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Book Reviews


Andrey A. Zaliznjak’s recent book, Drevnerusskie ènklitiki, explains the need for a book about Old Russian enclitics by stating that while the enclitics of the South and West Slavic languages have attracted great interest, those of Old Russian have been largely ignored. Very little literature on the subject exists, and Zaliznjak cites only two studies, both dating from 1935: Gunnarsisson’s study of сё and Jakobson’s small article about the Slavic enclitics as a whole. In Zaliznjak’s opinion, this lack of interest has been caused by the absence of good sources for colloquial Old Russian speech, until the discovery of the Novgorod birch bark documents in 1951. The author also notes that histories of the Russian language do not contain chapters on the enclitics of Old Russian. Thus, the present study has the goal of providing the first modern, comprehensive study of Old Russian enclitics, in which the sources of Old Russian colloquial speech are fully taken into account. In addition to the author’s use of the birch bark documents, he also makes extensive use of all the instances of direct speech, found in the Kievan letopis’, since this also provides good evidence about colloquial uses of Old Russian. This book is intended as a complete and comprehensive expansion of the author’s earlier 1993 article on the birch bark documents. It also draws from the author’s 1985 book on the history of Slavic accentuation.

The author makes the important statement that the goal of the book is not the comparison of Old Russian enclitics with those of other Indo-European languages or with the South and West Slavic languages. It appears that this statement was made for the purpose of explaining the absence of a discussion of the many recent studies of Slavic enclitics which have appeared in recent years, since it has become a topic of great interest to Slavists. At first glance, it seemed surprising that the references about Slavic enclitics are little more than the two 1935 sources mentioned above. One does not find such recent work as the Handbook of Slavic Clitics (Franks and King, 2000), or the large number of clitic references that one can find in their bibliography (pp. 377–392). One might have expected a bit more about the current literature on the subject, although Zaliznjak’s position is understandable. After all, his book is the first to bring the enclitics of the birch bark documents and many other Old Russian manuscripts into the field of scholarly study.

As the author mentions, the study of clitics has both phonological and syntactic aspects. Further, he states that “practically the only Old Russian manuscript from which one could directly extract information about enclitic accentuation” (p. 11) is the Čudov New Testament, due to the fact that it is accented. Therefore, in order to utilize the birch bark documents and other colloquial sources, it is necessary to use unaccented sources. Thus, accentological analysis plays only a secondary role, and the syntactic position of clitics is the main basis for judgements about their behavior. In fact, the central concept of this entire book is the explanation and prediction of those instances of Old Russian enclitics which do not conform to Wackernagel’s Law, which specifies that enclitics must occupy the second position in a sentence. Therefore, every possible instance of a non-second place location of enclitics is analyzed by the author on the basis of many parameters, which constitute the chapters of this book. I will now give a brief account of the book’s contents and how each chapter relates to the main theme of explaining how deviations from Wackernagel’s Law might be explained.

The first chapter, devoted to the main rules of enclitic behavior, introduces the most important concepts and parameters which are in constant use throughout the book. If one looks at enclitic order (i.e. “ranking”), the first five ranks of enclitics to occur – že, li, bo, ti (not the dative pronoun), and by – are considered to be the older and more stable group, and also can be called the “strong clitics” (p. 51). Conversely, the latter three ranks (dative pronouns mi, si, ti, accusative pronouns mę, sę, tę, and the copula) are the “weak clitics,” although there is a descending scale of strength within each group.
The next major concept to be introduced is that of the “rhythmic-syntactic barrier” (p. 54). This concept flows directly from observed violations of Wackernagel’s Law. If an enclitic appears to be in the third position, instead of the second position required by Wackernagel’s Law, Zaliznjak assumes that the initial element may be interpreted as occurring before a “barrier” which removes it from the normal counting of elements for the purposes of locating second position. It recalls the concept of “extrametricality,” as discussed by Franks (1985: 144–151). Barriers are classified into obligatory, semi-obligatory, and optional. In the presence of a barrier, the clitic occurs farther to the right than would otherwise be the case. This is exemplified by such cases as the obligatory barrier caused by direct address in the vocative case, as in “kněže, ty se na nasь ne gněvai” (p. 54). Simply put, obligatory barriers apply to all enclitics, but the semi-obligatory type of barrier does not apply to strong enclitics, only weak ones (pp. 54–55). An example of a semi-obligatory barrier, which causes a division of strong and weak enclitic types, can be seen in the following example (p. 51–52): “on źe nyné vorogo mi sę oučinilъ,” in which źe is in true second position, but the two enclitics “mi sę” observe a barrier and occur later. If not for the barrier, one might say that there had been a violation of the law of second position. In other instances, the presence of a barrier might be optional for all types of enclitics. Perhaps, the analyst might conclude that the enclitic was in the third position, and that Wackernagel’s rule was inoperative in Old Russian. However, Zaliznjak’s point is that numerous optional barriers can be proposed, allowing one to recognize the general operation of Wackernagel’s Law. For example, if we consider “a Vęčьslavъ sęditь ti v Kievę,” (p. 56) a barrier preceding sęditь means that Wackernagel’s Law holds for the enclitic ti, while the non-recognition of this barrier would mean that the law is violated.

