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**A partial tree of Central Iranian:
A new look at Iranian subphyla¹**

Agnes KORN

Keywords:

Iranian languages, family tree, reconstruction; Bactrian, Parthian, Middle Persian, Sogdian, Sorani

Summary:

Relations within the Iranian branch of Indo-European have traditionally been modelled by a tree that is essentially composed of binary splits into sub- and sub-subbranches.

The present article will argue that this tree is rendered outdated by new data that have come to light from contemporary and ancient languages, and that it was methodologically problematic from the outset, both for reasons of the isoglosses on which it is based and for not taking into account distinctions such as shared innovations vs. shared archaisms and marked vs. unmarked language changes.

Conversely, a set of non-trivial morphological innovations, particularly in the verbal system, shared by Bactrian, Parthian and some neighbouring languages appears to suggest a subbranch which I will call “Central Iranian”. The second part of the paper will present a tentative reconstruction of the nominal system of Central Iranian.

This reconstruction wishes to show the result one arrives at when trying to reconstruct a subbranch as strictly bottom-up as possible, i.e. using only the data from the languages under study, and avoiding to profit from Old Iranian data and from our knowledge about the protolanguages.

“Central Iranian” would be closely related to Sogdian, and would share, by language contact, a number of features with Middle Persian; at the same time, Bactrian and Sogdian also share features with individual Eastern Ir. languages.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to illustrate the point that this collection proposes to make with Iranian data. Its paper will apply the idea of “reconstructing from below”: while we think we reconstruct Proto-Indo-European bottom-up (**Fig. 1a**), our idea of the intermediary languages is in fact shaped by what we think we know about Proto-Indo-European, i.e. a top-down approach (**Fig. 1b**). What protolanguage would we arrive at if we set out exclusively from the attested languages and did not make any use of what we think we know about Proto-Indo-European (**Fig. 1c**)?

For the Iranian (Ir.) branch, the results would probably not differ too much from our usual reconstruction, first because the protolanguage is closer in time to Proto-Indo-European (PIE) than, say, Proto-Germanic or Proto-Slavic (**Fig. 2**), and, second, because reconstructed PIE heavily relies on Indo-Iranian at least insofar as the morphology is concerned.

¹ This article is based on the presentation given at the workshop in Göttingen 2016 as well as on several papers given at earlier occasions (Cracow 2011, Rome 2014 and Naples 2015) as well as in seminars in Cambridge, Hamburg, Paris and Zürich. I am grateful to all colleagues for feedback on these occasions, and particularly to Nicholas Sims-Williams for discussions of various points.

For the purposes of the present article, *y* and *w* are used for Proto-Iranian instead of *j* and *u*. Zazaki data are in contemporary orthography in **Sections 1.-3.**, but in phonological (historical) notation in **Section 4.**, thus <e, a> vs. *a, ā; <i, i> vs. *i, ī; <c, ç, j> vs. *j, č, ž.

Fig. 1: Ways of reconstructing

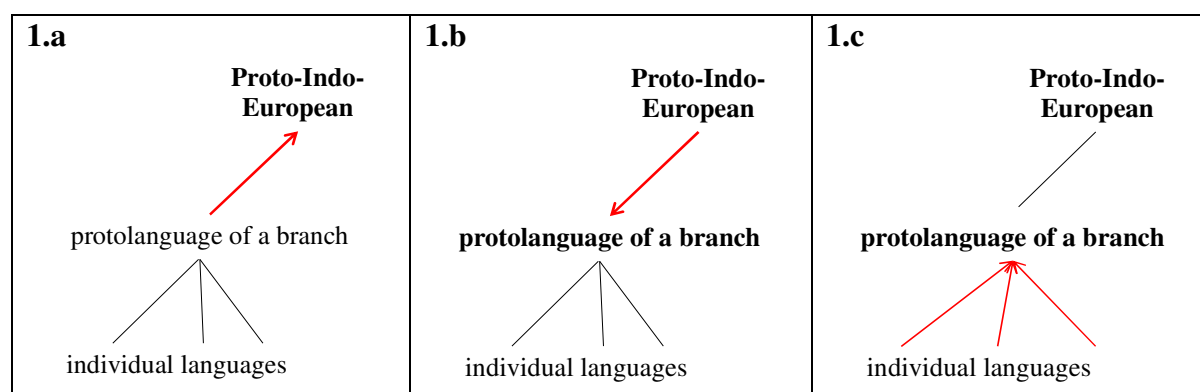
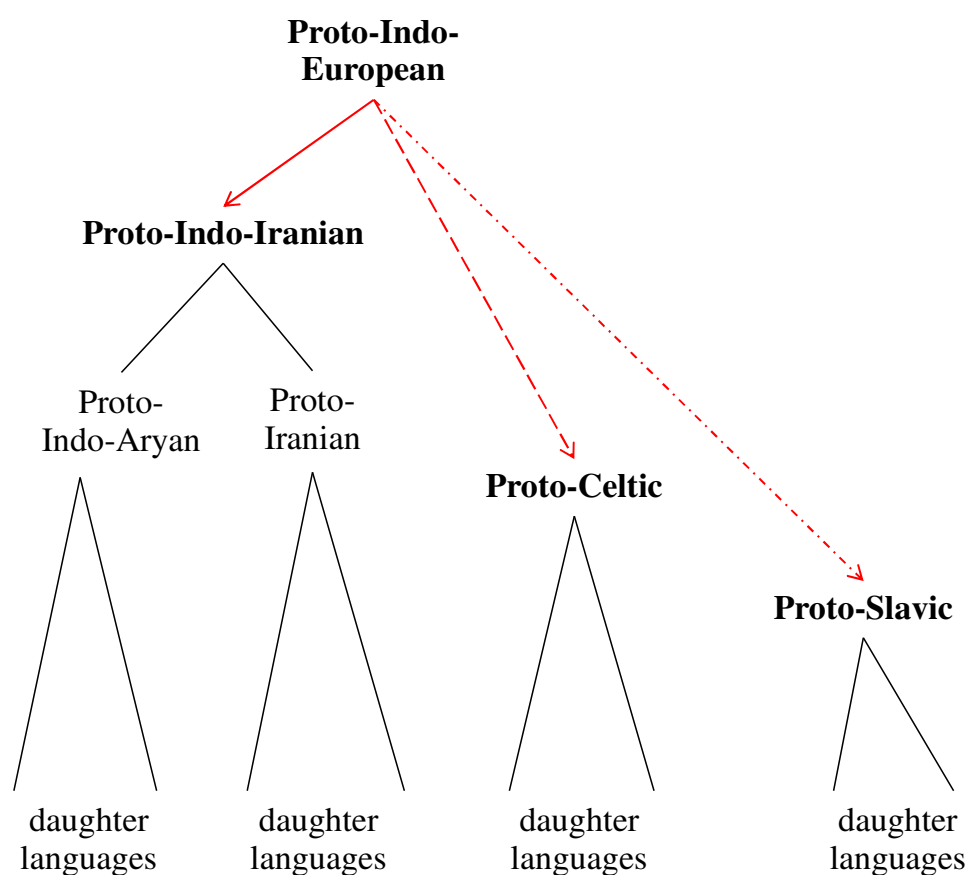


Fig. 2: Discrepancy in closeness of intermediary protolanguages to PIE (schematic)



Conversely, the problem does arise within Iranian. The family tree of Iranian (**Fig. 3**) is a typical example of a top-down reconstruction; it is in fact composed of dichotomies which were established to distinguish Old Persian from Avestan, Middle Persian from Parthian² and so on.

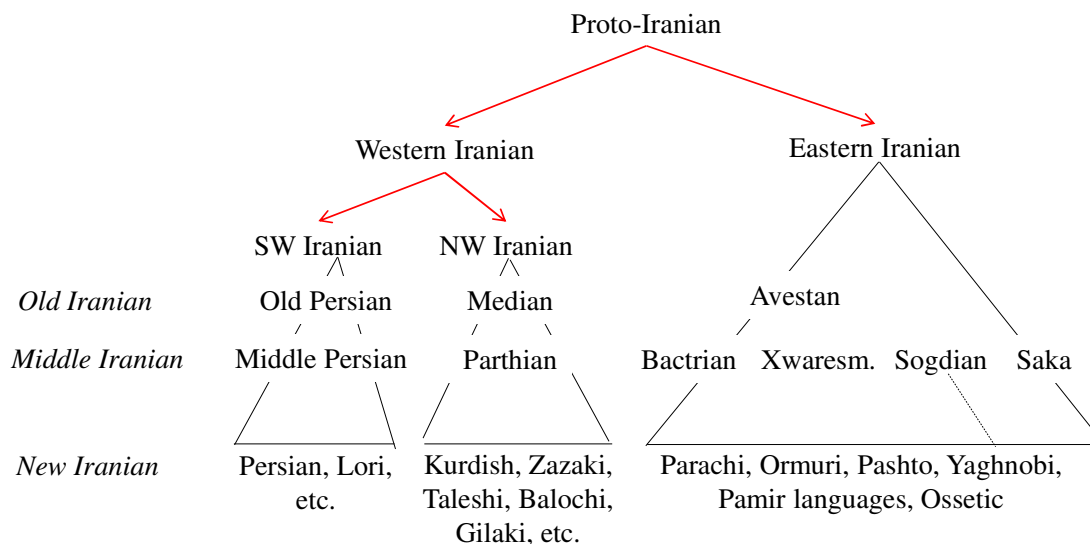
The first part of this article will thus point out the various types of problems with the traditional tree model (**Section 2.**), which seem to highlight rather well the types of problems encountered in family tree discussions generally.

I will then proceed to suggest a family tree different from the traditional one and attempt to

² See **Section 2.2** below.

reconstruct the intermediary protolanguage (Proto-Central Iranian) that this tree postulates (**Section 3.**). While this is clearly an attempt, I argue that, in view of the traditional model and its problems, it seems at least worth considering.

