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*Verbalrektion in den „Vesti-Kuranty” (1600–1660). Teil
2: Die präpositionale Rektion (review)*

Jan Fellerer

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REVIEWS

Ingrid Maier. *Verbalrektion in den „Vesti-Kuranty“ (1600–1660). Teil 2: Die präpositionale Rektion*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet. 2006. [*Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Slavica Upsaliensia*, 45.] pp. 466.

Reviewed by Jan Fellerer

Throughout the 17th century the Imperial Russian government's foreign office (Posol'skij Prikaz) compiled a sort of current digest of the European press for the use of the Tsar and the high nobility. These so-called *Vesti-Kuranty* (V-K) were hand-written translations into Russian from newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets mainly in German, Dutch, and Swedish.

Ingrid Maier has studied and published about the history and the language of V-K for more than two decades. In the monograph under review here, she investigates multiple argument realization in V-K from 1600 to 1660. The book continues Maier's earlier work on verbal valence in V-K (Maier 1997). There, the author focused on verbs with non-prepositional complements such as *pozdravit'/pozdravljat' komu/kogo* 'to congratulate'. In the second part, under review here, Maier discusses prepositional variants, which in many cases may also alternate with accusative complementation, e.g., *myslit' čto/o čem/pro čto/na čto, kogo*¹ 'to think'. The study is mainly based on the first five volumes of the Academy edition of V-K covering the years 1600 to 1660. Maier has been able to identify the Dutch, Swedish, German, and, occasionally, English originals to a considerable number of the Russian translations. This is an ongoing effort which has now produced a preliminary on-line publication of source texts for the sixth volume of V-K (1660–70) available at www.moderna.uu.se/slaviska/ingrid/vk-vi.pdf. This ample corpus represents rich source material for cultural historians, even if they would prefer reconstructions of individual V-K bulletins rather than a list of articles in chronological order. For historians of the language on the other hand, V-K are of great importance, as they

¹Reference to *čto* and/or *kto* indicates the type of noun that can be found in the corresponding V-K examples.

document, by and large, 17th century written Russian, rather than Church Slavonic or hybrid varieties.

The monograph is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter is a brief outline of the content, the aims, and the methods of the study. The author rightly identifies as a major methodological concern the question of whether the *V-K* really reflect Russian rather than Western syntax, as she refutes this concern. Empirical evidence from autochthonous Russian sources from the 17th century and other periods show that almost all *V-K* valence patterns are well rooted in Russian usage. Western original texts, where available, lend further support. Russian renderings do not normally match the precise Dutch, Swedish, or German wording. Maier seems too modest about the further merits of these originals. They not only help to assess the authenticity of Russian constructions but are also useful to establish their precise meaning, an invaluable tool for good philological and linguistic analysis.

The following four chapters are dedicated to the verbal lexemes which show variant prepositional government. Due to the amount of material, Maier excludes verbs with directional arguments such as *doexat' Moskvyy/do Moskvyy* 'to reach Moscow'. All remaining items are grouped into loosely defined semantic groups. Maier records about 60 verbs including aspectual pairs and prefixed derivatives. All existing valence patterns as attested in *V-K* are recorded and quantified. Each of them is given generous and careful treatment with special reference to two major questions: Does the type of government change the meaning of the verb? Which substantives typically appear with each type? Is there, for example, a preference for animate nouns or for anaphoric pronouns?

