

Editor-in-chief's preface

This is the first issue of the new linguistic journal *Indo-Iranian Languages*. The journal deals with linguistic aspects of the Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Dardic and Nuristani languages, which are united under the label of “Indo-Iranian” or “Aryan” and together constitute a separate branch of the Indo-European language family. Edelman [1992] considers that the subdivision of this branch took place gradually: initially, the Nuristani languages split off as a separate group, and this was followed by the breakup of the remainder into the Iranian and Indo-Aryan groups. There is no scholarly consensus on the status of the Dardic languages. According to the traditional point of view, which is still supported by many scholars, the Dardic languages belong within the Indo-Aryan group. However, a recent study by Anton Kogan convincingly shows that they instead constitute a separate Indo-Iranian group which split off after the Nuristani languages [Kogan 2005].

The Indo-Iranian languages are located in close proximity to each other. All Dardic and Nuristani languages are surrounded by Iranian and in contact with Indo-Aryan languages. Many Dardic and Nuristani native speakers are bilingual: for example, Dardic Pashai [Gryunberg 1999a: 73; Lehr 2014] and Nuristani Kati speakers [Gryunberg 1999b: 102, Halfmann 2024] also know Iranian Pashto or Dari.

The presence of a number of shared linguistic features attested by Indo-Iranian and the neighboring languages has made it possible to include many Indo-Iranian languages in a Central Asian or Himalayan linguistic area [Edelman 1980], which in recent studies has been called “the Greater Hindukush” or “Peristan” [Liljegren 2023]. It unites the languages of the Pamirs, the Hindu Kush, the Karakorum, the Himalayas and neighboring territories. The precise demarcation of this area and the list of languages included vary across linguistic studies. For example, Edelman [1980: 22] includes the following Indo-Iranian languages: all of Dardic and Nuristani, the majority of Eastern Iranian (Pashto and the Pamir languages), Balochi (Western Iranian),

some other Iranian languages (Parachi andOrmuri) and some Indo-Aryan languages (Dumaki, Western Pahari languages, Panjabi and a few others). The close interaction observed between the languages of the Himalayan linguistic area leaves no doubt that any descriptive study of an Indo-Iranian language is valuable and useful for scholars working on other languages of the Indo-Iranian branch.

Historically, the diachronic approach to Indo-Iranian languages has predominated, while the synchronic areal-typological approach was less well developed until recently. However, in the last decades the number of areal-typological studies conducted has increased thanks to regular linguistic field trips and the development of oral and written corpora for some Indo-Iranian languages. In the past 15 years a number of linguistic corpora have been created in the Russian Federation, namely the Ossetic National Corpus (Eastern Iranian; <https://www.ossetic-studies.org>, more than 12 million tokens), the Digor Ossetic Corpus (<https://www.ossetic-studies.org>, 2.3 million tokens), the Oral Corpus of Ossetic Dialects (<https://www.ossetic-studies.org/ru/texts>, 77,000 tokens), the Tajik National Corpus (Western Iranian; <https://tajik-corpus.org/>, 60 million tokens), a corpus of Shughni (Eastern Iranian; <https://pamiri.online/>, 60,000 tokens), and oral corpora of Yaghnobi (Eastern Iranian; 47,000 tokens) and Kullui (Indo-Aryan; <http://kullui-corpus.info/>, 18,000 tokens).

In the current phase of research on Indo-Iranian languages the areal-typological approach is seen as the most promising (cf. on the Iranian languages [Vydrin, Belyaev 2023]). Our journal focuses on studies of Indo-Iranian languages carried out within this approach. However, the scope of the journal is intentionally broad and covers all kinds of linguistic studies of the languages of this branch.

The journal *Indo-Iranian Languages* is currently the only linguistic journal dedicated to this language branch as a whole published anywhere in the world. Some existing periodicals cover linguistic aspects of a part of the Indo-Iranian branch. However, most of these are either not exclusively dedicated to linguistics or do not include all Indo-Iranian languages. For example, the well-known periodical *Indo-Iranian Journal* “focuses on the ancient and medieval languages and cultures of South Asia and of pre-Islamic Iran. It publishes articles on Indo-Iranian languages (linguistics and literatures), such as Sanskrit, Avestan, Middle

Iranian and Middle & New Indo-Aryan"¹. Modern Iranian as well as Dardic and Nuristani languages lie outside the scope of this journal.

