

## EXISTENTIALS IN DOMARI

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Domari is a moribund New Indo-Aryan language spoken by small and socially isolated communities of formerly itinerant metalworkers and entertainers in various countries of the Middle East. The language is rather archaic for a New Indo-Aryan in its overall verb typology, while at the same time showing very strong contact influences from Kurdish and Arabic. The existential verb in Domari is a particularly volatile category which allows us insights into the particular historical development stages of Domari, but also into the general potential for change and re-analysis in existentials. Among the issues that we encounter are: the emergence of a quasi-suppletive subjunctive paradigm based apparently on the early borrowing of a separate existential auxiliary from Dardic; the loss of the historical present-tense copula and its replacement through the perfect-tense form of the verb ‘to become’, giving rise to a perfecto-present; the chequered composition of the new copula paradigm consisting of forms of the existential verbs alongside gerundial and participial affixes; the retention of an enclitic copula despite an overall shift in word order; the borrowing of an Arabic past-tense copula to serve as a past-tense auxiliary; the spread of existential constructions beyond nominal and adverbial predications to support re-alignment of modifier-head positions; and more. The theoretical questions provoked by the Domari data concern the stability and renewal potential of existentials, their borrowability, their behaviour in situations of radical typological shift and drift and especially their potential to rise ‘up’ the grammaticalisation chain.