14th International Congress of Balticists
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WS "At the intersection of historical morphology and syntax:
The Baltic verb in a diachronic perspective"

Organisers:
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Workshop description

Probably due to their relatively narrow geographic distribution, the Baltic languages have not received the same level of attention from typologists and historical linguists as those belonging to the Germanic, Romance, and Slavic branches. Yet the Baltic languages have much to offer, as they show many fascinating typological features and intriguing (and intricate) historical developments (cf. Arkadiev et al. 2015, 62–66). While often praised for their phonological antiquity, they also preserve many archaic-looking morphological features (cf., e.g., Nau & Spraunienė 2021, 211 on the Baltic future marker). At the same time, they can be distinguished from related languages through all kinds of morphological and syntactic peculiarities.

The Baltic languages provide the interested scholar with a rich system of verbal morphology. One the one hand, more than its Slavic sister branch, Baltic has extended the inherited derivational morphology into a synthetic system in which each root can have a higher or lower number of interrelated formations associated with different diatheses or Aktionsarten (Arkadiev et al. 2015, 65–66 and Villanueva Svensson 2020, 382–383). These are formally differentiated through a combination of suffixation, ablaut, and metatony (cf., e.g., Petit 2004 and Pakerys 2021), and can have highly specialised meanings, such as diminutives and intensives. On the other hand, Baltic has heavily regularised the present and preterit systems based on the opposition [±transitive] (Schmid 1966, 1967).

As far as individual verbal categories are concerned, there has been an upsurge in debate on their diachrony in recent years, e.g. in the development of the East Baltic conditional mood (cf. Petit 2018 and Fries & Hill, 2022). Verbal (morpho)syntax, such

as valency change and alignment, voice, discourse organization (taxis), evidentiality and TAM, has also attracted much interest from a comparative-historical and typological perspective (see Holvoet & Nau 2014, 2015, 2016; Holvoet 2020).

This workshop aims to bring together scholars with an interest in the wider domain of the historical morphosyntax of the Baltic verb or more specifically in any of its subfields. 'Historical' is here envisaged in the broad sense as including not just a pre-historical (potentially Indo-European) perspective, but also approaches dealing with more recent (or pre-modern) language stages, such as those of the Old Lithuanian documents. Thus, the current workshop is open to papers discussing the development of verbal categories in Baltic from a morphological or (morpho)syntactic standpoint. All topics that fall under the overarching theme of the historical morphosyntax of the Baltic verb are welcome, including, but not limited to:

- Research into the origins of specific verbal categories, formants, or roots.

- Historical accounts of Baltic verbal constructions and functional categories.

- Language interference studies on phenomena related to the Baltic verb.

Submission instructions

Please submit your abstract (max. 500 words, examples and references excluded) to balticverb@gmail.com by June 1, 2025.

References

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