Fig. 3: Family tree of Iranian as traditionally assumed



2. Difficulties with the traditional tree model

A tree as in **Fig. 3** is a model of the relationships of the languages concerned, and has a number of additional implications at the same time. It posits the existence of a protolanguage Proto-Iranian as ancestor of all Ir. languages, and the existence of the intermediary knots Proto-Western Ir. and Proto-Eastern Iranian, whose grammars one should in principle be able to reconstruct. These assumptions have been shaken considerably in recent decades by the emergence of new data.

2.1 Disappearing genetic units

2.1.1 Eastern Iranian

First, Eastern Iranian (EI_r) has been shown not to be a genetic entity, and its ancestor language inexistent: “it does not seem possible to regard the Eastern Iranian group as a whole—even disregarding Parachi and Ormuri—as a genetic grouping. Such a conception would imply the existence of an ancestral “proto-Eastern Iranian” intermediate between “common Iranian” and the attested Eastern Iranian languages; but if one reconstructs “proto-Eastern Iranian” in such a way as to account for all the features of the group, it proves to be identical to the “common Iranian” reconstructible as the ancestor of the whole Iranian family” (SIMS-WILLIAMS 1996a:651b). SIMS-WILLIAMS goes on to say that the common features of Eastern Iranian are more likely to be due to language contact.³

Data leading to this conclusion are shown in (4): among the isoglosses that have traditionally

³ Essentially this thought is already stated in SIMS-WILLIAMS (1989:165).

been used to define Eastern Iranian, there is not even one which would include and embrace all of Eastern Iranian. Nor is there one that would be exclusive to it, i.e. distinguish Eastern Iranian as a group from Western Iranian (WIr.). There are thus no changes which would be attributable to the line (and the time span) which in the family tree links Proto-Eastern-Iranian to Proto-Iranian, and the knot Proto-Eastern Iranian needs to be deleted from the tree in **Fig. 3**.

Fig. 4: Eastern Iranian Non-Isoglosses (following SIMS-WILLIAMS 1996a:650b)

Isogloss	Example	Counterexample
not inclusive (i.e. here: does not include the whole group)		
Old Ir. <i>č</i> [tʃ], <i>ǰ</i> [dʒ] > <i>ts</i> [ts], <i>dz</i> [dʒ]	Xwar. <i>tsafār</i> , Pashto <i>tsalōr</i> ‘four’	not in Sogdian, Yaghnobi, Yidgha-Munji, Parachi
Old Ir. <i>b</i> , <i>d</i> , <i>g</i> > <i>β</i> , <i>δ</i> , <i>γ</i> also in word-initial position	Sogdian, Bactrian, Xwar. <i>βar-</i> ‘carry’	not in Parachi,Ormuri; maybe not in Saka ⁴ and some others
Old Ir. <i>ft</i> , <i>xt</i> > <i>βd</i> , <i>γd</i>	Saka <i>hauda</i> , Pashto <i>ōwə</i> , Xwaresm. <i>aβδ</i> < <i>*haβδa</i> ‘seven’	not in Parachi,Ormuri; Sogdian only <i>βt</i> (<i>aβt</i>), <i>γt</i>
lexical isoglosses	<i>*maiθa-</i> ‘day’ (WIr. <i>*raučah-</i>)	Bactrian <i>ṙōso</i> / <i>rōts</i> /
not exclusive (i.e. also in Western Iranian)		
Old Ir. <i>θ</i> preserved or > <i>t</i>	Sogdian, Xwar. <i>mēθ</i> ‘day’	<i>θ</i> > <i>t</i> also in Balochi: <i>mētag</i> ‘village’ < <i>*maiθana-</i> ‘place of living’
in SIMS-WILLIAMS (1996a:651a) still counted as exclusive: “numerous vocabulary items attested exclusively in Eastern Iranian”	<i>*abi-ar-</i> ‘obtain’ <i>*gari-</i> ‘mountain’ (WIr. <i>*kaufa-</i>) <i>*kuta/-</i> ‘dog’ (WIr. <i>*s(p)aka-</i>)	Caspian <i>īr</i> - ⁵ Persian, Parthian <i>Gar</i> ^o (names) Zazaki <i>kutik</i> etc.

Something similar holds true on the smaller level. Proposals which have been made for the subgrouping of Eastern Iranian differ so dramatically (cf. **Fig. 5**) that they become unlikely from the outset and consequently have not been relied on.⁶ Eastern Iranian as a group, and its subgroups, thus disappear as sub-branches from the family tree.

2.1.2 Western Iranian

So far as Western Iranian is concerned, the discussion has focussed on the subdivision into a Northern and Southern subbranch (see **Fig. 3**). This dichotomy of Western Iranian, essentially based on an article by TEDESCO (1921),⁷ has proven untenable because the isoglosses do not

⁴ Cf. SIMS-WILLIAMS (1989:168). For further discussion, see KÜMMEL (2007:289-294).

⁵ Nicholas Sims-Williams, p.c. (information from Satoko Yoshie).

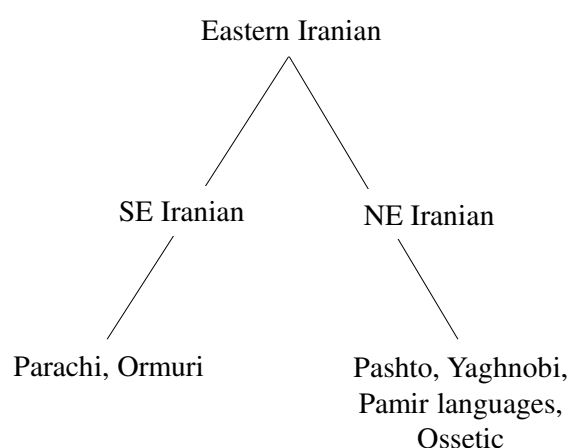
⁶ As argued by WENDTLAND 2009, the Pamir languages, despite the term, do not form a genetic entity either, but are more likely to be a *sprachbund*, or linguistic area, and again the shared features would be due to language contact.

⁷ For more discussion, see **Section 2.2** below.

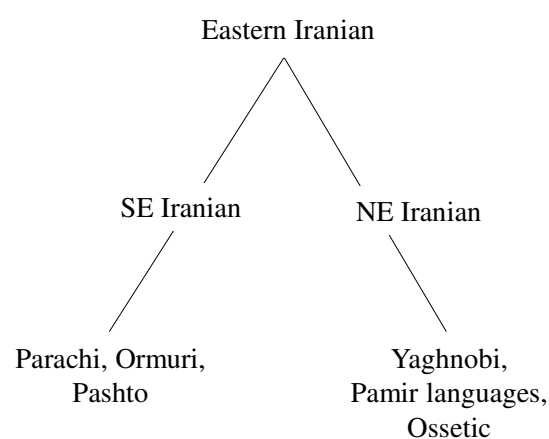
yield a two-way distinction once one adds more data, as shown by PAUL 1998a (**Fig. 6**).⁸ This table lists the phonological isoglosses from Tedesco's article (outcomes of certain Proto-Indo-European [IE] consonants and consonant clusters in Parthian [Pth.] and Persian [Pers.]) and adds data from some contemporary Ir. languages: Gorani, Azari (dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan), Zazaki, Talyshi, Semnani, Caspian dialects, dialects of Central Iran, Balochi (Bal.) and Kurdish.⁹ As shown by the thick line, which marks off the features traditionally labelled North-Western (to the left of the line) from the South-Western ones, most languages do not arrange themselves on one side of the division. This suggests that there is no ancestor knot for North-Western and South-Western Iranian, and these knots need to be deleted from the family tree in **Fig. 3** as well.

Fig. 5: Suggestions about subgroups of Eastern Iranian (cf. WENDTLAND 2009:172)

5.a



5.b



As already somewhat implicit in **Fig. 6**, PAUL (2003: 61) suggests to replace the dichotomy by a scale, on which all Western Ir. languages would then occupy a certain position: “the order of decreasing Northwesternness would be something like Gurani > Zazaki > Talyshi > Semnani > Caspian > C[entral] D[ialects] > Kurdish, Balochi > Persian” (PAUL 2003:61).

Although the family tree model has been challenged almost as soon as it was established, and indeed TEDESCO (1921: 250-255) himself showed that contemporary languages do not necessarily fit the model, it has not been replaced so far, and the traditional divisions keep being repeated in handbooks and manuals¹⁰ of Indo-European and Iranian.¹¹

2.2 Problematic isoglosses

Perhaps the fact that the family tree has not been replaced by anything else is connected to a second problem which has not been discussed yet, viz. the isoglosses on which the traditional classification of Iranian rests have not been challenged. These methodological problems will be highlighted by Western Ir. data, but a parallel point could be made about Eastern Iranian.

⁸ Some details in this table would need to be corrected (KORN 2003:52f.).

⁹ NB that “Kurdish” in this table chiefly refers to Kurmanji (see also fn. 15).

¹⁰ This also applies to the widely used language classification by the *Ethnologue* (<http://www.ethnologue.com>).

¹¹ For instance, SCHMITT 2000 refers to the traditional classification, and TEDESCO's isoglosses at various points (“Für die Klassifizierung als “nordwestiranisch” sind die üblichen Schibboleth-Merkmale entscheidend“, pp. 76-84; “... sich die ostiranische Dialektgruppe (...) von der westiranischen deutlich abhebt”, p. 4).