The second chapter deals with mental-activity verbs. Their common semantic denominator is often referred to as *deliberativnoe značenie* in Russian descriptive grammar. They form the largest part of the study and are further divided into seven loosely defined semantic subgroups: (i) verbs of thinking and understanding (*verba cognoscendi*) such as *razumet' čto/o čem/pro čto*; (ii) verbs of knowledge, experience, and perception (*verba sentiendi*) such as *vedat' čto/o čem/pro čto, kogo* 'to know, to experience'; (iii) verbs expressing enquiry and exploration such as *provedat'/provedyvat' čto/pro čto, kogo/o čem* 'to find out, to experience'; (iv) *verba dicendi* such as *ob"javit'/ob"javljat' čto/o čem, kom/pro čto, kogo* 'to announce, to communicate'; (v) verbs for questions and

requests such as *sprosit' / sprašivat' (kogo) o čem / pro čto* 'to ask'; (vi) verbs expressing deliberation and negotiation such as *rassudit' / rassužat' čto / o čem / pro čto / o čto*² 'to think, to judge, to decide'; (vii) other verbs of mental activity, for example, *verovat' v kogo, čto / čto* 'to believe in'. The size and the diversity of this group make it difficult to draw more general conclusions. Maier establishes two currents. Firstly, most verbs denoting mental activity take direct objects. By the 17th century these normally refer to the object of thought, knowledge, etc., rather than the content, as was still the norm in Old Russian. Compare for example *a nyne slyšu bolenou sestrou* 'I hear that the sister is ill' from a Novgorod birchbark letter (quoted in Maier p. 50) and *a cesarevoe (...) voisko stojat v odnomr meste i po(d)emu nikudy ne slyxa(t)* 'one does not hear of a departure anywhere' (100) from V-K.³ The latter is unusual and contrasts with a V-K example such as *a pro ego cesarskogo veličestva podbemu*⁴ *iz Linca ničego ne slyše(t)* 'he does not hear anything about the departure of his imperial highness from Linz' (99). Secondly, Maier refutes the notion that the contrast between *pro čto, kogo, and o čem, kom* is stylistic in character. Evidence from V-K suggests that government via *pro* is more likely with animate or concrete nouns. The preposition *o* tends to occur in more abstract contexts. Compare, for example, generic *delo* in *i tovo ešče nevedomo kak oni o tom dele vyrozumejut* 'how they will find out about this matter' (82), with 'articles (of treaty)' in *i všemu kesarskomu veličestvu pro nekotorye sta(t)i močno budet razume(t)* 'it will be possible for your imperial highness to gain a clear idea about some articles' (82).

The third chapter is dedicated to verbs which express separation. Typically, the complement of such verbs is in what Russian descriptive grammar calls the *roditel'nyj otložitel'nyj*. Maier distinguishes two subgroups. Verbs of the first subgroup denote either physical or notional separation, i.e., ridding or depriving someone of something. With six of them, the second argument appears in the genitive or as a prepositional phrase (PP) in *ot*, for example, *otlučit' / otlučat' čego / ot čego, kogo* 'to separate, to take away', *otstavit' / otstavlivat' čego / ot čego* 'to dispense, to

² The valence *o čto* is a Hapax legomenon in V-K, possibly as a result of Belarusian influence (cf. pp. 180–81).

³ Here and elsewhere only the relevant portions of the Russian text are translated into English.

⁴ It is assumed that this is used as a feminine noun here (cf. Maier, fn 118).

rid of'. Thus, *V-K* still illustrate the old genitive government. However, its low frequency shows the demise of that pattern and a shift towards prepositional government via *ot*. It is missing altogether from the particularly frequent verb *otstat' ot čego* 'to separate from, to stay away'.

In the second subgroup of verbs separation is notional. They express desire or striving to separate from something in an act of defense, prudence, or as a result of fear. Maier records six verbs. The most versatile item is *opasat'sja čego, kogo/ot čego, kogo/v čem/čemu* 'to fear, to be on one's guard', even though the modern pattern of non-prepositional genitive is clearly prevalent, as it is with *bojat'sja* 'to be afraid of', the second most frequent verb of fear. Unambiguous accusative, a pattern still alive today, seems to appear first in the *Vesti-Kuranty* of the 1660s: *opasajutsja javnuju voinu* 'they fear open war' (262). Verbs expressing defense take prepositional arguments only, for example, *boronit'sja/poboronit'sja ot čego, kogo/protiv čego, kogo* 'to defend oneself'. Verbs which refer to prudent behavior are particularly interesting from a diachronic point of view: *bereč'sja/pobereč'sja* 'to be on one's guard, to beware of', and synonyms such as *osteregat'sja, stereč'sja*, prefer *ot čego, kogo* over non-prepositional genitive, which is the valence that has become prevalent since the 18th century. The variants *bljustis' čego* and *ot čego, kogo* 'to be on one's guard' are on an equal footing in *V-K*, while other periods in the history of Russian show preference for genitive similar to modern Russian *bereč'sja čego, kogo*.

