

There are two crucial points which are observed in all parts of this volume and are worth mentioning. First, the editors have not deliberately tried to homogenize the technical nomenclature used throughout this volume. In other words, instead of being encouraged to employ a fixed set of terms in their argumentations, authors have been at liberty to utilize their own choices of terms. This fact gives the audience a chance to gain familiarity with a wide range of technical terms employed in the existing literature on Persian linguistics. Second, the discussions and argumentations of each chapter are convincingly augmented by sets of useful and authentic data. Not only do these data make the proposed accounts more comprehensible, but also they could inspire the researchers to bring alternative explanations for the attested phenomena. Generally speaking, the *Oxford Handbook of Persian Linguistics* provides a reliable and reader-friendly source for those researchers who wish to gain familiarity with Persian language and its various characteristics and the scholars who have been working on Persian and want to update their assumptions and get helpful research proposals.

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**Endangered Iranian Languages**, Saloumeh Gholami (ed.), Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2018, ISBN 978-3-9549-0329-0 (pbk), 122 pp.

An edited collection of five chapters based on papers presented at the Second International Symposium on Endangered Iranian Languages (2016), this book aims to present comprehensive and up-to-date findings on endangered Iranian languages while dealing with a variety of topics ranging from documentation methods and solutions, aspects of philology, morphology, phonology, and syntax as well as dialectology. Written in a clear scholarly style, the book amply supports and inspires researchers in the documentation and fieldwork of endangered Iranian languages.

Following by the editor's preface, five chapters are presented, each of which covers various fundamental aspects of language studies and language documentation.

The first chapter, "Non-canonical Subject Construction in Endangered Iranian Languages: Further Investigation into the Debates on the Genesis of Ergativity" by Mohammad Dabir-Moghaddam, deals with the long-lasting debate on the genesis of ergativity in Iranian languages<sup>1</sup>. In the first part, the author offers a thorough and elaborate description of six theories proposed in this regard. All the linguists

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<sup>1</sup>Dabir-Moghaddam, "Non-canonical Subject Construction in Endangered Iranian Languages".

and theorists in question are focused on tracing the origins of the ergative construction found in modern Iranian languages back in Old Persian. The sentence “*ima tya manā krtam*,” (which is called MK Construction) which is repeated over twenty times in Old Persian inscriptions, has been considered as the basis for the analysis of the ergative construction. Benveniste calls this a genitive construction,<sup>2</sup> while Cardona<sup>3</sup> and Skjærvø, following Geiger, consider it as passive.<sup>4</sup> Bynon views it as a raised possessor construction<sup>5</sup> while Haig introduces it as an instance of the external possessor construction (EPC).<sup>6</sup> However, Jügel, comparing it with similar constructions in Avestan, considers it as middle voice as the origin of the ergative construction in Iranian languages.<sup>7</sup>

In the next part of the chapter, Dabir-Moghaddam elaborates on his own theory regarding the origin of the ergative construction in Iranian languages. He believes that the MK construction is a prototype of the ergative construction and introduces ergativity as an epiphenomenon resulting from a reanalysis of the non-canonical subject construction and its subsequent expansion to perfect verbs in Middle Persian. What makes this study remarkable is Dabir-Moghaddam’s unique method of argumentation, which separates him from the other theorists on the topic. This has roots in his “From synchrony to diachrony” approach, which concentrates on modern Iranian languages rather than one or two structures in Old Persian. Given the very limited number of written documents and samples of old languages, Dabir-Moghaddam concentrates on present Iranian languages and engages in a comparison of constructions which bear great resemblance to the MK construction. Iranian languages such as Larestani and Davani (southwestern Iranian languages) as well as Vafsi, Nayini and Taleshi (northwestern Iranian languages) are very similar to Old Persian structure-wise, and have retained many of their ancient properties. A close analysis of these properties could shed light on many of the moot points about old languages. Identifying and presenting instances from languages that are currently spoken in Iran can provide a strong basis for arguments regarding the origin of the ergative construction. This study also indicates the significance of Iranian languages and the need for greater attention to documentation of and studies on these endangered and remote languages.