Fig. 6: Western Iranian isoglosses according to PAUL (1998a:170)

IE	Pth.	Gōr.	Āz.	Zaz.	Tāl.	Semn.	Casp.	CD	Bal.	Kd.	Pers.
* <i>k</i> /* <i>g</i>	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	h/d
* <i>k</i> (<i>u</i>)pal	-ž-	-ž-	-ž-	-j-	-ž-	j,ž	-j-	j,ž,z	-j-	-ž-	-z-
* <i>g</i> (<i>u</i>)(<i>h</i>)pal	ž	ž	ž (y-)	j	ž	j,ž	j (z-)	j,ž,z	j	ž	z
* <i>k</i> _w ²⁹	?	sip	isb	esp	asb	esp	s	esb	?	s	s
* <i>tr</i> /* <i>tl</i>	hr	(ya)r	(h)r	(hī)r	h(*r) ³⁰	(h)r	r	r	s	s	s
* <i>d</i> (<i>h</i>)w	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	d(?)	d	d
(OIr.) * <i>rd</i> /* <i>rz</i>	r(δ)/rz	l,r/rz	r/rz	ī/rz	r/rz	l/l(rz)	l/l	l/l(rz)	l/l(?)	l/l	l/l
* <i>sw</i>	wx	w	h	w	h	x(u)	x(u)	x(u),f	v	x(w)	x(u)
* <i>tw</i>	f	u	u	w	h	h	h	h (u)	h	h	h
* <i>y</i> -	y-	y-	y-	j-	j-	j-	j-	j- (y-)	j-	j-	j-

2.2.1 The history of Western Iranian isoglosses

The division of the Western Ir. branch into a so-called South-Western (SWIr.) and North-Western (NWIr.) branch to a large extent has its origin in the analysis of Middle Iranian texts of the Manichean religion found around 1900 in Chinese Turkestan. Trying to determine the language of the individual Manichean fragments, all written in the identical script, research by Friedrich Carl ANDREAS, Paul TEDESCO, Wolfgang LENTZ and others revealed three Ir. “dialects”, one of which (Sogdian, as it then turned out) was more different from the other two. To distinguish the other varieties, now known as Middle Persian (MP) and Parthian, TEDESCO 1921 set up a list of differences in order to attribute the various fragments to the language(s) found in them.

It is essentially this list of differences that has been used for subgrouping Western Ir. languages, a rather top-down approach again (cf. **Section 1.**). While the use of TEDESCO’s isoglosses for such purposes was initiated by TEDESCO himself, I argue that it is a misunderstanding to use the isoglosses in this way, and that it has rather major consequences in terms of method.

2.2.2 Overestimated features

The first consequence of using TEDESCO’s list for the purposes of subgrouping Iranian is that it has been taken for granted that any feature in which Middle Persian and Parthian diverge is good as an isogloss. This amounts to systematically overestimating a certain set of features.

A case in point is the change of *m* to *w* and that of word-initial *y*- to *j*-.¹² Regarding *m* > *w*, MACKENZIE (1961a:70) states that “there can be no question of it being an inherited feature of all these dialects” [= Kurdish, Balochi, Luri, Vafsi, and supposedly also Parthian]. However,

¹² These are isoglosses no. 19 and 5 in TEDESCO 1921. See KORN (2003:56f.).

the existence of Parthian examples for this change has in the meantime been rendered rather improbable, and in Kurdish the change is so recent that it also applies to Arabic loanwords. In Balochi, it is not even common to Balochi as a whole, thus more likely to be a recent development on the sub-dialectal level.

So far as $y- > \check{y}-$ is concerned, which is shown e.g. by Middle Persian *juwān*, *jāwēd*, *jud*, *jigar* vs. Parthian *yuwān* ‘young’, *yāwēd* ‘eternal’, *yud* ‘separate’, Gorani *yahar* ‘liver’. Now, Armenian *ĵatuk* ‘sorcerer’ vs. NP *ĵādū*, OInd. *yātú-* ‘sorcery’ (HÜBSCHMANN 1897:232) shows that the Persian change of $y- > \check{y}-$ is older than the voicing of the intervocalic stops, i.e. took place in a period preceding any Middle Persian texts. If this were a relevant isogloss, the sharing of this feature must mean that all these varieties (even including Talyshi and Zazaki, which otherwise agrees with Parthian in many features, cf. **Fig. 6**) were in contact with Persian at the time when the change operated. In my view, this is rather unlikely. Much more probably, these languages will have undergone the change independently.¹³ Indeed, the change is very common cross-linguistically; $y- > \check{y}-$ is found in Hindi, Italian, low German etc. (cf. Italian *giovane*, Low German [dʒuŋ] ‘boy’ vs. English *young*, Sanskrit *yuvan-*).

This also highlights another problem brought about by TEDESCO’s list. Using it as it stands, one tends to overlook the crucial difference between typologically **unmarked** and **marked** features, i.e. those that occur commonly in many languages (as is the case for $y- > \check{y}-$ and $m > w$) and are thus *a priori* somewhat likely to arise independently, and those that are less straightforward processes. In the latter case, languages that show them are more likely to share them as a result of either shared inheritance or language contact. Not all differences between Middle Persian and Parthian are thus useful as isoglosses for Western Iranian.

Likewise mostly overlooked is the **chronological** perspective. While the presentation in **Fig. 6** might indicate a continuous increase of Persian influence, the data suggest otherwise. Some changes took place already in Old Iranian (such as the difference between the results of PIE $*k >$ yielding θ in Old Persian and s in the other dialects, e.g. OP *θata-* vs. Avestan *sata-* ‘hundred’, 1st isogloss in **Fig. 6**) while others date to Middle Iranian times (e.g. PIE palatalised $*g^{(w)/(h)}$ > Old Iranian \check{y} > Middle Persian z vs. Parthian \check{z} , as in MP *zan* ‘woman’ vs. Parthian *žan*, 3rd isogloss in **Fig. 6**) or even later.¹⁴

Distinguishing the isoglosses into those that already marked off Old Persian from the other Ir. dialects from those that only appear in Middle Iranian (and eliminating those that do not hold, see above), a rather different picture emerges (**Fig. 7**, using those of the isoglosses traditionally employed to subgroup Western Iranian; the horizontal line marks off developments in Old Ir. times from later ones). Rather than a steady increase of Persian influence, the results suggest a series of waves of such influences, possibly attributable to the periods of Persian as a national language in Achaemenid and Sasanian times.

Another important distinction to be made is that between **shared archaism** and **shared innovation**. Concerning common **innovations**, it is of course impossible in principle to exclude that the same development may have happened independently in several languages: but, as mentioned above, the probability of this solution depends on whether or not the given change is typologically unmarked or marked.

¹³ See KORN (2003:56f.) and GIPPERT (2009:84-87) for further discussion. It also seems that some varieties that show $y-$ actually reverted from previous $\check{y}-$.

¹⁴ These two features are isoglosses no. 2 and 3 in TEDESCO 1921.

Fig. 7: Isoglosses of Western Iranian, arranged chronologically (KORN 2003:52f.)¹⁵

PIr.	Av.	Parthian	Zazaki	Balochi	Kurdish	NP	MP	OP
*š	s	s	s	s	s	h	h	ð
*ž	z	z	z	z	z	d	d	d
*pas-ča "behind"	<i>pas-ča</i>	<i>paš</i>	?	<i>paš</i>	<i>paš</i>	pas	pas	<i>pasā</i>
*śu	<i>sp</i>	<i>sp</i>	<i>sp</i>	<i>s(?)</i>	<i>s(?)</i>	s	s	s
*ðr	<i>ðr</i>	<i>hr</i>	<i>(h)r</i>	s	s	s	s	ç
*č /V_V	č	ž	ǰ	č	ž	z	z	č
*ǰ	ǰ	ž	ǰ	ǰ	ž	z	z	ǰ
*rč	<i>rz</i>	<i>rz</i>	<i>rz</i>	<i>rz</i>	?	l	l	<i>rd</i>
*rd	<i>rd</i>	<i>rd</i>	<i>ṛ</i>	<i>rd</i>	?	l	l	<i>rd</i>
*du	<i>duu</i>	b	b	<i>b(?)</i>	d	d	d	<i>duv</i>
*hu-	<i>x^w</i>	<i>wx</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>w, h</i>	<i>xw</i>	<i>x^w</i>	<i>xw</i>	<i>uv</i>
*ðu	<i>ðβ</i>	f	<i>w</i>	<i>h?</i>	<i>h?</i>	h	h	<i>ðuv</i>
*u-	<i>v</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>g(w)</i>	b	g, b	g, w	<i>g, d</i>

Table 3: Western Iranian isoglosses in Old, Middle and New Iranian times (in bold: innovations)

Common archaisms can be illustrated by the Old Iranian consonant cluster *rd*, preserved as such in a number of Western Iranian languages, but changed to *l* in Persian (e.g. *gol* ‘flower’, *del* ‘heart’).¹⁶ For languages sharing this change (thus Kurdish, or at least some varieties of it), one could consider a closer relationship to Persian (or language contact at the time the change occurred) while the group of languages preserving *rd* (e.g. Balochi and Parthian) does not imply anything: no contact of languages is necessary to motivate the preservation of a feature in a given language.

This crucially means that one isogloss has two fundamentally different implications for the two sides of the dividing line: while the languages showing [+change] might, if the feature is judged sufficiently marked to be an isogloss, form a group, varieties showing [-change] do not form a group as the non-change is a shared archaism. This means that, even if the change *y- > ǰ-* were judged to be sufficiently marked to be an isogloss, and even if the Armenian evidence militating against this were judged invalid, the feature would entail implications for the grouping of Western Ir. languages only for those varieties with an output *ǰ-*. Conversely, the fact that (e.g.) Gorani agrees with Parthian in preserving *y-* would not have a group-forming effect on these languages. An isogloss, then, is only **half an isogloss**, as it were, because it has implications only for one side of the line. This further reduces the usability of TEDESCO’s isoglosses.

¹⁵ The figure reproduces the table with correction of some errors. As in **Fig. 6**, “Kurdish” chiefly refers to Kurmanji.

¹⁶ This feature is isogloss no. 5 in TEDESCO 1921.

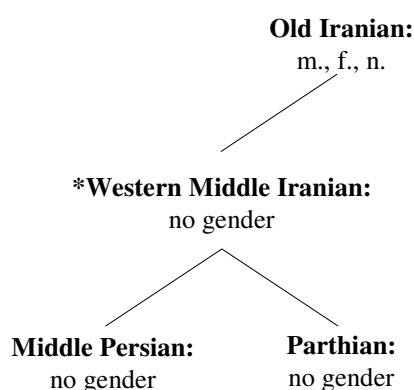
2.2.3 Overlooked features

Another aspect of the use of TEDESCO's isoglosses has even more negative consequences. Listing the differences of Middle Persian and Parthian, he of course does not note any features in which these languages do not differ. This has the effect that characteristics for which Middle Persian and Parthian agree have not been considered as isoglosses at all in scholarship on the issue. This is a major methodological problem as this approach eliminates *a priori* all characteristics where Middle Persian and Parthian do not differ although they might in fact be quite relevant for the question of subgroups within Western Iranian; it amounts to systematically disregarding potentially relevant data.

