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## The word order of possessive pronouns in Old Czech : summary

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# 14 SUMMARY

## The Word Order of Possessive Pronouns in Old Czech

The primary objective of this monograph is to provide a detailed description of word order behaviour of possessive pronouns in Old Czech, i.e. Czech language used in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. The research, based on thorough analyses of selected Old Czech texts, focuses mainly on: 1. Explaining the word order behaviour of each possessive pronoun used in Old Czech noun phrases (NP); 2. Describing any changes that may have occurred in the language within the period being studied; 3. Identifying any foreign (esp. Latin) influences and how they might have affected the word order in Old Czech; 4. Analysing the differences between the genres or types of Old Czech texts and understanding the impact the genre might have had on the word order behaviour of Old Czech pronominal possessives.

Methodologically speaking, the research presented in this book uses the methods of dependency grammar. The NP classification is based on the classification used by A. Svoboda (1989), which stems from the classification coined by Quirk – Greenbaum (1977). In other words, we distinguish between two types of NPs: 1. a simple NP; 2. a complex NP. As in Svoboda (ibid.), a simple NP is any noun phrase in which the head is specified only by a group of determiners or quantifiers (see examples (1), (2), (3), and (4)):

- (1) „*Nebo jsme viděli jeho hvězdu na východ slunce i přišli sme, chtiec se jemu pokloniti.*“ BiblDrážď, Mt 2,2 (Poss › N)  
“*For we saw his star when it rose and we have come to worship him.*”
- (2) *Nemoc ta nenie na smrt, ale pro chválu boží {...}* KristA 73r (N › Dem)

- Illness that** (meaning “that illness”) is not for dying, but for the praise of God {...}
- (3) *Ale Virgilius psal jest, že týž Priamus z té své královný ještě měl jest jiné dva syny {...} TrojK 92r (Dem › Poss › N)*  
*But Virgilius wrote that the same Priamus from that his Queen had had two more sons {...}*
- (4) *Smiluj se nade mnú, nebl' jsem nemocen; uzdrav mě, nebl' jsú zamúcený všechny mé kosti! ŠtítSvátA 20r (Q › Poss › N)*  
*Hast thou mercy on me, since I am diseased; healest thou me, since troubled are all my bones!*

A complex phrase is any phrase in which one of the modifying components of the NP dominant noun is an adjective modifier, complement or adjunct (see e.g. (5), (6), and (7)).

- (5) *A Syn boží, jenž bieše syn jeho podlé tělesenství, z říše nebeské pro zlost jeho sstúpil s nebe, jenž učiněn jest surchní lékař náš. GestaM 4r (Adj › N › Poss)*  
*And the Son of God, who was the God's own image, came down from heaven not to do his own will, and he was made to be the highest doctor of ours.*
- (6) *Aby člověk uměl ďáblu k jeho dówodóm odpovéděti, musí znamenati: prvé, aby svého života přirozenie znamenal {...} HusDcerkaH 217v (NP.GEN › N)*  
*So that a man could respond to Devil's reasons, he must observe: first of all, he must observe his life's nature {...}*
- (7) *A když se zpoviedala, pokánie za své hřiechy až do své smrti učinila a v dobrém svůj život dokonala. PovOl 252v (N › PP)*  
*And when she had confessed, she repented of her sins until the end of her days and died as good.*

The material analysed in this book comes from Old Czech prose that was written somewhere between the mid-fourteenth century and the end of the fifteenth century. No poetry was included in the analysis, as its word order tends to be heavily influenced by rhythm, melody and rhyme. Nevertheless, if the research focuses exclusively on the analysis of prosaic texts, it is somewhat problematic. Since the number of original prosaic texts that came into existence in the period of interest is rather limited, most of the analysed material comes from non-original texts which – more or less – depend on the original (typically Latin) pretext. That is why both Old Czech and Latin versions were compared for the texts in which one can (if only to some extent) identify the Latin pretext. This comparison was made for the biblical text, Old Czech *Gesta Romanorum* and *Trojánská kronika*. Most of the analysed material comes from the diachronic corpus called *Staročeská textová banka*, section *Edice*). All the rest was excerpted directly from the published editions of the texts. While shorter texts (up to 50 standard pages) were analysed as

a whole, longer ones were usually represented by a sample of approx. 50 standard pages. The material from *Staročeská textová banka* was used to analyse phenomena for which we do not have sufficient evidence in the selected texts.

Analysed texts:

- biblical texts (Mt BiblDrážď, Mt BiblOl, Mt BiblMlyn, Sk BiblLitTřeb, Sk BiblMlyn, Gn BiblOl, Gn BiblMlyn);
- religious education literature (HusDcerka, HusVýklKrát, JakKal, ChelčLid, ŠtítSvát);
- fiction (TrojK, PovOl, Krist, Tkadl);
- specialized non-fiction (LékŽen, LékFrant, Hvězd, BřezSnář);
- entertaining literature (Gesta);
- travel literature (CestMand);
- legal texts (Rožmb);
- historical fiction (Let).

The Czech possessive pronouns were divided into three groups according to their origin and partly also according to their word order behaviour (Group A possessives {*můj, tvůj, svůj*}, Group B possessives {*náš, váš*}, and Group C possessives {*jeho, jejíe, jich*}) – and the NP word order was analysed for each group.

The results of the analysis, using 6,498 excerpts in total, are as follows.

