

# *Iranian Linguistics*

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# Introduction

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This special section in *Orientalia Suecana* 61 is a selection of papers presented at the Fourth International Conference on Iranian Linguistics (ICIL4) held in Uppsala, June 17–19, 2011. The conference was organized by Carina Jahani, Uppsala University, Simin Karimi, University of Arizona, Tucson, and Agnes Korn, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main. Originally more than 100 abstracts were submitted to the conference, from which 36 were selected for oral presentations and 19 for poster presentations. A number of contributors to the conference subsequently submitted their papers for publication in this issue of *Orientalia Suecana*, and after the reviewing process, the seven papers below were finally selected for publication.

The aim of the International Conferences on Iranian Linguistics is to provide a common venue for scholars from different disciplines, such as general linguistics, Iranian studies, and comparative Indo-European studies, who share a research focus on the Iranian languages. The first ICIL conference was held in Leipzig in 2005, and thereafter it has become a bi-annual event, hosted in turn by the University of Hamburg (2007), the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris (2009), and Uppsala University (2011). Selections from two previous conferences have been published, Karimi *et al.* (2008) and Korn *et al.* (2011). This section in the 2012 issue of *Orientalia Suecana* thus continues a now well-established tradition of publishing a selection of state-of-the-art contributions covering a broad spectrum of topics in current Iranian linguistics.

Iranian languages are spoken over a vast geographic area, stretching from the Pamir region in the northeast and across Central Asia to the Caucasus, southern Russia, and eastern Turkey in the northwest. On the Iranian plateau, different languages belonging to the Iranian family are spoken all the way to the southern shores of the Persian Gulf and even across the Gulf on the Arabian Peninsula. In the southeast there are speakers of Iranian languages all the way to Sindh province in Pakistan. Studies of linguistic contact between Iranian languages and particularly Turkic, Semitic, and other Indo-European languages, e.g. languages from the Indo-Aryan family, Armenian, and Tocharian, are therefore highly rewarding.

Persian has for centuries enjoyed a special position among the Iranian languages. For more than a thousand years it has been used at courts on the Iranian plateau, in Turkey, Central Asia, and India, where it developed as the vehicle of an elevated written literature. Long before that, in its Middle Persian form, it was the medium of a rich oral literary tradition as well, and oral literature has continued to play an important role in Persian in modern times. Persian was also an important *lingua franca* among traders along the Silk Road. There are today more than 100 million speakers

of Persian (in its three dialect variants Farsi, Dari, and Tajik), either as first or second language.

Persian is, however, not the only Iranian language with several million speakers. Kurdish, Pashto, and Balochi each count around 10 million speakers or more, and in historical times Sogdian was a large Iranian language spoken over vast areas in Central Asia. But there are also very small languages belonging to the Iranian family, among others the so-called “Pamir languages” spoken in southern Tajikistan, eastern Afghanistan, and northern Pakistan, some of which only have a few thousand speakers. The area of Iranian linguistics therefore offers rich potential for a highly diversified range of diachronic and synchronic studies, covering a considerable number of languages in various geographic and socio-cultural settings.

The individual articles in this section of *Orientalia Suecana* are arranged alphabetically, based on the surname of the author. It would, of course, have been possible to arrange the articles based on content as well, but we feel that the themes of the articles are rather intertwined, and that any thematic split would be rather arbitrary. There are three articles that treat phonological subjects. Kümmel and Miller deal with phonological changes over time and Hosseini with prosody and syllabification in Persian in connection with clitics. Cliticization is also discussed by Nourzaei and Jahani, though this time in Balochi. Levinsohn also deals with Balochi, but investigates the discourse level. Shokri and Öpengin both study morphosyntax, but there are clear links between the articles by Shokri and by Nourzaei and Jahani as well, since both deal with the verb phrase. There is also a good range of specific languages under study: Balochi, Kurdish, Mazandarani, and Persian. Kümmel’s article is a general discussion of phonological development and not limited to any one Iranian language. Kümmel and Miller have a clear diachronic perspective in their articles, while the rest are of a mainly synchronic nature.