In subsequent chapters, Zaliznjak offers a detailed statistical description of enclitic behavior, both historically, from the Old Russian period into the modern period, and in terms of colloquial versus formal language. The major concept used for conveying this statistical information is that of the “coefficient of preposition and non-automatic postposition” (p. 65). This refers to preposition or postposition, with respect to a non-initial predicate. If a predicate is non-initial, one would expect the enclitic to precede it, while a violation would occur if the enclitic followed the predicate. This provides the terms “preposition” and “postposition.” Thus, preposition refers to the correct Wackernagel position, while postposition refers to a violation of Wackernagel’s Law, caused by a movement farther to the right.

Chapter 2 studies the differences of clitic behavior in colloquial versus formal speech, as represented by different manuscripts. The conclusion (p. 127) is phrased in terms of the coefficient of preposition, as just described, for each ranking of enclitics. Thus, the colloquial type, with the strongest enclitic rank of enclitic, has a 96.3% rate of preposition, meaning that it obeys the Wackernagel Law around 96.3% of the time. The formal, literary style has 100% obedience of the law in the strongest group of enclitics. However, when one looks at the weakest clitics, the situation is reversed, and the seventh ranked sę has a 64% ranking for colloquial texts, but only a 3% ranking for the formal type. Copious explanations are provided for every statistical parameter. In this case, the Old Church Slavonic model plus a formal tendency to emphasize enclitics is adduced as a possible reason for sę and other weak enclitics to have such a high rate of violation of Wackernagel’s Law.

Chapter 3 studies the historical changes in the pronominal enclitics, other than sę. All of them were eliminated in the course of the history of Russian, and Zaliznjak provides a continuous calculation of the coefficients of preposition for a variety of manuscripts of both colloquial and formal styles (p. 155). The differences, which most sharply differentiate East Slavic from the other branches, can be attributed the phonological dynamic stress of East Slavic (p. 267), building on the proposals of Jakobson (1935). Chapter 4 similarly charts the evolution of sę. However, since sę fuses with the preceding verb, rather than disappearing, as did the other pronominal enclitics, it merits its own chapter. The author’s main conclusion about why other pronominal enclitics totally disappeared, while sę was kept in fused position, is that the other enclitics really had the same basic meaning, but only differed in emphasis, while sę and sebe had a real semantic difference, which was maintained by the continuation of both elements in the language (p. 219). Zaliznjak also uses the occasion to refute Gunnarsson’s thesis about the evolution of sę (p.
According to Zaliznjak, the birch bark documents are critical to the analysis and Gunnarsson could not have reached the proper conclusions, since his study predates their discovery. The sixth and final chapter is devoted to the final category of enclitic which underwent drastic changes in the history of Russian – the present tense forms of the verb byti, which served as the auxiliary verb with past tenses as well as the copula. All of these were reduced to zero, while other meanings of the verb have survived in the present tense (p. 262).

I found the author’s style very straightforward and easy to follow. Since the author devotes most of the book to a presentation and analysis of textual data, one does not need a high degree of theoretical sophistication to read this work. Anyone who can understand a linguistic history of Russian should be able to understand this book. I found it to be almost completely devoid of misprints, with one small exception (on p. 51, line 18, the singular ènklitik appears instead of the plural ènklitiki).

In conclusion, I would say that Zaliznjak’s work is a great and groundbreaking study of the enclitics of East Slavic. It fills a major gap with a very comprehensive and clearly argued study. Using Jakobson’s short, but brilliant article on enclitics as its point of departure, Zaliznjak contributes the data and statistics which have long been needed in this field. I would imagine that large numbers of scholars, who have been interested in Slavic enclitics, but have paid little attention to East Slavic, will now be motivated to re-think the entire Slavic situation, as a result of Zaliznjak’s work. It certainly can be considered to be the most important book on its subject – the enclitics of Old Russian.

References


Ronald F. Feldstein, Indiana University


In recent years, many scholars of Soviet history have begun to turn their attention away from traditional research programs focusing on European Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. Elena Shulman has recently written on the Khetagurovites, scholars such as Adeeb Khalid, Adrienne Edgar, and Marianne Kemp, to name only a few, on Central Asian history in the twentieth century, and both Cynthia Ann Ruder as well as Matthew Payne on the early great Soviet construction projects of Belomor and Turksib, respectively. Christopher Ward’s well-researched book on the construction of BAM (Baikalo-amurskaia magistral’) continues admirably in this tradition, examining how familiar themes of environmentalism, gender, internationalism, and nationalism played out in the frontiers of Northeast Asia during the Brezhnev era.

BAM, of course, was a massive railway mainline that, unlike the southerly Trans-Siberian Railroad, cut north across Baikal, then east to Sovetskaia Gavan’, a port on the Straits of Tartary between Northeast Eurasia and Sakhalin. Russian leaders in both the late nineteenth as well as