The fourth chapter is about verbs denoting different types of physical activity. The first subgroup expresses hostile intent and activity. The target surfaces in different types of PP, often *na kogo, čto* or *nad kem, čem*, but also with other prepositions as in *promyšljat' (čto) nad čem/protiv kogo, čego* 'to engage in hostilities'. Reference to attack and assault is the common semantic denominator of the second subgroup of verbs discussed in this chapter. They are particularly frequent in *V-K*. Equal to the first subgroup, they tend to take a PP *na čto, kogo* for the target of the attack. However, other types of prepositional and non-prepositional government occur too, for example, *pristupit'/pristupať k čemu* 'to attack', *naexat'/naezžat' na kogo, čto/kogo* and once *vo čto* 'to attack, to invade'. The third loosely defined semantic subgroup has *voevat'/povoevat'* 'to attack, to fight', *voevat'sja* and *bit'sja/pobit'sja* 'to wage war, to fight'. The adversary in war surfaces as a PP, *protiv kogo, čto/c kem*, or as a direct object if the verb is not reflexive. Verbs of

sound emission are grouped together next. Maier has not only found *bit' vo čto* 'to play (the drum)' and *igrat' na čem* 'to play (an instrument)' as in modern Russian, but also *bit' po čemu/po čto* and *igrat' vo čto/po čemu*. 'To shoot' and synonyms form the fifth type of physical activity verbs. The target hit invariably appears in the accusative, e.g., *zastrelit' kogo*. The source of the shot requires a PP in *iz* (s), while the type of ammunition a non-prepositional instrumental, e.g., *učali iz pušek melkimi jadrami strelja(t)* 'they started to shoot light bullets from cannons' (339). Variant government comes into play when the target is shown at but not necessarily hit: *streljat' po čemu, komu/vo čto* as in modern Russian, besides *streljat' po čem, kom/na čto, kogo*.

Finally, there are 11 semantically isolated verbs which Maier discusses in chapter 5, for example, *vedat' čto/nad čem* 'to lead', but not *čem* as in modern Russian; *gotovit'sja/izgotovit'sja k čemu* 'to prepare for', *na čto* as in Old Russian, also *vo čto*, and, according to Maier, *dlja čego; gotovit'sja/izgotovit'sja protiv čego/na kogo/do čego* 'to prepare to fight, to arm for war', all obsolete today; *obvinít' (kogo) čem* 'to accuse', and *v čem* as in modern Russian; *otkazat'/otkazyvat' (komu) čto/o čem* 'to refuse, to turn down, to revoke', and frequently *v čem* as in modern Russian; *pozdravit'/pozdravljat' (komu/kogo) v čem/na čem* 'to congratulate' rather than *s čem* as from the 18th century onwards; *radet'/poradet' o čem, kom* 'to take care' and perhaps *komu, čemu* as in 19th century Russian, also *v čem/čem/čego*, and once even *k čemu; ugovorit'/ugovarivat' (kogo) k čemu* 'to persuade' and, still possible in modern Russian, *na čto; upovat' na kogo, čto* 'to hope for' as in modern Russian, but also *čego/k čemu* with one example each.