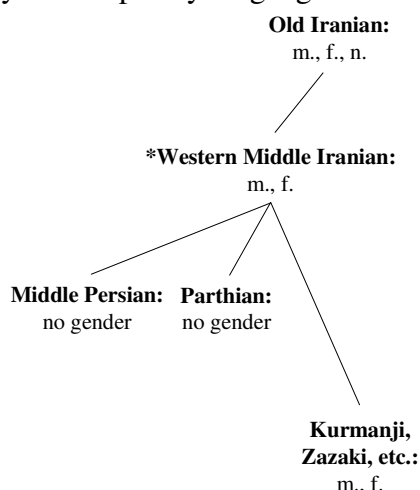
It is obvious that Middle Persian and Parthian do not show the whole picture of what must have been present in Middle Iranian. One such point is the **gender distinction** seen in some Western Iranian languages. Gender is absent from both Middle Persian and Parthian (the only Western Iranian languages attested in Middle Iranian times), which might be taken to suggest that the inherited gender system was lost in Western Iranian already in Middle Iranian times (**Fig. 8a**).

Fig. 8: Models for the development of gender in Western Iranian

8.a reconstruction as suggested by attested Middle Iranian



8.b reconstruction as suggested by contemporary languages



However, as shown by MACKENZIE 1954, the two-way gender distinction (masculine vs. feminine) seen in Kurmanji Kurdish (and other contemporary languages) cannot be an innovation, but must rest on Old Iranian models since numerous lexical items show the same gender they had in Old Iranian, which would not be subject to explanation from within Kurdish. The (unattested) predecessor of Kurdish can thus not be derived from attested Middle Iranian, but must have been a Middle Iranian language preserving at least two of the Old Iranian genders. The ancestor language must thus have had gender distinction, and both Middle Persian and Parthian lost it (**Fig. 8b**).

This example shows that looking at Middle Persian and Parthian alone yields wrong assumptions about the ancestor language. It also underlines the importance of contemporary languages for linguistic reconstruction, and in fact suggests a bottom-up approach.

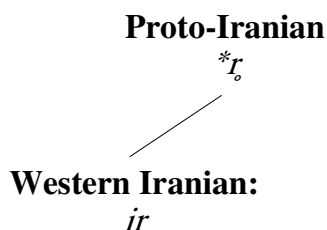
While both the retention of gender in some Ir. languages (as a shared archaism) and the loss of gender in others (as probably independent developments) will hardly be considered an

isogloss, some other features could quite well be worth to be taken into account.

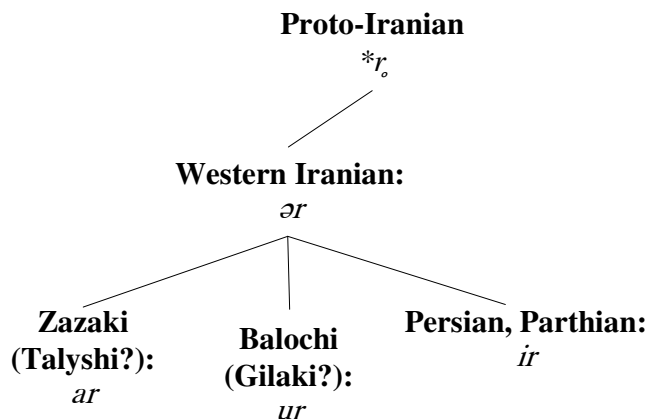
I argue that this is the case for Proto-Iranian **vocalic** **r̥* (as e.g. in Proto-Ir. **br̥ta-* ‘carried’, **mr̥ta-* ‘died’, **kr̥ta-* ‘done’, **tr̥sa-* ‘fear’, **gr̥wya-* ‘seize’, **mr̥ya-* ‘die’, etc.), which yields *ur* in labial context in both Middle Persian and Parthian (*burd*, *murd*) and *ir* in palatal and neutral contexts (*kird*, *tirs-*; MP *gīr-*, *mīr-*).¹⁷ One could be tempted to assume that this development is common to all of Western Iranian and to ascribe it to Proto-Western Iranian (**Fig. 9a**). However, this interpretation is proved wrong by data from other Western Iranian languages. Balochi agrees with Middle Persian and Parthian insofar as **r̥* likewise yields *ur* in labial context (*burt*, *murt*) and *ir* in palatal context *ir* (*gir-*, *mir-*), but differs from both in that there is *ur* in neutral context, as shown by *kurt*, *turs*, etc.¹⁸ Gilaki might agree with this result (*kud* ‘done’).¹⁹

Fig. 9: Models for the development of Proto-Iranian **r̥*

9.a reconstruction as suggested
by attested Middle Iranian



9.b reconstruction as suggested
by contemporary languages



A still different (and as yet not quite investigated) development is shown by Zazaki and perhaps by Talyshi, and also needs to be assumed for a Western Ir. language that provided some loanwords in Armenian.²⁰ These languages appear to show /ar/, e.g. *kard*, *tars*. The result in labial context is not quite clear;²¹ maybe loanwords or dialectal phenomena play a role here. However, it is noteworthy that the result is /ar/ in several words even here, e.g. /bard/, /mard/.²²

¹⁷ For the outcome of **r̥* in Persian, see RASTORGUEVA & MOLČANOVA (1981a:48), HÜBSCHMANN (1895:143-150); for Parthian, see RASTORGUEVA & MOLČANOVA (1981b:181). There is a difference in that MP has *īr* from **r̥...y* (*gīr-* ‘seize’ < **gr̥wya-*, *mīr-* ‘die’ < **mr̥ya-*) while Parthian does not lose **w* and it is not clear whether the outcome is *i* or *ī* in these sequences (KORN & DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2009:12).

¹⁸ See KORN (2005:143-149, 328) for a discussion of the Balochi evidence.

¹⁹ The Gilaki data are from KERIMOVA et al. 1980, Zazaki from MALMISANI 1992, Talyshi from MILLER 1953.

²⁰ See BOLOGNESI (1960:25-27, 53f.), KORN (2013a:77f., 87; 2016:13f.) for *ar* in Armenian.

²¹ Zazaki examples for /ar/ (written <er>, cf. fn. 1): *berz* ‘high’ < **br̥zant-*, *pers-* ‘ask’ < **pr̥sa-*, *verg* ‘wolf’ < **wr̥ka-*, *girewt* ‘taken’ < **gr̥fta-*; but also *pird* ‘bridge’ < **pr̥θu-*, *pirr* ‘full’ < **pr̥na-*, *birn-* ‘cut’ < **br̥na-*, *vilike* ‘flower’ < **wr̥da-* (which because of its *l* is likely to be a loanword, PAUL 1998a: 169). In palatal context, the results include /i/: *mir-* ‘die’ < **mr̥ya-*, *gīr-* ‘take’ < **gr̥bya-*, *zerri* ‘heart’ < **z̥r̥daya-* (cf. also KORN 2013b:107f.).

²² PAUL (1998:305); other dialects of Zazaki have *mord*, which may either show secondary labialisation or has been adjusted to *mordem* ‘man’ (< **mart̥iya-*)

There are thus at least three different outcomes of *□ in Middle Iranian times, and thus three groups of dialects to be distinguished by their result of **r* in neutral context, viz. *ir*, *ur*, and *lar*/. This difference, small though it may seem, appears to be an important isogloss: as soon as *□ has yielded *ir*, *ur* or *ar*, this sequence is indistinguishable from old sequences of vowel plus *r* (the outcome *ar* even falls together with inherited full grades). The development is thus a “point of no return” in establishing a dialect group, dividing Middle Persian plus Parthian from other Western Iranian languages (**Fig. 9b**). Yet, Middle Persian and Parthian agreeing in this feature by coincidence has had the effect that the feature has never been considered as a potential isogloss.

2.2.4 Summary on Western Ir. isoglosses

The potential isogloss just suggested demonstrates that the set of isoglosses used for the subgrouping of Western Iranian has been problematic from the outset. While it is interesting of course to see which New Ir. language agree with which MP or Pth. feature, I think it is a misunderstanding to imply that the same features are the best and the only criteria by which Western Ir. should be grouped. It implies a heavy bias towards those features in which Persian and Parthian are different and ignores potentially relevant features just because Persian and Parthian happen to agree in a particular point.

PAUL’s approach (cf. **Section 2.1.2**), transforming a binary distinction into a scale, refines TEDESCO’s dichotomy, but it reproduces the bias that those, and only those, features are taken as relevant in which Persian and Parthian are different. The basic problem is thus not solved, and the approach remains mono-dimensional.

Similarly, works such as MACKENZIE 1961a and WINDFUHR 1975 are also based on TEDESCO’s criteria (often adding one or the other feature to the list), even if they do not arrive at a dichotomy of Western Iranian.²³ Essentially, however, the issue is not solved by adding some features to the existing list, but to revise it entirely, by evaluating the features and preferably by looking at additional language material.

3. The position of Bactrian within the Iranian languages

The opportunity to look at the matter from a different perspective is offered by an entire corpus of data having emerged in the last years, viz. the ca. 150 manuscripts (from the Sasanian era) that have come to light and have been edited by SIMS-WILLIAMS 2000-2012 (“BD”). The knowledge of Bactrian has thus immensely increased over the last decades, and it has also led to a better understanding of the inscriptions (predating the Sasanian era), which are more archaic linguistically. The two bodies of texts will be referred to “**Bactrian manuscripts**” and “**Bactrian inscriptions**”, respectively, where necessary.

