом связано с глаголом *достать* в значении 'дотянуться', 'суметь прикоснуться'." (ibid.).

Let us put this sharp observation in a cross-linguistic perspective and have a look at some of the Germanic languages. Allow me to start out with Dutch. In my booklet *Stemmen op berkenbast* [*Voices on Birchbark*] (Leiden, 2012), where St.R. 39 is treated on p. 46, I already indicated that there is a semantic parallel in Dutch. In the Dutch translation, the passage 'as the finger grasps [gets, reaches]' reads 'vol tot waar de vinger reikt', on which I comment: "De inhoud moest letterlijk 'toereikend' zijn" ("The content had to be literally *toereikend*"). Dutch *reiken* and English *reach* are of course cognates and the derived adjective *toereikend* means exactly the same as *достаточно* or *хватит*. The same applies to German, where we find *reichen* and *aus-, zureichend*, as well as *es reicht* 'it's enough' and *es reicht mir!* 'I've had enough!', 'мне хватит!'. In fact, the very word 'enough' (cf. Dutch *genoeg*, German *genug*) seems to be derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *\*h<sub>2</sub>noǵ-* with cognates in other Indo-European languages that have a similar meaning as *хватить* and *достать*; cf. Sanskrit *aśnóti* 'to reach, attain' or Latin *nancīscor* 'to acquire, get'. In addition, Guus Kroonen notes in his *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (Leiden, 2013, s.v. *nugan-*) that "[t]he 3sg. form [*\*ga-nahe*] was borrowed into Balto-Slavic, cf. Lith. *ganà, gañ* adv. 'enough', where it gave rise to a number of secondary formations, e.g. Lith. *ganėti*, OCS *goněti* 'to suffice'."

Undoubtedly, more semantic parallels can be found in other languages and language families (see the discussion on the *German is easy!* blog, which features the twofold meaning of *reichen* – *Reicht ihr das Salz?* and *Reicht er ihr das Salz?* – as the [Word of the Day on 2 July 2014](#)), but this brief remark should be *достаточно*, *toereikend*, *ausreichend* & *enough* to illustrate A. A. Zaliznjak's many great contributions to the field of berestology and far beyond.

Jos Schaeken, Leiden University