Chapter 6 is a supplement to Maier's monograph from 1997. Since then she has found variation in non-prepositional government with three more verbs from V-K prior to 1660. These are *napolnit'/napolnjat' (čto) kem, čem/kogo* 'to fill', *promyslit'/promyšljat' čto, kogo/čem* 'to provide', and *dokučat' komu/kogo (o čem)* 'to pester'.

In the concluding remarks Maier draws some comparisons between verbal government in V-K and in modern Russian. She refutes the notion that the development towards modern Russian is characterized by a spread of analytical constructions. In fact, depending on the type of verb the opposite is true, e.g., *bojat'sja čego* vs. *ot čego* 'to be afraid of'. It is however correct to say that variation in prepositional government is now more restricted than in V-K and 17th century Russian. For example, it is *gotovit'sja k čemu* 'to prepare for' today, as op-

posed to *V-K* variants such as *na čto* and *vo čto*. Maier also reiterates the fact that the language of *V-K* testifies to good native command of Russian among the translators of the Newspaper Workshop at the Posol'skij Prikaz. The following appendix lists all verbs and valence patterns which Maier studied in her monograph of 1997 and in the book under review here. An extensive bibliographic apparatus includes Russian and Western sources; details about archives, libraries, card catalogues, and electronic corpora; as well as all the secondary literature. There is then a list of the German, Dutch, Swedish, and English originals to the *V-K* from 1600 to 1660 which Maier has so far been able to identify. Finally, there is a reference index to all verbs treated in both parts of the author's study.

The monograph is an important contribution to the history of pre-Petrine Russian, a period which is directly relevant to the emergence of the new literary language in the 18th century. Maier's thorough study of the syntax of over 60 verbs will be of immediate interest to the historical syntactician and lexicographer alike. The mainly descriptive procedure has, however, certain limitations. It is difficult to see how the data, even though rich and carefully scrutinized, lend themselves to generalizations about verbal government patterns and their development from pre-modern to modern Russian. The main obstacle, it seems, is that the author does not compare like with like. This applies to individual verbs and to groups of verbs.

For individual verbs Maier does not distinguish systematically between semantic derivation and argument alternation. The latter presupposes that the meaning of the verb remains more or less stable across government variants. For example, *myslit'* *o čem* and *myslit'* *pro čto* are in fact more or less synonymous in contexts such as *on... o sem' dele s svoimi sojuznikami dale pomyslit' xotel* 'he wanted to further think about this matter with his allies' (60); *i po tom' ver[ny]e dumnye ljudi komisarov' k voiskovoi dume poslali čto(b) pro se delo gorazdo rosudili i pomyslili* 'so that they carefully consider and think about this matter' (61). This contrasts with a different type of prepositional complementation: *pomyšljat'* *na kogo* for 'to suspect someone of sth.' and *myslit'* *na čto* for 'to plan, to aspire to' (cf. p. 62). Even though the prepositional phrase *na kogo, čto* clearly alters the meaning of the verbal stem, Maier treats *pomyšljat'* *na kogo* and *myslit'* *na čto* as government variants of *myslit'* for 'to think'. There is, however, a much smaller semantic step to *myslit'*, *pomyšljat'* [and other derivatives] *na čto/kogo*. Maier rightly

records them as completely separate entities (cf. pp. 279–81). Their meaning is ‘to entertain hostile intent’. It is not clear why *pomyšljat’ na kogo* for ‘to suspect someone of sth.’ and *myslit’ na čto* for ‘to plan, to aspire to’ should not have been treated here, rather than under *myslit’* for ‘to think’. This obscures the specific role of PPs in *na* in semantic derivation.