3.1 Vocalic **r* continued

Traditionally, Bactrian has been classified as Eastern Iranian, but it has also been noted that it is “closely related” to Parthian (SIMS-WILLIAMS 2004a:543). Looking beyond this divide, thus, it springs to mind that the Bactrian result of Proto-Iranian **r* is not any more researched than that of Zazaki, but, judging by words with rather clear etymology, the result looks like

²³ LECOQ 1989 has a somewhat different set of isoglosses, but the phonological ones are essentially those from TEDESCO 1921.

that of Middle Persian and Parthian (cf. **Section 2.2.3**).²⁴ There is *ur* in labial contexts (βορδο ‘carried’ < **br̥ta-*, μορδο ‘died’ < **mr̥ta-*, πορσ- ‘ask’ < **pr̥sa-*, πορδο ‘fitting, appropriate’ < **pr̥ta-*, βορζο (in names) ‘high’ < **br̥zant-*, χοζο ‘good’ < **xw̥r̥žu-*, inscr. φροχορτ- ‘withdraw’ < **fra-xw̥r̥šta-*,²⁵ πιδοροβ-, πιδορβ- ‘accept’ < **pati-gr̥bāya-*,²⁶ πιδοροβδο ‘carried’ < **pati-gr̥fta-*)²⁷ and *ir* otherwise, i.e. in phonetically neutral context: κιδ- / κιδδο ‘do’ < **kr̥nu-* / *kr̥ta-*, υιδζ- / υιδτο ‘leave’ < **hr̥za-* / *hr̥šta-*, γιδζ- / γιδτο ‘lament’ < **gr̥za-* / *gr̥šta-*,²⁸ γιδλ- ‘call’ < **gr̥da-*,²⁹ κιδαγο ‘plowing ox’ < **kr̥šāka-*, φρογιβτιγο ‘share (?)’ < **fra-kr̥šta-ka-* (?), ριδτο (day name) < **r̥štāt*; and in palatal context: μιδ- ‘die’ < **mr̥ya-*, ιειρο, (ι)ερο ‘matter’ < **rya-* or **īra-* (?).³⁰

This begs the question whether Western Iranian should also be abandoned as a genetic entity, all the more since the result from Proto-Ir. **r̥* is by no means the only common feature of these languages, and there are a number of further “branch-crossing isoglosses” in the phonological domain, such as *hr* for Old Ir. (non-Persian) *θr*, shared with Parthian, Zazaki, etc. (while Sogdian, in other respects quite close to Bactrian, shows *š*).³¹

3.2 Morphological innovations

3.2.1 General points

As noted in **Section 2.2.2**, it is shared innovations rather than shared archaisms which are potentially relevant for the subgrouping of languages. Also, phonological isoglosses often are difficult to judge as to whether they are marked enough to count – many sound changes occur precisely because they are phonetically straightforward, which often means they are cross-linguistically too common to be sure they did not occur independently.

It has been suggested, then, that morphological innovations are a better way to check subgroupings of languages: “It is now generally agreed among linguists that the most certain sub-groups are constructed on the basis of unique shared morphological innovations” (CLACKSON 2007:5f.).

In what follows, I will thus review the morphological innovations which Bactrian shares with

²⁴ Examples and protoforms are from the glossary in SIMS-WILLIAMS BD II. In Bactrian orthography, o marks the end of the word, and v is used for *h* (for which the Greek alphabet does not have a letter).

²⁵ The past stem οοχορτο ‘quarrel’ has full grade (**wi-xwar̥šta-*) according to SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:248).

²⁶ Thus SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:256). Bactrian agrees with Od Persian (against Middle Persian and Parthian) in this particular present stem.

²⁷ But note *ir* in labial context in μιδγο ‘hen’ < **mr̥ga-* ‘bird’, καμιδδο (god’s name) < **kam̥r̥da-*; *καμιδδο could be present in the name Kamalu (9th c.) and in Khotanese *kamala-* ‘head’; *καμιδτιγο gives Tocharian B *kamartike*, A *kākmārtik* (SIMS-WILLIAMS 1997:23).

²⁸ The Western Ir. cognates appear to have full grade: Zoroastrian MP <glc->, Pth. <grzyšn> ‘lament’.

²⁹ For potential cognates cf. CHEUNG (2007:106).

³⁰ A further example might be present in the hapax πιδο if it means ‘old man’. For the case that it does, SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:256) assumes **parya-*. This proto-form, which was suggested by GERSHEVITCH (1964:81f.), could agree with Avestan *pao’riia-* in going back to a form with laryngeal (PIE **pr̥h₃u_hio-*) while MP *pīr* etc. appears to derive from a form without laryngeal (**pr̥u_hio-*, see KORN 2005:149 for discussion). GERSHEVITCH’s adduces *pēr* found in a Judeo-Persian poem from Bukhara to support his argument. However, the same text also shows *faqēr*, with secondary *ē* vs. Arabic *faqīr* (cf. HORN 1901:27), and NP *pīr* (not *ē*) is shown by rhymes in the Shahnama (HORN 1899:166).

³¹ This is the 5th isogloss in **Fig. 6** (no. 10 in TEDESCO 1921). For this feature in Eastern Iranian, see WENDTLAND (2009:177f.).

other Ir. languages. To avoid imposing my own views, the points mentioned below (though not the presentation) are items of a list of features of Bactrian in SIMS-WILLIAMS 2004b (with data from other languages added).

3.2.2 Data

One instance is the suppletive paradigm of the verb ‘see’, the elements of which are the same in Bactrian, Parthian, Persian and Zazaki, combining the present stem (PRS) **waina-* (a denominative probably meaning ‘perceive’)³² with the past stem (PST) **dīta-*, thus MP *wēn-* / *dīd* (10). Sogdian has the same PRS; the PST *wyt* is clearly a secondary formation based on the PRS; and it seems possible (though of course speculative) that it has replaced an earlier PST **dyt*. Other Ir. languages show other combinations, though. For instance, Balochi associates PST *dīt* to PRS *gind-* (see (11)).³³

(10)	Bactrian, Parthian, Zazaki, Persian	
	PRS <i>*waina-</i> /	PST <i>*dīta-</i>
	Sogdian: new past stem < <i>wyt</i> >	Balochi <i>*wind-</i> / <i>dīta-</i>

Next, Bactrian shares the suffix *-ād* with Sogdian, Parthian and several contemporary languages such as Zazaki and Semnani, while Persian and Balochi use a suffix deriving from **-ita-* for the same purpose, and still others show *-ist*. This shared feature is all the more remarkable as it links Bactrian both to “Western” and “Eastern” Ir. languages.

The suffix *-ād* must have arisen as a result of a metanalysis of a small group of verbs whose past stem is regularly *-ād*, and then spread by analogy to other verbs.³⁴ The most frequent surely is ‘stand’ (**stā-ta-* < **steh₂-to-*), which shows (quoting Parthian forms) *ēst-ēd* ‘s/he stands’ (PRS *ēst-* + ending 3SG, from **st-ayati* with a preverb) vs. *ēstād* ‘s/he stood’ (PST *ēstād* + ending 3SG zero). These forms may lend themselves to a reanalysis of the form (11), yielding a past stem suffix *-ād*. This process is not quite trivial, and indeed neighbouring languages such as Persian follow other paths to recruit a secondary past stem suffix.

$$\begin{array}{lcl}
 \text{(11)} & \begin{array}{c} \bar{e}st-\bar{e}d \\ \text{‘stands’} \\ \hline = wind-\bar{e}d \\ \text{‘finds’} \end{array} & : \begin{array}{c} \bar{e}st\bar{a}d \\ \text{‘stood’} \\ \hline X \end{array} \Rightarrow wind-\bar{a}d \text{ ‘found’; PST suffix } -\bar{a}d
 \end{array}$$

Another peculiar and synchronically irregular feature is a new optative ending, which is found in Bactrian (*-ēndēi*) and Parthian (*-ēndē*), and might be the origin of the imperfect in Zazaki.³⁵ This form is clearly based on on *-ēnd*, the ending of the 3PL indicative, to which the 3SG optative ending is affixed.³⁶ Maybe the reanalysis that brought about this form opposed forms

³² Cf. CHEUNG (2007:412f.) for the cognates.

³³ For further discussion, see Section 3.2.3 below.

³⁴ Cf. DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2000:86f.) and BARTHOLOMAE (1920:12, 20) on the derivation of *-ād*, PAUL (2003:68-70) on the distribution of past stems in Western Iranian and KORN (2009a:198f.) on Persian *-īd*. For the verb *wind-* which I choose as an example for the notional scenario here, the inherited PST **wist* is replaced by a secondary PST formed with the newly recruited productive suffix.

³⁵ Thus GIPPERT (2009:92-96); NB that the imperfect does not inflect, while an apparently parallel formation in Gorani (past conditional) shows inflection (maybe secondarily). Both are based on the PST, thus corresponding to Parthian constructions such as *būd ahēndē(h)* ‘would have been’ (GIPPERT *ibid.*). In Bactrian, there is one attestation of a PT optative in **ēndēi* for the 3PL.

³⁶ That this is the case (rather than *-ηio* being e.g. the 3SG pronominal clitic, cf. Section 4.2.2) receives

such as (Bactrian forms) *āγad* ‘s/he has come’ and *āγad-ēnd* ‘they have come’ to the optative *āγad-ēi* ‘may s/he come’, yielding an optative marker *-ēi*, thence *āγad-ēnd-ēi* ‘may they come’ (12).

$$(12) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \bar{a}\gamma ad & : & \bar{a}\gamma ad-\bar{e}nd \\ \text{‘s/he came’} & : & \text{‘they came’} \\ \hline \bar{a}\gamma ad-\bar{e}i & : & X \\ \text{‘s/he might come’} & : & \end{array} \Rightarrow \bar{a}\gamma ad-\bar{e}nd-\bar{e}i \text{ ‘they might come’};$$

optative suffix **-ēi**

Even more remarkable, the modal marker is suffixed to the ending of the 3PL, thus to a finite verb form. Such a form is highly marked, as otherwise modal markers are suffixed to the stems, followed by the endings. The suffix *-ēi* is even generalised for other forms: for the 1PL in Bactrian and for the 2/3SG in Parthian, making it a somewhat general optative ending.

There is also an imperfect in *-āz* in Sogdian, which may be connected to one such verb form in Bactrian, and to a Parthian imperfect form of the copula (13). As pointed out by DURKIN-MEISTERERNST 2007, one might assume that Sogdian is the source for this form, since the language has a full paradigm. However, he goes on to say that the Sogdian forms other than *āz* ‘was’ seem to be late and the paradigm an innovation parallel to some other innovations within the Sogdian verbal system, so the element . The etymology is not clear, but it seems to be a combination of a fossilised verb form with a particle, and a rather noteworthy formation as well.

