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Some notes on temporal adverbials in Old Russian: the case of *лѣто* ‘year’ in *Suzdal’skaja letopis’**

Contemporary Standard Russian has temporal adverbials of the type *в этом году* ‘this year’ and *в прошлом году* ‘last year’, where the preposition *в* ‘in’ combines with the noun *год* ‘year’ in the locative case. How has this construction developed over time? What was the situation in Old Russian? In this article, I explore data from the medieval *Suzdal’skaja letopis’* and compare these data with data from *Ipat’evskaja letopis’*. I show that the *въ* + locative construction for ‘year’ was marginal in Old Russian, and demonstrate that three other constructions were used instead: *въ* + accusative, the bare genitive and the bare locative. These constructions show different distributions in different chronicles; I show that the bare genitive is particularly frequent in the *Suzdal’skaja letopis’*.

After a short discussion of the situation in Contemporary Standard Russian in section 1, the data from *Suzdal’skaja letopis’* are presented in section 2 and compared to data from *Ipat’evskaja letopis’* in section 3. Conclusions are provided in section 4.

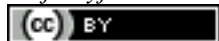
1. The situation in Contemporary Standard Russian

As mentioned, in Contemporary Standard Russian the normal way to express that something happened in a given year, is to use *в* ‘in’ followed by *год* ‘year’ in the locative:¹

- (1) **В 2002 году** был выпущен браузер Mozilla 1.0.
‘In 2002 the browser Mozilla 1.0 was launched.’ (*Computerworld* 2004)

* I would like to thank Laura A. Janda for discussing an earlier version of this paper.

¹ Numbered examples in this section are excerpted from the Russian National Corpus (www.ruscorpora.ru). For the convenience of the reader, I provide for each example the publication date and an indication of the source from which the example is taken. For examples from fiction, I give the name of the author, while for examples from non-fiction the name of the periodical is provided.



However, the *в* + locative construction competes with *в* + accusative. If *год* occurs in the plural, the accusative is normally used:

- (2) **В те годы** в доме жила сестра Павлова.
 ‘In those years Pavlov’s sister lived in the house.’ (*Наука и жизнь* 2009)

If the temporal adverbial contains a noun phrase in the genitive, the accusative prevails:

- (3) Это стихотворение тоже написано **в год смерти матери**.
 ‘This poem was also written the year his mother died.’ (Iskander 1998)

There are further complicating factors described in detail in Nessel 2004 and Makarova and Nessel 2013, but for present purposes the following simplified rules are sufficiently precise:

- (4) Temporal adverbials with *год* ‘year’:
 a. Plural → *в* + accusative
 b. Genitive NP → *в* + accusative
 c. Elsewhere → *в* + locative

These rules show that for *год*, *в* + locative is the default construction that is used whenever the specific conditions that favor *в* + accusative are not met. The question now arises as to what the situation was in Old Russian. In the following section, we will see that data from *Suzdal’skaja letopis’* suggest that the rules have undergone radical changes since Old Russian.

2. The situation in *Suzdal’skaja letopis’*

In order to shed light on the situation in Old Russian, I have excerpted all examples with *лѣто* ‘year’ from *Suzdal’skaja letopis’* (*po lavrent’evskomu spisku*), which has been made available electronically by *Institut russkogo jazyka RAN* at <http://www.ruslang.ru/agens.php?id=res>. Characteristic of the Russian chronicles is the formula *въ лѣто* followed by a numeral indicating the year, and this construction is well attested in *Suzdal’skaja letopis’* (170 examples in my database):

- (5) **В лѣто 6665** (1157) выгнаша Новгородци Мстислава.
‘In 1157 the Novgorodians chased Mstislav away.’

This construction, where лѣто occurs in the accusative, introduces a new section of the chronicle, which describes all the events that year. Since in this construction the year is mentioned for the first time, I will refer to it as “new information”.

While for “new information” the accusative is the only option, four constructions compete if the year has been mentioned previously, i.e. what we may call “given information”. First of all, we find the въ + accusative construction:

- (6) **В то же лѣто** придоша Половци в помочь Гюргеви на Изаслава.
‘In the same year the Polovtsians came to help G. against I.’

However, a frequent alternative is the bare genitive, i.e. the genitive case without a preposition:

- (7) **Того же лѣта** престависа епископъ Климентъ.
‘In the same year bishop Clement died.’

Another alternative is the bare locative:

- (8) **Том же лѣтъ** престависа князь Андрѣи Володимеричъ.
‘In the same year Prince Andrej Vladimirovič died.’

Yet another alternative is въ + locative, i.e. the construction that is the default for ‘year’ in Contemporary Standard Russian:

- (9) **В том же лѣтъ** Ярополкъ ходи на Половьчскую землю.
‘In the same year Jaropolk went to the Polovtsian land.’