The distinction between semantic derivation and argument alternation is equally important when we turn to detransitivization. For example, if *myslit’ o čem* and *myslit’ čto* are to be considered government variants, then the verb should mean more or less the same in both cases. As Maier herself points out, this is not so. It equals English ‘to think about sth.’ when complemented by a prepositional phrase, but ‘to think sth.’ when it takes a direct object. The former is close in meaning to ‘to give thought to, to deliberate about’, the latter to ‘to judge, to hold, to consider (that)’. Thus, there is no real contrast between *ne vedajut čto mysliti* ‘they don’t know what to think [to come to what judgment]’ (59) and *oni ežede(n) radete(l)no o tom mysljat i dumajut* ‘everyday they eagerly deliberate and think about this’ (60). The verb phrases in these two examples differ in form AND in meaning; a state of affairs which is in evidence from other periods in the history of Russian, too (cf. e.g., Slovar’ 2002: 81; Slovar’ 2003: 96). Real variation emerges where *myslit’*, or a closely related derivative, takes an object noun rather than a PP and still means ‘to give thought to’ as in *a kakъ starinnoe pomyšlju* ‘and as I think about the old days’ (59). The theme of ‘think’ could be realized as direct object well into the 19th century (cf. Kryš’ko 2006: 160–62), and even beyond that. It would have been interesting to investigate in more detail to what extent this possibility was exploited in the V-K. This however is not possible if *myslit’* for ‘to judge, to hold, to consider (that)’ and *myslit’* for ‘to use the mind, to give thought to’ are treated together.

Other examples where transitive and intransitive usage differ in meaning include *vyrazumet’/vyrazuŋljat’ čto* ‘to understand’ and *vyrazumet’/vyrazuŋljat’ o čem* ‘to find out’ (81–82), *dogovorit’ čto* ‘to agree’ and *dogovorit’ o čem* ‘to conclude negotiations [with or without result]’ (155–58), *rassudit’/rassužat’ čto* mainly ‘to judge’ and *rassudit’/rassužat’ o čem* mainly ‘to think about, to ponder’ (175–78), *voevat’ kogo, čto* ‘to attack’ and *voevat’ protiv kogo, čego/s kem* ‘to fight, to be at war’ (311–17), *otkazat’/otkazyvat’ čto* ‘to revoke, to terminate’ vs. *otkazat’/otkazyvat’ v čem* ‘to refuse, to turn down’ (cf. pp. 365–70).

In this context, it seems problematic, too, that Maier assumes double complementation in an example such as *pro prošloe čto delalo(s) nikakova durna ne govoriti* 'one ought not to say anything bad about the past' (123). The direct object as well as the prepositional phrase are said to be both arguments of the verb. Maier explicitly dismisses an analysis whereby the noun phrase incorporates the PP (cf. p. 50). Take however a phrase in modern Russian such as *govorit' slova o Rossii, kotorye*. The relative pronoun clearly refers to the constituent *slova o Rossii*. There is no evidence which suggests that this should be different in Middle Russian. A further, related complication arises from the fact that Maier deliberately excludes complement clauses from her study. However, clausal complementation seems to be immediately relevant in examples such as *posle sevo velikova dela pošel general gsdnʒ Torstensonʒ pod gorod Lepʒcix i tam xočet dožida(t)ca čto one o ratnomʒ dele pridumajut* 'what they decide about the battle' (77) and *a čto pro to myslit(t) čto pod Kolyvan'ju v takoe studena[e] pogode (sic!) pala tuča mux na snegʒ i pro to zdešnix mestʒ ljudi dobre sumnevajutca* 'and what he thinks about that' (61). Maier somewhat ambiguously attributes them to a valence pattern (*čto*) *pro čto*, which in turn is considered to represent prepositional government. This cannot be the correct analysis. The pronoun *čto* appears to refer to propositional content in *čto... pridumajut* and *čto... myslit(t)*. It replaces a complement clause rather than a direct object noun. In the case of *myslit'*, the meaning is 'to judge, to hold, to consider (that)', similar to *ne vedajut čto mysliti* from above. The valence then is *myslit'* + complement clause plus optional *pro čto*.⁵ In stark contrast to Maier's analysis, it is juxtaposed to *myslit' čto/pro čto/o čem* for 'to give thought to, to deliberate about'.