(13)	Bactrian φροαγ-αζο ‘was proclaimed’	3SG imperfect
	Parthian <i>āh-āz</i> ‘was’	
	Sogdian <i>-āz</i> , <i>āz</i> ‘was’	(whole paradigm)

3.2.3 Discussion

As noted e.g. by CLACKSON (cf. **Section 3.2.3**), “unique shared morphological innovations” should safely permit the reconstruction of a common ancestor, just as, for instance, Indo-Iranian (**Fig. 2**) is defined by the shared innovations of Iranian and Indian. If one takes this seriously, the group of shared innovations in **Section 3.2.2** (to which other shared features might be added) would seem to permit the reconstruction of a subbranch containing at least Parthian and Bactrian, and possibly Sogdian as the next relative (**Fig. 14**).

Clearly this is not the complete picture, since Bactrian also shares a number of features that have traditionally been held to define Eastern Iranian (cf. **Fig. 4**), such as the lenition of the Old Ir. consonant clusters **xt* and *ft* (e.g. Bactrian λογδο vs. Avestan *duxtār-* ‘daughter’).³⁷

So far as morphology is concerned, there is a rather peculiar pronoun which Bactrian shares with some Pamir languages (Yazghulami *təmox*, Ishkashmi *tīmīx*):³⁸ the 2PL pronoun τωμαχο

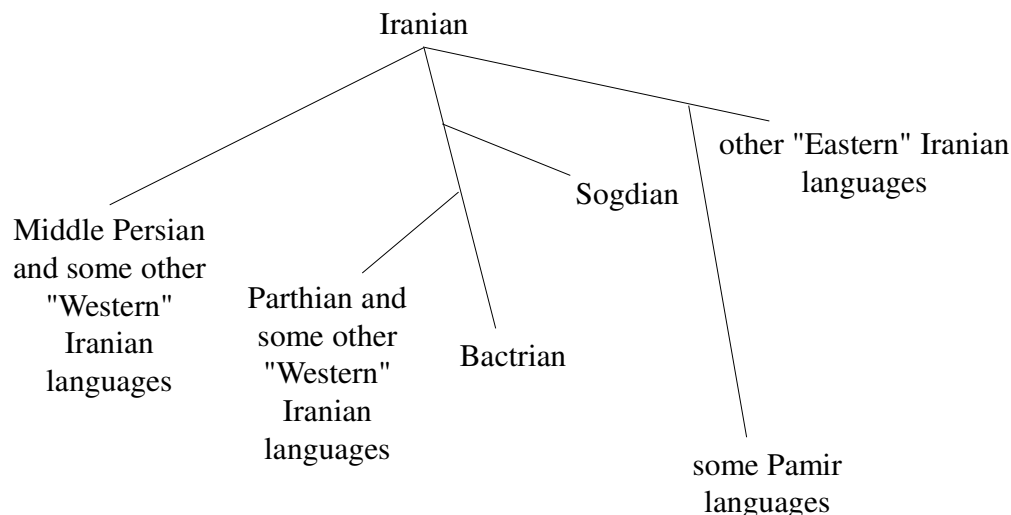
confirmation from the fact that the 3PL subjunctive is *-ivδaδo* (besides *-ivδδo*), thus the 3SG *-aδo* added to the 3PL ending.

³⁷ See WENDTLAND 2009 for more data on the position of Bactrian vs. the traditional isoglosses.

³⁸ The Pamir languages showing this pronoun are Shughni, Bartangi, Sarikoli, Yazghulami, Ishkashmi. WENDTLAND (2009: 180) adds: “Before the Bactrian form became known it [= this formation] was thought to be a peculiarity of some Pamir languages, and was described as one of several characteristics alien to Iranian and therefore attributed to substratum influence.” This view is still upheld by EDELMAN / DODYKHUOEVA

‘you’ looks as if it were a combination of the 2SG *to / too* (etc.) and the 1PL pronoun ‘we’. It seems difficult to imagine at first sight that the same process would have happened independently in Bactrian and other languages. At the same time, one would hardly suggest a common ancestor for these languages, which otherwise are quite different from each other.³⁹

Fig. 14: Preliminary conclusion from shared innovations of Bactrian and Parthian



However, things are maybe somewhat different: as suggested by MORGENSTIERNE (1929:348) for the Ormuri 2PL pronoun *tōs / tyūs*, the inherited “*(*yu*)šmāxam prob[ably]. resulted in *māx = [the] 1st Prs. Pl. [pronoun]”. Such a change also occurred in Bactrian (SIMS-WILLIAMS fthc.), which motivated the rise of a new form “with added prefix for differentiation from the first person plural pronoun”.⁴⁰ The change *šm* > *m* is quite common, by the way, and has also taken place in Zazaki and Balochi (Persian *čašm* vs. Z *çim*, B *čam(m)*, respectively, with further development *m* > *v* in Kurmanji *çav* ‘eye’).⁴¹

Other Eastern Ir. languages have likewise innovated the 2PL pronoun, also based on the 2SG, but of different formation, thus e.g. Pashto *tāsē* (vs. 2SG DIR *tā*, OBL *tā*) whose second element is not clear.⁴² It thus seems likely that a change *šm* > *m* operated in a number of Eastern Ir. languages, either as a regular change of an earlier knot in the tree, or as an areal phenomenon, or independently.

In fact a parallel process took place in Greek: regular changes of the vowels *η* and *υ* brought about the same form for the pronouns *ἡμεῖς* ‘we’ and *ὕμεῖς* ‘you.PL’ (/imis/), which motivated the substitution of the 2PL pronoun by a form *σεῖς*, *ἐσεῖς* based on the 2SG one (NOM *σύ*, ACC *σέ*).⁴³

(2009:782, 794).

³⁹ See also **Section 4.2.2** for more discussion of isoglosses in the pronominal system.

⁴⁰ This element might be either the “second person demonstrative (...) or 2 sg. pron. (...)” (SIMS-WILLIAMS BD II:271). For Ormuri, MORGENSTIERNE assumes influence from Lahnda *tus*, however, rather than a language-internal development.

⁴¹ Note that GEIGER (1890:147) considers Bal. *šumā* ‘you.PL’ as borrowed from Persian. However, his reason for doing so appears to be that he considers Eastern Bal. *šawā*, *šā* as the inherited form (ibid.). This seems unlikely since it would presuppose that the (occasional) change **m* > Eastern Bal. *w* is earlier than the change *šm* > *m* common to all Bal. dialects, giving an implausible scenario. On the other hand, if *(V)*šmāh* gave **mā* as it apparently did in Bactrian etc., it might indeed have been replaced by *šumā*, showing the New Persian epenthetic vowel (vs. MP, Parthian *Všmāh*, see **Section 4.2.1**) instead of a prothetic one as would be expected for Balochi.

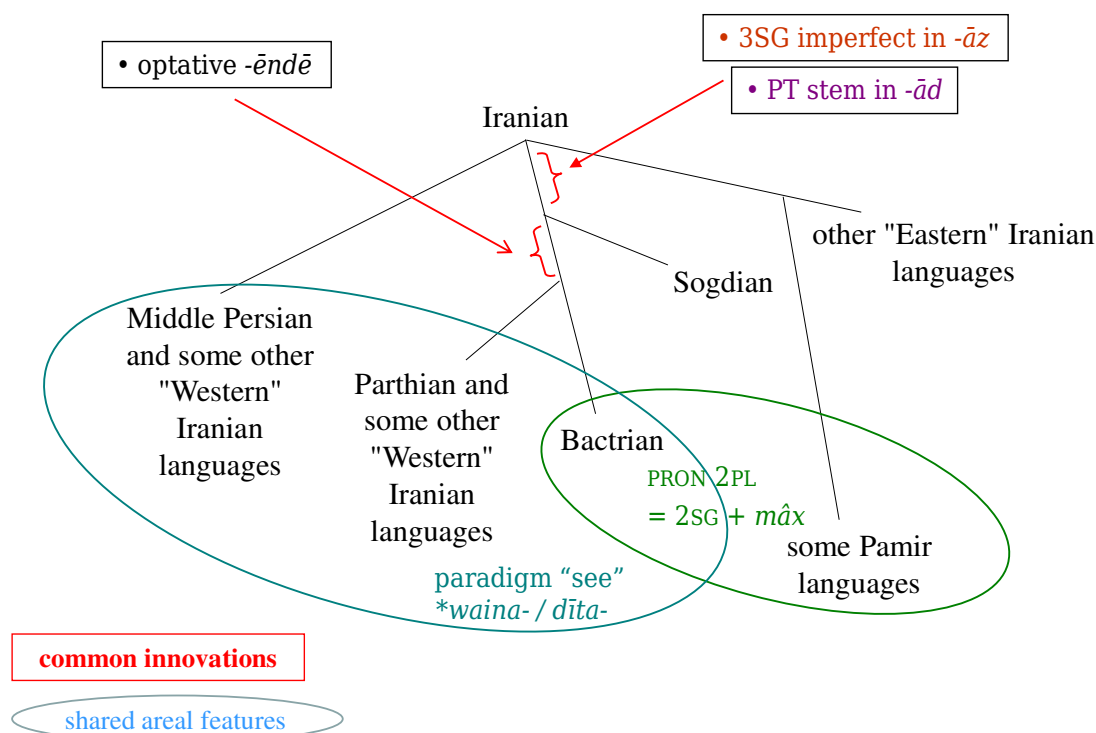
⁴² Cf. the suggestions by MORGENSTIERNE (2003:84).

⁴³ Cf. PALMER (1980:184): “owing to the convergence of *η* and *υ*, *ἡμεῖς* and *ὕμεῖς* were often confused (from A.D.

There is thus a group of Ir. languages which, following a phonetic change that produced two identical pronouns, have innovated one of these on the basis of the corresponding singular while the details of the formation are different. This view is quite different from a mere statement to the effect of “the same formation of the 2PL pronoun in Bactrian and some Pamir languages”, underlining the importance of isogloss evaluation for the perspective of the result.