The Islamic Republic of Iran publishes a number of journals devoted to linguistic aspects of Persian and other Iranian languages and dialects. The scope of these journals usually does not go beyond those Iranian languages located within the current territory of Iran and does not include other subgroups of Indo-Iranian languages. Similarly, there are some promising linguistic journals in the Republic of India; however, they usually focus on the languages of India and do not include other subgroups of the Indo-Iranian languages beyond Indo-Aryan. There are no linguistic journals in European languages dedicated to Dardic or Nuristani at all.

The launch of *Indo-Iranian Languages*, covering linguistic aspects of Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Nuristani and Dardic, will therefore be of great value for experts and researchers of these languages.

The first issue of our journal features a selection of papers presented at the "Conference on the Grammar of the Iranian Languages" held on 18th–20th April 2024 at the Institute for Linguistic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia. The papers all deal with different grammatical aspects of Eastern Iranian languages, and are mainly based on the areal-typological approach and corpus data or data elicited from native speakers.

Yulia Sinitsyna's paper, "Semantic oppositions in comparative constructions of equality in some Iranian languages", is devoted to comparative constructions of equality in Iron Ossetic, Pashto, Tajik and Balochi. The constructions under discussion are described on the basis of three semantic oppositions: subject vs. event comparison, qualitative vs. quantitative comparison, and explicit vs. implicit comparison. In all four languages in the sample, simple standards of comparison (*He sings like a nightingale*) are conveyed by case markers (Ossetic Equative case *-aw*) or adpositions. More complex (clausal) standards (*Today he is as happy as he was yesterday*) are marked with conjunctions. As a result, the data presented extend the typology of comparative constructions.

¹ URL: <https://brill.com/view/journals/iij/iij-overview.xml?language=en> (accessed on 30th October 2024).

The paper by Maksim Melenchenko, “The Pluperfect in Shughni and other Pamir languages”, is an overview of the Pluperfect in the modern Pamir languages. The Pluperfect is a periphrastic form derived from the Perfect by either an auxiliary ‘to be’ or a suffix. In most of the Pamir languages, the Pluperfect conveys the typologically common meaning of distant past and also some irrealis meanings. The author treats the Shughni Pluperfect in greatest detail: this has lost its distant past meaning and is now used to mark irrealis situations only.

In the next paper, “Aspectual-actional semantics of verbs with the prefix *fæ-* in the modern Ossetic language (in comparison with Russian)”, Alina Levitskaya considers aspect in modern Ossetic (principally the Iron dialect), a category mainly expressed by preverbs. The paper focuses on the semantic features of the preverb *fæ-*. Unlike other preverbs, which convey perfective aspect, *fæ-* can express either perfective or imperfective aspect. One of the most interesting characteristics of *fæ-* is that some verbs marked by this preverb have both perfective and imperfective meanings. The analysis of the data leads to the conclusion that aspect in the Ossetic language is relatively young, and the processes of aspect formation in Russian and Ossetic are typologically similar.

The paper “The lexeme *wældaj* in Ossetic: between an exceptive and a simulative marker” by Irina Khomchenkova is a detailed study of the lexeme *wældaj* in modern Iron Ossetic. The main meaning of *wældaj* is ‘extra, excess’, but this lexeme can be used in individual constructions with the meaning ‘in addition to’ (the additive-exceptive construction), ‘except for’ (the exceptive construction proper) and ‘in contrast to’. The article examines the features of the use of *wældaj* in various constructions and attempts to trace the development of the semantic meanings of this lexeme. Of particular interest is that *wældaj*, when used with negation, can also have a simulative meaning ‘like, as’.

The next paper, “The verb focus construction in Iron Ossetic”, considers the Ossetic construction with the participle-converb in *-gæ* and the verb *kænən* ‘to do’. Anastasia Podgornaia shows that this construction marks verb focus and is obligatorily used in the presence of focus particles modifying a verb. The author examines the morphosyntactic features of the focus construction and concludes

that the Ossetic construction showcases a cross-linguistically attested strategy of employing periphrasis with a verb 'to do' for marking verb focus in a language with word order restrictions.