Table 1 and Figure 1 provide an overview of the distribution of the four constructions. Notice that the table and figure only concern the given information type; for new information only въ + accusative is attested, so an overview in tabular form is superfluous.

	# of examples	Per cent
Въ + accusative	78	28
Въ + locative	6	2
Bare locative	11	4
Bare genitive	183	66
Total	278	100

Table 1: Distribution of constructions (given information only)

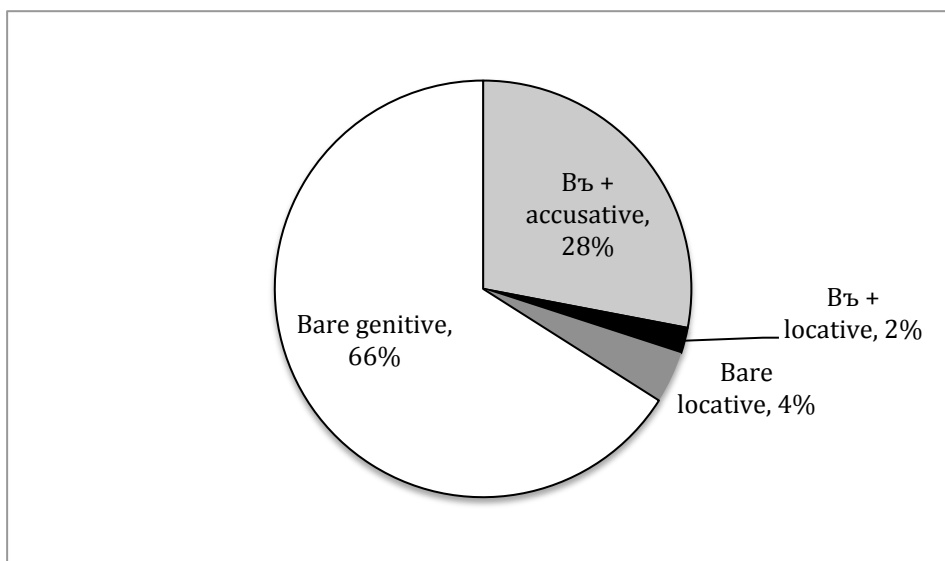


Figure 1: Distribution of constructions (given information only)

On the basis of the data in Table 1 and Figure 1, the following conclusions can be drawn. First of all, unlike in modern Russian the *въ + locative* construction is marginal in *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*, since it is attested in only 2% of the examples. Second, the bare genitive is characteristic of *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*, insofar as 66% of the examples display this construction. The question now arises as to whether these conclusions are valid for Old Russian in general. In the following section, we shall see that the marginality of the *въ + locative* construction is confirmed by data from *Ipat'evskaja letopis'*, whereas the situation for the bare genitive is more complex.

However, before we leave *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*, an additional comment on the *въ + locative* is in order. As shown in Table 1, this construction is attested in six examples. Table 2 compares five of these

examples in three versions of *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*. Two observations lend additional support to the marginality of the *въ* + locative construction. First, all five examples are from two pages of the 206-page-long chronicle. The fact that the *въ* + locative examples are not evenly distributed across the chronicle suggests that they may be due to scribal error or some other idiosyncratic property of the text. Second, the table shows that only two out of five examples have *въ* + locative in all three versions of the chronicle. Notice that the example on page 291, line 5 has *въ* + accusative in the 1997 edition of *Lavrent'evskaja letopis'*, so it remains unclear why the electronic version displays the locative. The sixth locative example, which is not in Table 2, has *въ тѣлѣ* 'in the body' instead of *въ лѣтѣ* in *Radzivilovskij spisok* and *Akademičeskij spisok*, so here it is likely that *въ лѣтѣ* is due to scribal error. In summary, since there are only two indisputable examples with *въ* + locative, we can safely conclude that this construction is even more marginal than the numbers in Table 1 might suggest.

	290, 18	290, 19	291, 5	291, 12	291, 20
<i>Lavrent'evskij</i>	<i>въ</i> + L	<i>въ</i> + L	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + L	<i>въ</i> + L
<i>Radzivilovskij</i>	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + L	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + L
<i>Akademičeskij</i>	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + L	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + A	<i>въ</i> + L

Table 2: Comparison of the *въ* +locative examples in three versions of the chronicle (Numbers indicate page and line in the 1997 edition of *Lavrent'evskaja letopis'*)

3. Comparison with *Ipat'evskaja letopis'*

Neset (2013) has investigated temporal adverbials in *Ipat'evskaja letopis'*, which is available electronically as part of the Regensburg Russian Diachronic Corpus.² *Ipat'evskaja letopis'* contains *Povest' vremennyx let*, as well as a continuation describing the years 1118–1292. This continuation can be divided into the so-called *Kievskaja letopis'* (1118–1200) and the *Galicko-Volynskaja letopis'* (1201–1292), but for the purposes of the present article, I will not investigate the differences between these two subparts. Table 3 and Figure 2 provide a comparison of the distribution of the relevant constructions in *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*,

² The Regensburg Russian Diachronic Corpus can be accessed at <http://rhssl1.uni-regensburg.de/SlavKo/korpus>.