The second chapter, “Dikin Marāqei Tati of Alamut: An Undocumented Conservative Tati Language,” by Donald L. Stilo, investigates properties of Dikin Marāqei, a language spoken in the village of Dikin and belongs to Marāqei group of Tati<sup>8</sup>. This language is unique for its geographical distribution as well as linguistic properties such

<sup>2</sup>Benveniste, “La construction passive du parfait transitif.”

<sup>3</sup>Cardona, “The Indo-Iranian construction *mana krtam*.”

<sup>4</sup>Skjærvø, “Remarks on the Old Persian Verbal System”; Skjærvø, “Old Iranian”; Skjærvø, “Middle West Iranian”.

<sup>5</sup>Bynon, “Evidential, Raised Possessor.”

<sup>6</sup>Haig, *Alignment Change in Iranian Languages*.

<sup>7</sup>Jügel, “On the Origin of the Ergative Construction in Iranian”; Jügel, *Die Entwicklung der Ergativkonstruktion*.

<sup>8</sup>Stillo, “Dikin Marāqei Tati o Alamut: An Undocumented Conservative Tati Language.”

as retention of grammatical gender; direct vs. oblique cases; the second person (singular) agreement marker (PAM) -iš; ergative alignment of nouns and pronouns in past tenses; agreement with object; and a synthetic passive in -i-. Despite the limited number of the sentences used in this study—which has been extracted from a three hour recording—and the type of the sentences—which are questionnaire based sentences, Stilo has been able to provide a detailed description of a number of diachronic phonological and morphological processes; pronouns and prepositions; verb system; present, past, and gerund grammatical tense system; passive and ditransitive verbs in this language. Dikin is a split ergative language: it is nominative-accusative in the present tense but has ergative alignment when it comes to the past tense. Interestingly, given the grammatical gender system in this language, fronted oblique enclitics, co-indexing agent, separates the feminine definite marker from the root in feminine patients in the ergative alignment at the past system and function as mesoclitics, which does not occur with masculine patients. The author hopes that more comprehensive investigations would be conducted on natural data to reinforce the results of his study.

“Forms and Meanings of the Ezāfe in Zazaki” is the third chapter in this volume. Written by Brigitte Werner<sup>9</sup>, it offers a thorough description of the “*ezāfe*” phenomenon in *Zaza*—a northwestern Iranian language which is spoken by some three million people in eastern Turkey. What separates this study from previous research conducted into the *Zaza* language is Werner’s approach, which engages in a comparative study of various forms of *ezāfe* construction in northern, central and southern dialects of this language and describes different classifications of *ezāfe* construction in detail. The use of *ezāfe* in nominal groups is the same in the three *Zaza* dialects but number, gender and syntactic relations of the head noun could result in different *ezāfe* forms in the southern dialect. An equally important point is that language change can be seen in the speaker’s optional use of the allative case marking definite and specific Noun Phrases in northern and southern Zazaki, in terms of tending towards simpler forms in language use.

The chapter “Steps Being Taken to Reverse Language Shift in the Wakhi Language in Tajikistan,” by Jaroslava Obrtelova and Raihon Sohibnazarbekova,<sup>10</sup> focuses on the current state of Wakhi, a southwestern Iranian language which is spoken in Tajikistan, northeastern Afghanistan, northern Pakistan and western China and has been classified as an unwritten endangered language. The authors look deeply into the efforts made to document the language and design an alphabetic system for it, and painstakingly elaborate and classify the technical and social challenges with which both linguists and speakers have been faced. A great many efforts have been made to document this language. The cooperation of speakers of the Wakhi language in documenting their cultural and linguistic heritage indicates their full awareness of the danger threatening their language and is a good instance of language revitalization. They not only try to

<sup>9</sup>Werner, “Forms and Meanings of the Ezāfe in Zazaki.”