1. All the three groups of possessive pronouns in the Old Czech NP oscillate between two primary positions – pre-nominal (i.e. position before the head of the phrase) and post-nominal (i.e. position after the head of the phrase). The number of occurrences for the pre-nominal position (also called anteposition – A) is slightly higher than for the post-nominal position (postposition – P). One can therefore presume a competition between the two positions in Old Czech, which gradually developed into the situation in Modern Czech where pre-nominal positions are perceived as neutral (unmarked), whereas post-nominal positions are marked.

2. The differences that can be observed between the three groups of possessives:
- a/ there are more pre-nominal (61.4%) than post-nominal (38.6%) positions in Group A;
  - b/ post-nominal (55.2%) positions prevail over pre-nominal (44.8%) positions in Group B;
  - c/ the number of pre-nominal positions (53.6%) is higher than the number of post-nominal ones (46.4%) in Group C.

However, the results for Group B possessives cannot be deemed as valid – these pronouns are rather infrequent and appear mainly in religious education literature and biblical language.

3. The distribution of pre-nominal and post-nominal positions in Old Czech NPs depends to a large extent on author's style and the genre of the text. It can

be therefore hypothesized that the word order of possessives used in Old Czech NPs was probably strongly influenced by style.

4. The research also took into consideration the potential impact of style-based factors and the differences in the frequency of usage of each word order position for Groups A, B and C. The results suggest that the pre-nominal position was most likely the primary (unmarked) word order position of Old Czech possessive pronouns used in NPs.

5. The pre-nominal position noticeably prevails in texts that were not written as Old Czech versions of Latin originals (Tkadl, Rožmb); in texts that do not depend on the word order of their pretexts very much – or just slightly (TrojK, PovOl, Krist); and in texts where a Latin pretext is presumed, but has not been found (LékŽen, LékFrant, the *Astrologie* section in BřezSnář). These texts obviously had their own style too, but the occurrence of other word order specifics (circumposition, interposition, etc.) indicate that there is no tendency in these texts to imitate the word order behaviour of the possessives in the Latin NP.

6. The post-nominal position of possessives prevails particularly in the New Testament of the second Old Czech biblical edition and in some religious education literature written after 1400 (HusVýklKrát, JakKal). It is therefore possible that the post-nominal position was activated by the Latin original, and became one of the stylistic means used to differentiate the style of Old Czech prosaic texts. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that the post-nominal position of Old Czech possessive pronouns was motivated by style has yet to be verified by further research.

7. The process of grammaticalization of third person possessives (i.e. the process by which the adnominal genitives of the personal pronoun *jeho, jie, jich* were changed into possessive pronouns) had been probably already finished by the beginning of the analysed period (i.e. the beginning of the second half of the fourteenth century). The process most likely included the change of the primary word order position of the possessives: with some simplification it can be described as the transformation of post-nominal adnominal genitives of personal pronouns into pre-nominal possessive pronouns. The assumption that the grammaticalization had already come to an end by that time can be based on the fact that in the oldest Old Czech texts analysed herein, which were only slightly affected by the Latin NP (Gospel of Matthew of *Bible drážďanská*, and *Knihá rožmborská*), the third person possessives were already in the pre-nominal position.

8. In contrast with the oldest biblical translation, the new version of the New Testament of the second Old Czech biblical edition tended to preserve the original Latin patterns in the translated text as much as possible. What this return to Vulgata meant in terms of word order: the modifying components of the NP typically appeared in the post-nominal position. This tendency became even stronger in later Early Modern Czech translations (see Navrátilová 2012a).

9. The frequency of other types of word order – circumpositions (i.e. NPs such as *tato slova má*) and interpositions, (i.e. NPs such as *náš jest sluch naplnilo*) – was very low in our corpus of texts (1.2% for interpositions and 2.8% for circumpositions). That is why neither of them can be probably regarded as typical examples of the word order used in the earlier stages of Czech language development. They seem to have been used in Old Czech as style-marked variants – they appear most frequently in texts which have the ambition to achieve certain language exclusivity (esp. in ŠtítSvát, Tkadl, TrojK, PovOl, Gesta and in the biblical text).

10. In Old Czech, some differences in the word order behaviour of possessive and demonstrative pronouns in NPs can be also observed: while almost all of the demonstrative pronouns (about 95%) are pre-nominal, the word order of possessives oscillates between two positions (about 60% pre-nominal and 40% post-nominal in the analyzed material).

11. In addition to that, some of the NP structures occurring in Old Czech are in contrast with the expected behaviour of possessive pronouns functioning as determiners of the phrase: the adjective modifier in the linear chain of the modifying parts of the NP is positioned before the possessive (Adj › Poss › N), e.g. *v pilné jeho potřebě* (in his urgent need), *v surchniem svém stavu* (in his utmost state). One might therefore hypothesize from the occurrence of such structures that the Old Czech possessive pronouns do not have prototypical behaviour like definite determiners, as they enable the adjective modifier to occupy the position reserved for the determiner (or quantifier) of the phrase.

The analysis carried out in this book can be used as a starting point for further research into the word order development in Czech NPs, which should focus on two important aspects that have not been dealt with here very much: 1. The word order behaviour of other modifying parts of Old Czech NPs and their word order constellations; 2. The word order of possessive pronouns in later stages of Czech language development, particularly in Early Modern Czech and the Czech used in the nineteenth century.