Povest' vremennyx let and *Kievskaja/Galicko-Volynskaja letopis'*.

	<i>Suzdal'skaja letopis'</i>		<i>Povest' vremennyx let</i>		<i>Kievskaja/Galicko-Volynskaja letopis'</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
ВЪ + А	78	28	76	60	52	23
ВЪ + L	6	2	4	3	9	4
Bare L	11	4	15	12	87	38
Bare G	183	66	32	25	79	35
Total	278	100	127	100	227	100

Table 3: Comparison of three chronicles (raw numbers and percent)

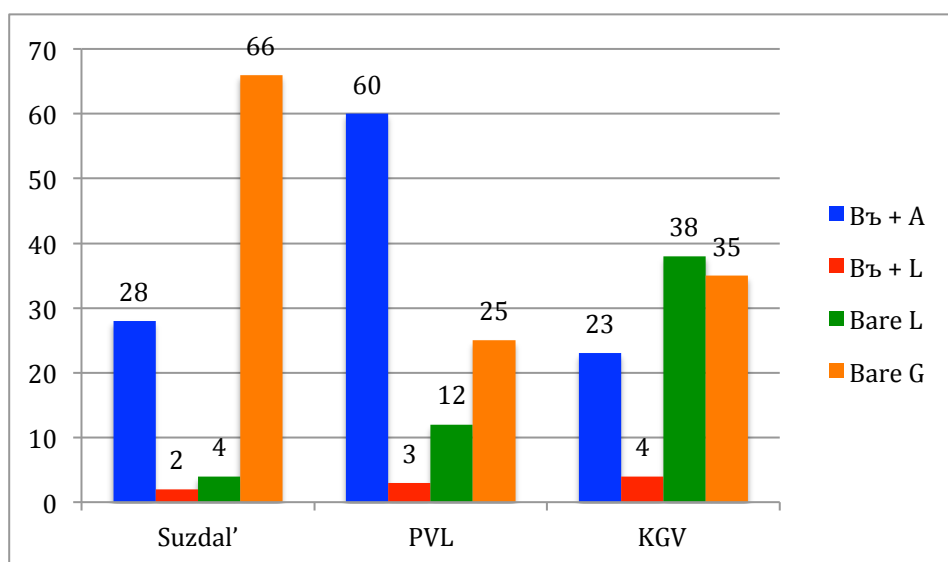


Figure 2: Comparison of three chronicles (percent)

Two observations can be made on the basis of Table 3 and Figure 2. First, the ВЪ + locative construction is marginal in all three sources, thus suggesting that this construction enjoyed a marginal status in Old Russian in general. Therefore, the change whereby the ВЪ + locative construction became the main construction for temporal adverbials with 'year' most likely happened in the Middle Russian period.

The second observation regards the other constructions. Table 3 and Figure 2 show that in *Suzdal'skaja letopis'* the bare genitive is the most

frequent construction, while *въ* + accusative dominates in *Povest' vremennyx let*, and the bare locative has the highest frequency in *Kievskaja/Galicko-Volynskaja letopis'*. This indicates that there was extensive variation in temporal adverbials with 'year' in Old Russian. However, the data do not tell us whether this variation was due to language change in progress, dialectal variation and/or the linguistic habits of individual authors.

4. Conclusion

In this article I have presented an analysis of temporal adverbials with *лѣто* 'year' in *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*, and carried out a comparison with data from *Ipat'evskaja letopis'* (*Povest' vremennyx let* and *Kievskaja* and *Galicko-Volynskaja letopis'*). I have shown that the main construction for 'year' in Contemporary Standard Russian, *въ* + locative, was marginal in Old Russian. Instead, three construction competed in Old Russian: *въ* + accusative, bare genitive and bare locative. In order to gain a better understanding of this variation further research is needed.

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Summary: Some notes on temporal adverbials in Old Russian: the case of *лѣто* 'year' in *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*

This article offers a small analysis of temporal adverbials with 'year' in *Suzdal'skaja letopis'*. These data in comparison with data from

Ipat'evskaja letopis' indicate that **въ** + locative (the construction that prevails with 'year' in Contemporary Standard Russian) was marginal in Old Russian, whereas three other constructions (**въ** + accusative, bare genitive and bare locative) competed for dominance.

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