<sup>10</sup>Obrtelová & Raihon, “Steps Being Taken to Reverse Language Shift in the Wakhi Language in Tajikistan.”

document their language but endeavor to preserve it as a vital language. From a historical point of view, efforts made in order to document Wakhi language may constitute a real and noteworthy standard for documentarians, linguists and also the speakers of endangered languages.

The authors first describe the Wakhi language, its geographic distribution and the number of its speakers. The efforts made toward documentation of this language, which include designing an alphabetic writing system, are so significant and can inform documentarians, linguists and the language community by indicating a turning point—a shift from the unstoppable course of decline and attrition to revitalization and safeguarding that language. In this vein, one of the most significant measures taken was designing a writing system for this language. Choosing between Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, coping with the phonetic complexities of Wakhi, keeping the alphabetic system homogenous and using a proper alphabetic system and spelling for borrowed words were among the difficulties facing linguists in this task. The large number of publications in this language indicates the interest of Wakhi speakers in being able to read and write their native language.

Finally, strategies and solutions are proposed to overcome the shortcomings and potential obstacles; these could have been more extensive and more scientific. The status of the language following the design of a writing system and the publication of the book, and a comparison with the past, further confirm the efficacy of the efforts to preserve languages from extinction.

In addition to all the foregoing is Saloumeh Gholami's "Pronominal Clitics in Zoroastrian Dari (Behdini) of Kerman"<sup>11</sup>, which discusses the function of enclitic pronouns in that language. Zoroastrian Dari traditionally has been classified under the central plateau branch in western Iranian languages, but nowadays, due to the diverse features of this group of languages, some linguists have proposed a revision of the traditional classification and to consider the central plateau languages as a distinct cluster.

Zoroastrian Dari is one of those languages that show unique characteristics, whether in its historical backgrounds, or the large number of subdialects. Interestingly, despite the fact that this ancient and noble language is considered an endangered language, the dialect spoken in Yazd province has about twenty-eight subdialects that are still spoken in many villages and towns around the city of Yazd. The great resemblance between Zoroastrian Dari (both Kerman and Yazd variations) and western Iranian languages indicates that the religious minority most likely migrated to the provinces of Yazd and Kerman at different points from different parts of the country.

Investigating the function of pronominal clitics in Zoroastrian Dari, Gholami observes the historical evolution of this phenomenon from Old to Modern Persian, which yields remarkable results. Following the collapse of Old Persian's case system and in order to mark case distinction, the use of pronominal clitics gained momentum in Middle Persian. Gholami has studied clitics in the Kerman dialect in depth and

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<sup>11</sup>Gholami, "Pronominal Clitics in Zoroastrian Dari (Behdini) of Kerman."

compared them to Old Persian structures which she believes form the foundation of clitics formation in the language in question. Similarities between clitics in Zoroastrian Dari to pronouns in Parthian, Middle and Modern Persian are visible in tables provided by the author.

Gholami has pointed out that in Zoroastrian Dari of Kerman clitics are generally used to mark the agent of transitive verbs in the past tense.

The behavior of the Zoroastrian Dari dialect of Yazd is somewhat different from that of the Kerman variation. Unlike the Zoroastrian Dari of Kerman, in some Dari dialects of Yazd, such as Ma'lati and Sharif Abadi, ergativity still exists. These dialects display a split ergative system where pronominal clitics are used as subject agreement markers and object agreement markers that are prefixed to verbal forms.

At the end of the chapter, Gholami asks whether the use of pronominal proclitics as subject agreement markers in the languages of Fars, Yazd, Kerman and Hormozgan provinces is a regional typological feature or is simply due to a genetic relationship. Answering this question requires extensive research on all these languages. As for the Zoroastrian Dari language of Yazd, where I have been studying and collecting data from a number of dialects for two years, these dialects show striking similarities, while each of them displays unique features. Subsequently, until all of them are documented and compared in one comprehensive study, we cannot make any definitive claims about whether the use of clitics in these languages are dominated by areal typology or linguistic genetics.

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