The first article, written by Ayat Hosseini, is entitled “The Prosodization of Function Words in Persian” and investigates the prosodic structure of stressless function words in Persian (enclitics and proclitics) within the framework of Prosodic Phonology. Hosseini argues for an analysis that differentiates enclitics from proclitics. Enclitics group with their hosts in a recursive structure, forming a single PWord, while proclitics exhibit a PWord boundary between themselves and their hosts.

In the next article, Martin Joachim Kümmel studies “The Iranian Reflexes of Proto-Iranian \**ns*” and proposes a solution uniting the apparently diverging Avestan *tqθra-* ‘darkness’ with corresponding words in other Iranian languages under a common preform. He also gives a similar explanation for a parallel case of apparent variation, namely Avestan *pąsnu-* ‘ashes’ and its cognates, and concludes by discussing the development of Proto-Iranian \**ns* in Iranian languages and its relative chronology.

In his article entitled “Introducing Reported Speeches in Balochi of Sistan with *ki*”, Stephen H. Levinsohn investigates the hypothesis that *ki* in Balochi is used as an introducer of a reported speech when the consequences of the speech are highlighted, rather than the speech itself. He finds that the main function of *ki* is to indicate that the following speech is to be understood as a representation of an utterance or thought, rather than its verbatim replication.

In “Variation in Persian Vowel Systems”, Corey Miller addresses the diachronic development of the Early New Persian vowel system in the three contemporary variants of Persian – Farsi, Dari, and Tajik – with respect to Labov’s principles of vowel shifting. He concludes that the changes that have taken place in the Persian vowel system sometimes corroborate Labov’s findings and sometimes provide alternative directions. The notion of a pan-dialectal vowel system is explored both as a theoretical construct in understanding the diachrony of vowel systems, but also for possible pedagogical applications.

Maryam Nourzaei and Carina Jahani investigate “The Distribution and Role of the Verb Clitic =a/a= in Different Balochi Dialects”, including four varieties spoken west of Balochistan proper. They discuss the enclitic versus proclitic status of the verb clitic in altogether eleven Balochi dialects and find that the verb clitic has proclitic status in three of the four previously undescribed westernmost dialects, whereas it occurs as an enclitic, attaching to the word preceding the verb with certain restrictions to what word can host it, in a majority of the Balochi dialects for which there are descriptions available, and in one of the dialects under study it is totally absent.

In his article entitled “Adpositions and Argument Indexing in the Mukri Variety of Central Kurdish: Focus on Ditransitive Constructions” Ergin Öpengin describes how adpositions in this dialect may have the syntactic functions of introducing a third participant into the speech event, a causee in an indirect causation construction, and a “weakened actor” in the passive construction. Adpositions combine with pronominal clitics to yield a system of argument indexing that is of considerable complexity and has hitherto not been adequately analysed.

Guiti Shokri studies “Past and Non-past Structures in the Mazandarani Dialect Spoken by the Galesh of Ziarat” and finds that the non-past indicative verb forms in this dialect combine Persian indicative prefixes and personal endings with a Mazandarani stem. In the simple past, the dialect of Ziarat follows a Mazandarani structure, apart from the personal endings, which are Persian, except in the third person singular. This is an example of the comparatively rare instance of a language borrowing entire inflectional paradigms in a language contact setting.

As is evident, the contributions to this section cover a broad range of topics and languages, and illustrate several distinct theoretical traditions. We are very grateful to the authors for submitting their articles to *Orientalia Suecana* and for their cooperative attitude during the revision process. Sincere thanks also to the anonymous reviewers of the submitted papers. We are indebted to Everett Thiele for a highly professional checking of the English and stylistic accuracy of the articles, and to John Wilkinson, Textgruppen i Uppsala AB, for typesetting.

## Publications from previous ICIL

Karimi, Simin, Samiiian, Vida, and Stilo, Donald (eds) (2008). *Aspects of Iranian Linguistics*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ICIL1.

Korn,ANGES, Haig, Geoffrey, Karimi, Simin, and Samvelian, Pollet (eds) (2011). *Topics in Iranian Linguistics*. Beiträge zur Iranistik, 34. Wiesbaden: Reichert. ICIL3, reviewed in this volume.