To be sure, even if meaning and valence patterns do not seem to be matched correctly, Maier is conscious of the contrast between 'to think about sth.' and 'to think sth.' (cf. p. 60). She is also clearly aware of the wider principle that verbal stems may change meaning when they take a different type of complement. Discussions of individual verbs usually include careful and illuminating semantic considerations. It is also

⁵ This is not to be confused with the syntax of a modern Russian phrase such as *dumat' o tom, čto* 'to think [deliberate] about the fact that'. If one applied a similar reading to the example under consideration here, the subordinate clause *čto pod Kolyvan'ju...* would be the complement of cataphoric *pro to*. This, however, seems unlikely, as it leaves the role of initial *čto* unaccounted for.

true that precise verbal meaning in pre-modern Russian can be difficult or impossible to establish. I can not however agree with Maier (31) that this relieves us of the necessity to distinguish, where possible, argument alternation from semantic derivation. Maier's descriptive procedure makes it difficult to draw this distinction.

My second concern is about comparisons beyond individual verbs. They would need to be based on those components in the lexical meaning which are immediately relevant to valence. A category such as mental activity does not seem to belong here. Otherwise, it should not produce a group so heterogeneous as to include predominantly transitive verbs and predominantly intransitive verbs, for example, *razumet'* čto 'to understand', *smyslit'/smyšljat'* čto 'to plan' vs. *pomyslit'/pomyšljat'* o čem 'to think', *promyšljat'* o čem 'to think, to negotiate' (cf. pp. 84–85). Similarly, verbs which express an agent's desire or striving to separate from something may form a semantically coherent group of some kind. However, the semantic element that produces this coherence is probably irrelevant for verbal governance. Some verbs which belong here tend to take genitive arguments, others prepositional phrases, e.g., *bojat'sja čego* 'to be afraid of' vs. *boronit'sja/poboronit'sja ot/protiv kogo, čego* 'to defend oneself' (274). Maier stresses that she groups verbs into semantic classes for practical rather than analytical purposes. Tables and summaries however suggest that these classes do produce valid generalizations about valence. The relationship between verbal meaning and type of verbal governance is in fact an important question in general linguistics (cf. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005), the historical and diachronic dimension of which has hardly been studied at all. For attempts in that direction it will however not be sufficient to identify groups of verbs which appear to be similar in meaning. The similarity must be substantiated by comparable patterns of argument realization (cf. e.g., for modern English Levin 1993).

To be sure, it was not Maier's intention to systematically explore the relationship between verbal meaning and syntax in pre-modern Russian. However, her monograph would be an excellent source of relevant data to that end. In its own right it is a careful philological and linguistic description of over 60 verbs in V-K and an important study of 17th century Russian. The presentation is impeccable. Note however that it should say "statistisches Belegmaterial" (fn 47), "na + Lokativ" (163), "Im Vergleich mit (...) *uložit'* na čem" (196), "hier ist die

Bedeutung des Verbs ~~und~~ 'erwähnen'" (213), "Übersetzungsvorlagen" (270), and "ein entsprechendes Beispiel" (401). Another minor area for improvement is the bibliography, which lacks entries for the following references: Zolotova 1988 (47), Haudry 1977 (47), Popova 1969 (fn 42), Potebnja 1958 (50), Bartula 1964 (fn 275). It should be Moser 2000 in fn 15 and Anstatt 1999 in fn 23. Finally, numbers quoted in tables very occasionally do not seem to correspond to those mentioned in the text: According to Table 1, *myslit' na čto*, *obmyslit' čto* and *promyšljat' k čemu* occur twice rather than three times each (59, 63, 73). So does *obvestit'* according to Table 4 (fn 134). According to Table 6, *dogovorit'sja čem* occurs twice rather than once (cf. p. 162).

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Wolfson College
Oxford OX2 6UD, UK
jan.fellerer@wolfson.ox.ac.uk

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