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Grouping Iranian Languages Polydimensionally

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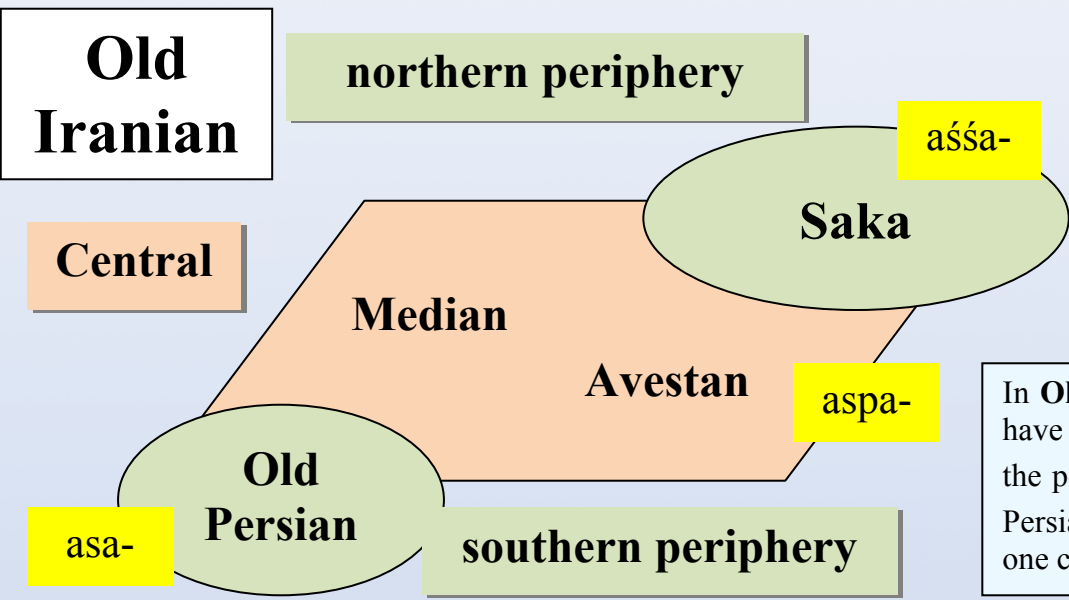
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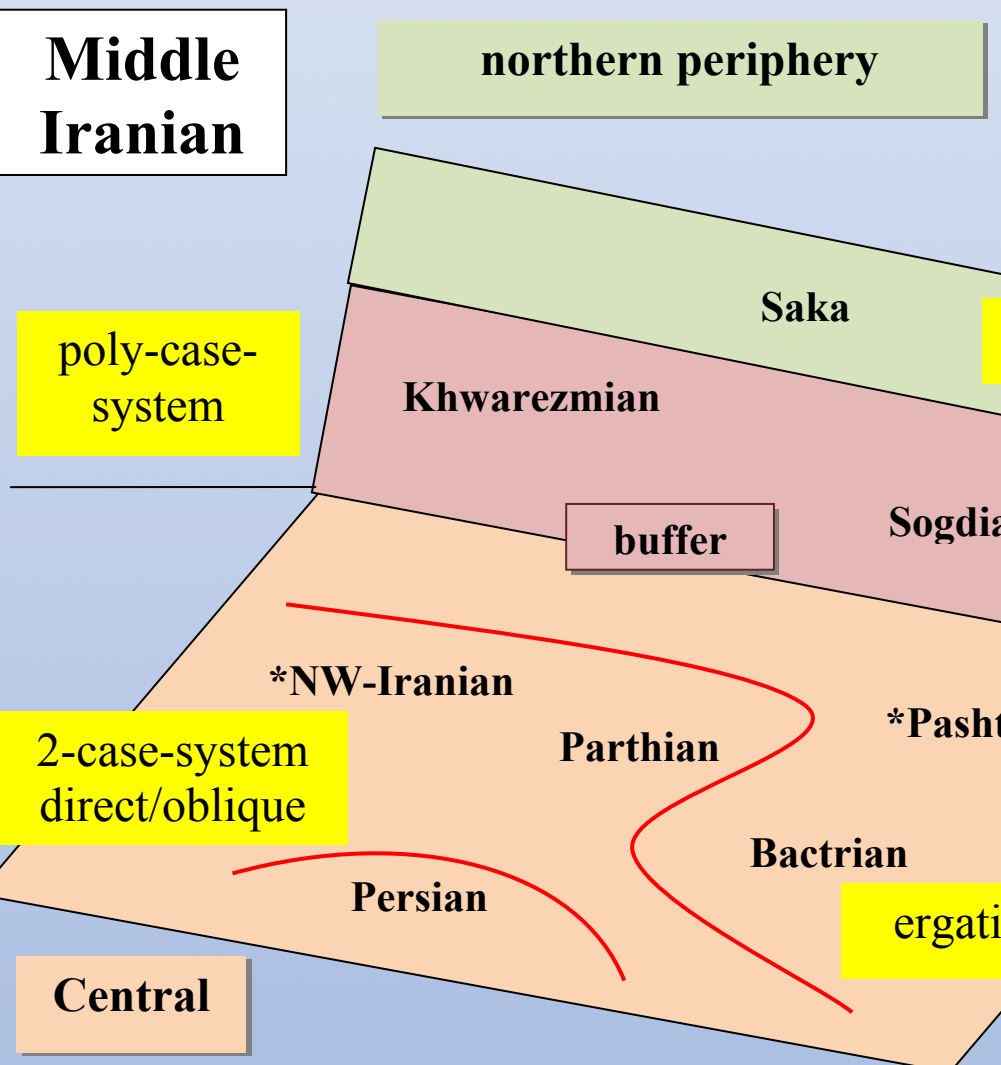
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Grouping Iranian languages polydimensionally

