Clitics in Old Serbian: What does the text of Troyan Parable tell us?

The present research examines the diachronic development of Serbian clitics. The investigation of clitic forms is of special interest in Slavic languages: despite the fact that these languages display free worder, the use of clitics is subject to strict rules.
Clitics were present as early as in the Proto-Slavic language, however, in the course of language development they were totally lost in East-Slavic and partially from West Slavic.

The problem addressed:

The array and function of Serbian clitics has undergone substantial change:
1. In Old Serbian manuscripts similarly to Proto-Slavic, three types of enclitics were used – discourse, pronominal and auxiliary clitics.
2. Clitics in present day Serbian (PDS) tend to clusterize and within the clusters their order is regulated by strict rules. This ordered position of clitics within the clusters have undergone changes. Moreover, there are significantly less clitic clusters in the investigated manuscripts than in PDS texts.

The corpus of the investigation:
The investigation of clitics is carried out on a 15th century Serbian manuscript, the Troyan Parable (Троянска притча). The text of the manuscript is peculiar in the sense that it reflects the 15th century vernacular.

The analyses:
The research shows that discourse clitics were already lost in Serbian in the 15th century, as only the clitic *li* is reflected (1), which is used in PDS as well.

(1) кьⷣ ли те ѡставлю

In PDS clitics clusters are in the following order: *li*, auxiliary clitics (except the 3rd person auxiliary clitic – je), pronominal clitics (Dat-Gent-Acc), reflexive (se), 3rd person auxiliary clitic (je). We can find clusters following this order in the Troyan Parable as well (2) (3):

(2) послал ме ҥⷠ агаменонь цⷬ҃ъ.

(3) хоүю ти га дати,

There are also numerous instances where clitics follow a different ordering:

(4) грѣⷭ҇ци оуробе сьда ваⷨ сьⷣ спомен8ⷮ

In example (4) the pronominal enclitic preceeds the non 3rd person clitic auxiliary.

(5) даⷯ га ваⷨ жива и зⷣрава

While in example (5) the pronominal accusative enclitic preceeds the dative one.

As the language of the Troyan Parable reflects an intermediate linguistic state, special focus is put on irregular constructions.

Works consulted:

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