The tree suggested in **Fig. 14** would also imply that the suppletive paradigm for ‘see’ must likewise be an areal phenomenon (**Fig. 15**) or an independent development. That this is actually possible might be shown by the Balochi forms. Here, a present stem *gind-* (< **wind-* ‘find’) is combined with a PT *dīt*, replacing the inherited PT **wist* (> †*gist*), which in Parthian was replaced by *windād*, and of which a trace might be present in the *-st* of the Bal. variants *dīst*, *dist*.⁴⁴ The noteworthy substitution of a suppletive paradigm for the inherited form shows that Old Ir. *dīta-* ‘watch, observe’⁴⁵ was widely adopted as PT for different present stem formations.

Fig. 15: Preliminary conclusion from shared innovations of Bactrian and Parthian



It would be beyond the scope of the present article to discuss all relevant points, and I hope to continue the discussion in another article in the future. For the moment being, it seems that there is sufficient motivation at hand to justify the attempt of a different approach, and a different family tree. On the one hand, there are the combined facts of the traditional family tree being clearly not viable, and of proto-WIr und proto-EIr being clearly inexistent, and, conversely, a couple of morphological innovations which seem by far not trivial enough to have occurred independently.

i, in the papyri). This led to the creation of a new form σεῖς/ἐσεῖς for the second person (A.D. vi) while ἡμεῖς, ἡμᾶς, ἡμῶν were replaced by ἐμεῖς, ἐμᾶς, ἐμῶν.” Modern Greek has εμεῖς /emis/ vs. υμεῖς /imis/. I am grateful to Ron KIM for pointing out the Greek parallel to me.

⁴⁴ This is the meaning in Avestan according to BARTHOLOMAE (1904:724f.).

⁴⁵ Cf. KORN (2005:79, 188).

In what follows, I will thus test what happens when one attempts to reconstruct what I will call “Central Iranian” for the present purposes, i.e. the ancestor knot of Parthian (possibly joined by some contemporary varieties) and Bactrian (“Central Iranian PB”) or the ancestor knot of the latter and the Sogdian branch (“Central Iranian PBS”).

4. Central Iranian

Having pointed out the problems of the traditional family tree as well as the alternative perspectives offered by the innovations seen in Bactrian, I will now turn to a test case of **Fig. 1c**, proposing to reconstruct the ancestor knot of Bactrian and Parthian shown in **Fig. 14-15**, calling this branch “Central Iranian” for the present purposes.

Doing so, I will aim to reconstruct strictly “bottom-up”, i.e. trying so far as possible not to make use of our knowledge of previous stages and etymologies (where necessary, data of this type will be given in the footnotes). Also, I will rely as far as possible on data and etymologies suggested by others in order to avoid imposing (too much of) my own views.⁴⁶

Trying to avert the problems discussed in **Section 2.2.3**, and to compensate for the fragmentary data from Parthian (including the ambiguities of the script), I will add some data from neighbouring languages,⁴⁷ chiefly from Zazaki, a contemporary language comparatively close to Parthian.⁴⁸ Middle Persian, not belonging to the branch to be reconstructed, will be referred to for comparison, to supply additional data, and as potentially sharing features with “Central Iranian” within a *sprachbund* of which Parthian and Bactrian are also members (cf. **Fig. 15**).

Having mentioned some features of the verbal system already (**Section 3.2.2**), this case study will attempt to reconstruct the nominal system of “Central Iranian”.

4.1 Nouns

The most common paradigm for nouns (probably the only productive one) for Parthian and Bactrian is given in **Fig. 16**. The Parthian system is the one also obtaining in Middle Persian.

Fig. 16: Noun inflection in Central Iranian (most common patterns)

	Early Bactrian ⁴⁹		*Early Parthian / Middle Persian ⁵⁰		cf. Zazaki ⁵¹	
	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL
SG	-Ø <-o>	-l, -ε	-Ø	-ē	-Ø	-ī
PL	-ε	-αvo		-ān, -īn, -ūn	-ī	-ān

⁴⁶ Unless otherwise noted, Bactrian data are quoted from the grammatical sketch in SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:38-49), Parthian and Middle Persian from DURKIN-MEISTERERNST 2014.

⁴⁷ Sogdian will be quoted from YOSHIDA 2009, Zazaki from PAUL 2009.

⁴⁸ Cf. GIPPERT (2009:103), who concludes from his study of the position of Zazaki that it forms a group with Gorani and Semnani, which in turn has a particularly close relation to Parthian. However, Parthian differs from the group by showing some innovations not shared by the contemporary languages.

⁴⁹ Data: SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:40).

⁵⁰ Data: DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2014:201f.).

⁵¹ PAUL (2009: 548). For the notation of Zazaki, see fn. 1.

Clearly Bactrian with Parthian / Middle Persian alone would yield an incomplete paradigm as is shown already by the fact that neither Bactrian nor Parthian has **gender** whereas many contemporary languages do (cf. **Section 3.2.2**). Bactrian shows traces of gender agreement (the definite article $\iota\alpha$ being combined with originally feminine nouns) and there are “isolated examples of f. adjectives in $-\sigma\omicron$ and $-\nu\zeta\omicron$ corresponding to m. forms in $-\gamma\omicron$ and $-\gamma\gamma\omicron$ respectively” (NSW 2007:41). With no relics of the neuter, a two-way gender distinction (M, F) as seen in Zazaki and other New Ir. languages thus needs to be reconstructed for Central Iranian (**Fig. 18**).

So far as **case** is concerned, both Bactrian and Parthian / Middle Persian show a loss of case distinction within the attested texts, the OBL.SG being lost and the OBL.PL ending reinterpreted as PL suffix, giving a system SG $-\emptyset$, PL $-\bar{a}n$. As shown by Zazaki and many other contemporary languages, however, this did not occur in related dialects, and the case distinction can safely be reconstructed for Central Iranian.

As for the form of the endings to reconstruct for the OBL.SG and the DIR.PL, it seems to me that the vowel length of Zazaki and the vowel quality of Bactrian represent the *lectio difficilior*, as it were: an $*\bar{e}$ might have yielded \bar{i} as it did e.g. New in Persian, and Bactrian might show a shortening of word-final vowels that would certainly not be unusual.⁵²

As is already shown by the several endings of the OBL.PL, matters are somewhat more complicated than suggested by **Fig. 18a**. The $-o$ of the DIR.SG of Bactrian also needs to be accounted for: while it marks the word-end in the manuscripts,⁵³ it seems unlikely that it had no phonetic value whatsoever at the time when the script was adopted and more likely that it marked a labial vowel at first (as it undoubtedly does in non-word-final position).⁵⁴ Also pointing towards word-final labial vowels are certain peculiarities of the Manichean orthography,⁵⁵ and a group of Ir. loanwords in Armenian unexpectedly being *u-* or *o-*stems although these noun classes are not productive in Armenian.⁵⁶ While the former phenomenon has been found for Middle Persian, the Armenian items just mentioned appear to come from an Ir. variety sharing with Zazaki the development of $*\square$ (cf. **Section 2.2.3**), and with Bactrian, Parthian, Zazaki etc. the result of *hr* from $*$ (**Section 3.1**). All this appears to favour the reconstruction of a DIR.SG ending $-u$ or $-o$ (**Fig. 18b**).

There is a prominent group of nouns patterning differently, viz. the family terms (**Fig. 17**). In Bactrian, $\beta\rho\alpha\delta\omicron$ ‘brother’ is the only noun preserving two case forms at the period when all other nouns do not show case distinctions any more. (The DIR.PL $\beta\rho\alpha\delta(\alpha)\rho-\alpha\nu\omicron$ is clearly adjusted to the main noun paradigm.⁵⁷) Some dialects of Zazaki show an OBL.SG in $-r$ for family terms while the remaining paradigms follow the usual pattern.

All this suggests a paradigm of the form as in **Fig. 18b** for Central Iranian. So far as the family terms are concerned, it might be possible that the endings of the other nouns should be added, although direct evidence (other than the Bactrian $-o$) appears to be absent if one assumes that the Zazaki endings are generalised from the other nouns.

⁵² NB that the exact phonetic value of the Greek letters in Bactrian use is far from clear.

⁵³ Cf. SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:38).

⁵⁴ Cf. LAZARD et al. (1984:224-226).

⁵⁵ Cf. SIMS-WILLIAMS 1981.

⁵⁶ Cf. KORN 2013a.

⁵⁷ The more original DIR.PL $\beta\rho\alpha\delta\alpha\rho\omicron$ might be present in the text F10 unless it is “a mere mistake” (SIMS-WILLIAMS BD II:41).

Fig. 17: Inflection of family terms in Central Iranian

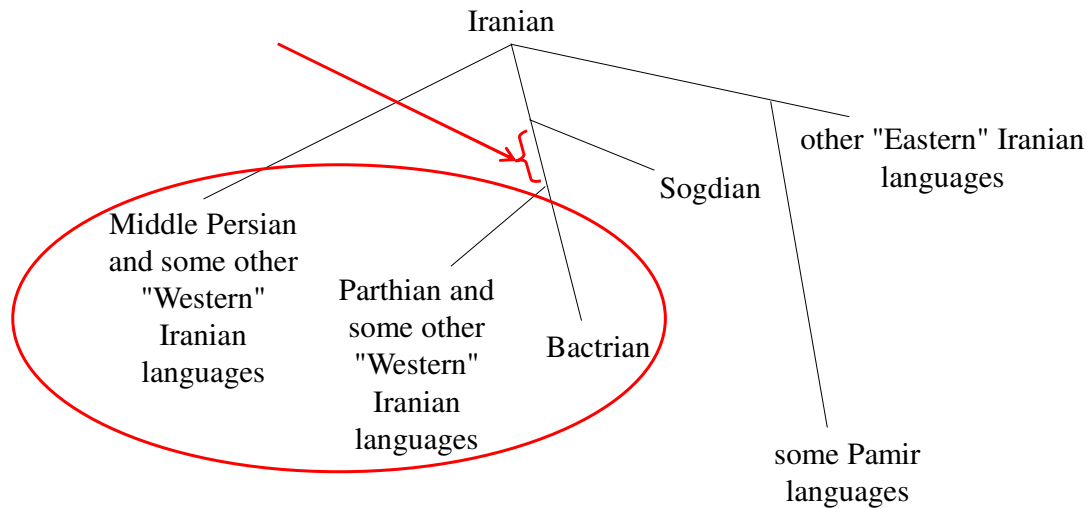
	Bactrian family terms ⁵⁸		Middle Persian / *Parthian ⁵⁹		cf. Zazaki ⁶⁰	
	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL
SG	βραδο	βραδαρο (?)	<i>pid, pidar</i>	<i>pidar</i>	<i>birā</i>	<i>birāwār(ī)</i>
PL	βραδ(α)ρανο	πορανο, φροζινδανο, πο(υ)ρανανο, φροζινδανανο	<i>pidar</i>	<i>pidarān</i>	<i>wāy</i>	<i>wāyān</i>

Fig. 18: *Central Iranian noun inflection

18a	reconstruction		18b	revised reconstruction				
				nouns		family terms		
	DIR	OBL		DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL	
SG	-∅	-ē		-u/o	-ē		-∅, -ar(u/o?)	-ar(ē)
PL	-ē	-ān		-ē	-ān, -īn, -ūn		-ar(ē?)	-ar-ān
• NB: gender M vs. F								

Looking beyond these languages, the Sogdian “heavy stems” share the SG paradigm of **Fig. 16**, but “light stems” have a rather elaborate paradigm (see **Section 4.3**). The development of the system in **Fig. 18** thus seems to have taken place during the time highlighted with the arrow in **Fig. 19**. It is shared by Middle Persian.