by Agnes Korn and Thomas Jügel

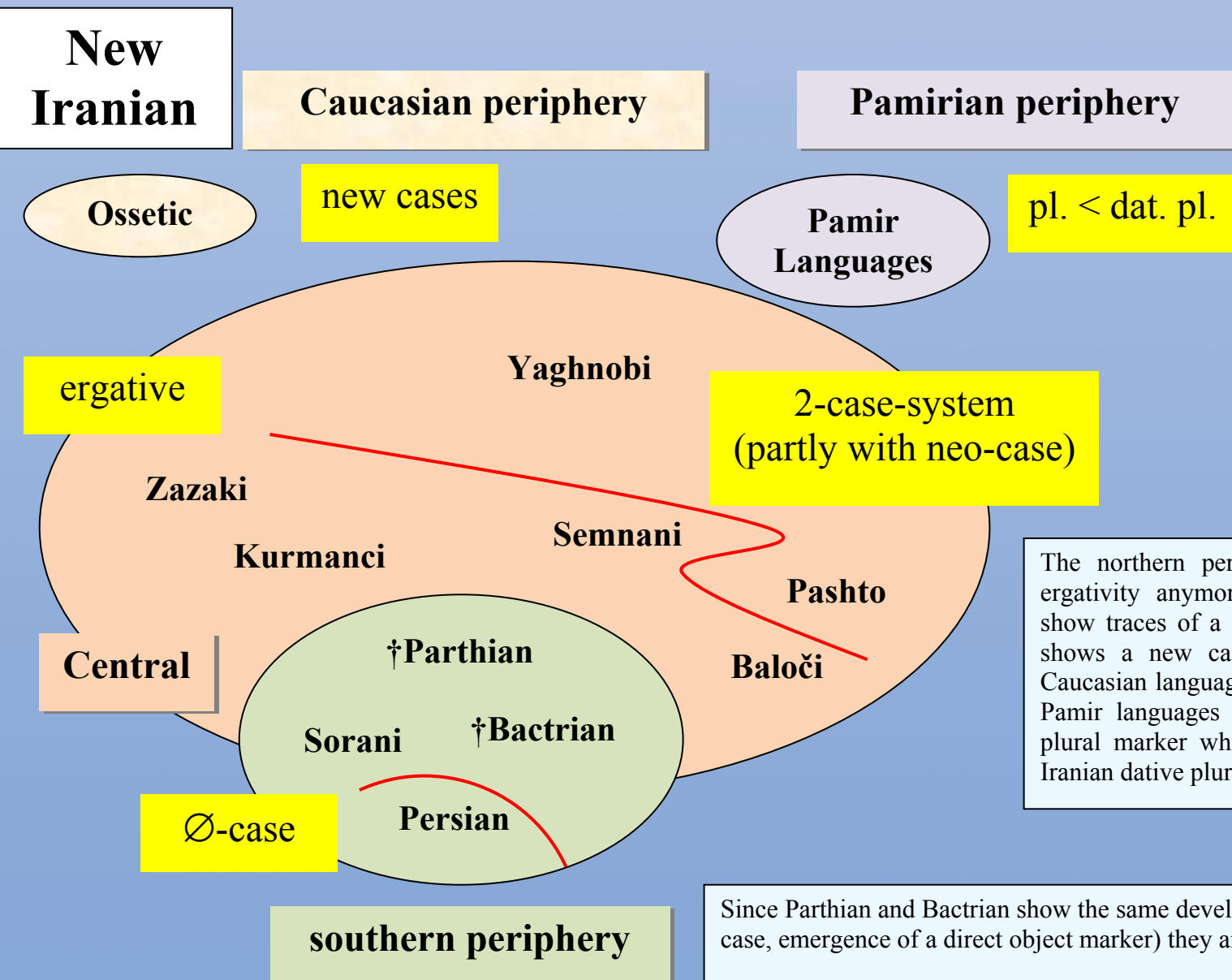
In **Old Iranian**, the changes which separate Western from Eastern Iranian have not yet taken place. In this stage, only a few sound changes mark off the peripheral dialects from the others: Proto-IE **h₁ek₂yo-* > Central *aspa-*, Persian *asa-*, Saka *aśśa-*. The periphery reduces the consonantal cluster to one consonant.



For **Middle Iranian** two features are used here: the case system and the “ergative problem”. The varieties in the Centre reduce the Old Iranian case system to a direct and an oblique case. The languages in the north (here: the Buffer Zone and Saka) preserve more cases, but the heavy stems of Sogdian share the Central 2 case system.

auxiliaries
to have/to be

The incorporation of the past participle (PP) into the verbal system entails ergativity in the Central group. The varieties of the Buffer Zone exhibits auxiliary selection, i.e. the PP of transitive verbs is transitivized by a transitive auxiliary (“hold/have”). Saka uses two different sets of personal endings (PE), one for transitive verbs, one for intransitive verbs. So the Buffer Zone and Saka avoid ergativity, albeit by different means.



For **New Iranian** the case system is used as a parameter. In the southern periphery case has been lost (and thereby ergativity), in the Centre the 2 case system is maintained. Several languages have rebuilt a richer case system (Balochi, Gilaki, etc.). In these languages ergativity is mostly maintained.

The northern peripheral languages do not exhibit ergativity anymore, although the Pamir languages show traces of a former ergative stage. Ossetic also shows a new case system, heavily influenced by Caucasian languages. The development of case in the Pamir languages is diverse, some of them show a plural marker which can be traced back to an Old Iranian dative plural (e.g. Sariqoli *-ef* < OIr. **-byah*).

Since Parthian and Bactrian show the same development as (Middle) Persian (loss of case, emergence of a direct object marker) they are included here.