Danil Alekseev in the paper "Non-verbal predication in Ossetic" deals with features of the copula in Iron and Digor Ossetic. The verb 'to be' in the third person singular of the Present has two morphological forms, one of which can be considered a copula. In all other persons and numbers the copula has no special form. However, the author shows that with third person plural subjects the "copular meanings" can be conveyed by non-agreement with the subject and the use of the third person singular copula. The paper considers in detail locative sentences and the specifics of the use of the verb 'to be' with negation. The detailed study of the semantics of the Ossetic copula and its morphosyntactic features makes this a significant contribution to the typology of copulas in Iranian languages.

The paper "Copulas in Yaghnobi" by Arseniy Vydrin is a corpus-based study of the Yaghnobi language of the 1920s–1960s. Yaghnobi has three different forms of the copula in the third person singular of the Present: the full forms *xast*, *ast* and the suffix *-x*. The paper shows that they all have distinct grammatical and semantic uses and should be considered different copulas. The use of the copula is not obligatory: all three copulas can be omitted in most of their semantic and some grammatical functions. An interesting finding of this study is the existence of double copula sentences: sentences with a single subject where two copulas are used simultaneously. The analysis of such sentences shows that each copula conveys its own meaning. According to the available literature such constructions have not previously been described for Yaghnobi or other modern Iranian languages.

The editorial team believes that *Indo-Iranian Languages* will be a high-demand scientific platform for experts in languages of the Indo-Iranian branch as well as for typologists and linguists dealing with other languages.

Arseniy Vydrin

DOI: 10.30842/30346800.2025.1.1.2

References

- Edelman 1992 — D. I. Edelman. Yeshche raz ob etapakh fliatsii ariyskoy yazykovoy obshchnosti [Aryan linguistic-filiation milestones revisited]. *Voprosy Jazykoznanija*. 1992. No. 3. P. 44–66.
- Edelman 1980 — D. I. Edelman. K substratnomu naslediyu Tsentralnoaziat-skogo yazykovogo soyuza [Central Asia Linguistic Areal: a substratum heritage]. *Voprosy Jazykoznanija*. 1980. No. 5. P. 21–32.
- Gryunberg 1999a — A. L. Gryunberg. Pashai yazyk [Pashai]. D. I. Edelman (ed.). *Yazyki mira: dardskiye i nuristanskiye yazyki* [Languages of the World: Dardic and Nuristani languages]. Moscow: Indrik, 1999. P. 72–80.
- Gryunberg 1999b — A. L. Gryunberg. Kati yazyk [Kati]. D. I. Edelman (ed.). *Yazyki mira: dardskiye i nuristanskiye yazyki* [Languages of the World: Dardic and Nuristani languages]. Moscow: Indrik, 1999. P. 101–117.
- Halfmann 2024 — J. M. Halfmann. *A Grammatical Description of the Katë Language (Nuristani)*. PhD thesis. Köln: Universität zu Köln, 2024.
- Kogan 2005 — A. I. Kogan. *Dardskiye yazyki. Geneticheskaya kharakteristika* [Dardic languages. Genetic characteristics]. Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 2005.
- Lehr 2014 — R. Lehr. *A descriptive grammar of Pashai: the language and speech community of Darrai Nur*. PhD thesis. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2014.
- Liljegren 2023 — H. Liljegren. The languages of Peristan through the lens of areal typology. A. M. Cacopardo, A. S. Cacopardo (eds.). *Roots of Peristan: the pre-Islamic cultures of the Hindukush/Karakorum. Proceedings of the International Interdisciplinary Conference, ISMEO, Rome, Palazzo Baleani, 5–7 October, 2022. Part I*. Roma: ISMEO, 2023. P. 391–431.
- Vydrin, Belyaev 2023 — A. P. Vydrin, O. I. Belyaev. Sovremennaya rossiyskaya iranistika: predisloviye [Contemporary Iranian studies in Russia: A foreword]. *Voprosy Jazykoznanija*. 2023. No. 6. P. 7–10. DOI: 10.31857/0373-658X.2023.6.7-10.