Fig. 19: The position of Central Iranian noun inflection in the family tree



⁵⁸ Cf. SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:41, with more details).

⁵⁹ This paradigm shows the functions observed for MP family terms in the Manichean texts by SIMS-WILLIAMS (1981:167-170). The paradigm given by DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2014:202) for Early Parthian and Middle Persian has forms such as **pitaram*, thus a stage too early for the one meant here.

⁶⁰ PAUL (2009:548).

4.2 Personal pronouns

4.2.1 Full pronouns

The forms of the personal pronouns (**Fig. 20**) are very similar in Parthian and Bactrian while Middle Persian differs in having another formation for the 1SG.

For the Parthian 2SG, the Manichean script shows <tw> throughout, but the possibility of a case distinction (i.e. DIR *tū* (?) and OBL *tō* (?)) has been suggested on the grounds of two different Aramaeograms being employed in the older texts.⁶¹ At any rate, there clearly are two different forms in Bactrian as well as in Zazaki (and in other contemporary languages), thus two forms need to be posited for Central Iranian.

Fig. 20: Inflection of personal pronouns in Central Iranian

	Bactrian ⁶²		Parthian / Middle Persian ⁶³		cf. Zazaki ⁶⁴	
	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL
1SG	αζο	μανο	Pth. <i>az</i> , MP <i>an</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>az</i>	<i>mi(n)</i>
2SG	το(ι), τοο, τογο, τοουο	ταο(ι), ταοο(ι)	<i>tū</i> (?) <tw>	<i>tō</i> (?) <tw>	<i>ti</i>	<i>to</i>
1PL	αμαχο	αμαχο, ιαμαχο	<i>amā(h)</i>		<i>mā</i>	
2PL		τωμαχο, τομαχο, ταμαχο	Pth. <i>išmāh</i> , MP <i>ašmāh</i>		<i>šimā</i>	

The final consonant of the 1PL shows the rather common difference between WIr. *h* and EIr. *x*, for which I decide to reconstruct *x* as potential *lectio difficilior* for Central Iranian, also assuming that Zazaki lost the word-initial vowel.

The Bactrian 2PL pronoun is clearly an innovation replacing an earlier form (cf. **Section 3.2.3**), and it is not shared by the neighbouring languages. The comparison of the vowels leads to *(V)*šmāx*, since the difference between the MP and Pth. forms “follows the rules for the prothetic vowel”⁶⁵ (and the same applies to Zazaki), so one could posit *(ə)*šmāx*, which yields the system in **Fig. 21a**. Middle Persian does not share this system so far as the 1SG pronoun is concerned.

It springs to mind that the personal pronouns of Sogdian are very similar to this system. The integration of Sogdian, or rather the reconstruction of the pronouns of the next higher knot, thus comes at low cost, so to speak, yielding an element of the grammar of “Central Iranian PBS” (Parthian, Bactrian and Sogdian) different from the lower knot “Central Iranian PB” (Parthian and Bactrian only) (**Fig. 22**). The pronouns of Central Iranian PBS differ from those of PB chiefly by showing a word-final vowel, which is reminiscent of the difference between **Fig. 18a** and **18b** insofar as the DIR.SG is concerned.

⁶¹ SUNDERMANN (1989:131).

⁶² SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:41), GHOLAMI (2009:133).

⁶³ DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2014:206-208).

⁶⁴ PAUL (2009:551).

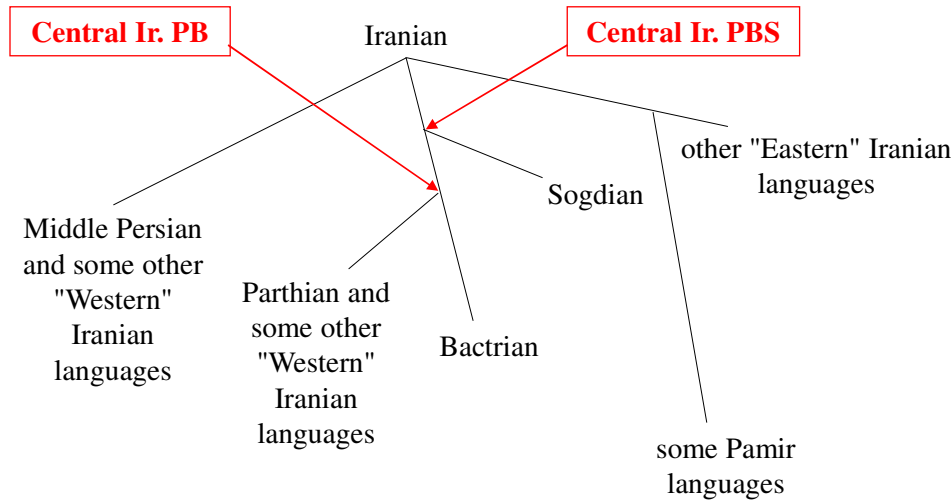
⁶⁵ DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2014:208).

While this system seems overall coherent, the Sogdian 2SG *taγu* is divergent from the neighbouring languages. For the present purposes, the form is maybe best treated as a specific development of Sogdian,⁶⁶ although of course it cannot be ruled out from our bottom-up perspective that it contains a remnant of something old.

Fig. 21: *Central Iranian pronoun inflection

	21a: *Central Ir. PB		Sogdian ⁶⁷		21b: *Central Ir. PBS	
	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL	DIR	OBL
1SG	<i>az</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>(ə)zu</i>	<i>mana</i>	<i>azu</i>	<i>mana</i>
2SG	<i>tō</i>	<i>tau</i>	<i>taγu</i>	<i>tawa</i>	<i>tō</i>	<i>tawa</i>
1PL	<i>amāx</i>		<i>māx</i>		<i>amāx</i>	
2PL	<i>(ə)šmāx</i>		<i>(ə)šmāx</i>		<i>(ə)šmāx</i>	

Fig. 22: The position of Central Iranian pronoun inflection in the family tree



4.2.2 Pronominal clitics

Just as in most other Ir. languages, enclitic pronouns (also called pronominal clitics) are part of the pronominal system of the languages under discussion, with the exception of Zazaki (and some other varieties that have likewise lost them). I thus use Sorani data for comparison, which is comparatively close to Zazaki in sharing isoglosses such as PIE **t□* > Ir. **θ_w* > *w* in instances such as *čwār* ‘four’ vs. MP *čahār*.⁶⁸ More precisely, the Sorani data in **Fig. 23a** are from dialects that show forms in addition to those shared by Persian (i.e. dialects which are presumably less influenced by Persian).

The first observation to be made about the clitics in **Fig. 23a** is that most PL forms are derived from the corresponding SG ones by addition of an ending *-ān*, which is identical in form to the OBL.PL suffix of the nouns (**Fig. 16**). Indeed, this ending is suitable for this use even from a synchronic point of view since the pronominal clitics have OBL function. While these PL forms look secondary a priori, the innovation seems to be reconstructible for Central Iranian

⁶⁶ See SIMS-WILLIAMS (1983:48) for a discussion of Sogdian *taγu* (assuming a development via dissimilation **tuwam* > **tuwu* > **t(u)γu*).

⁶⁷ YOSHIDA (2009:290).

⁶⁸ This is the 2nd but last isogloss in **Fig. 6** (no. 11 in TEDESCO 1921). For further discussion of this isogloss, see SIMS-WILLIAMS 2004a and KORN 2013b. Cf. also fn. 9.

(Fig. 23b).

Fig. 23: Pronominal clitics in Central Iranian

23a	Bactrian ⁶⁹	Parthian / Middle Persian ⁷⁰	cf. Sorani ⁷¹	23b	*Central Ir. PB
1SG	=μo, PREP=μαγο	=(V)m	=(i)m		=(u)m
2SG	*=δo, =δηo, PREP=φαγο	=(V)d, =(V)t	=(i)t, =u		=(V)d/t, =f(?)
3SG	=ηo etc.	=(V)š	=ē, =ī		=(i)š, =ē(i?)
1PL	=μηvo	=mān, MP =n	=mān, =(i)n		=mān
2PL	=δηvo	=(V)tān, =(V)dān	=tān, =ū		=d/tān, =f(?)
3PL	=ηvo etc.	=(V)šān	=yān		=šān, =yān

Besides, there are a few forms which are not synchronically explainable. This applies to Sorani and MP 1PL =(V)n, an element that is maybe not necessary to reconstruct for Central Iranian (unless one wishes to include Sorani in this group), but which shows that another set of PL clitics (probably inherited, since it is not derivable synchronically) was present at some point. The same holds for Sorani 2PL -ū.⁷²

In addition to the usual clitics, Bactrian also shows some forms occurring after prepositions. Comparing 1SG =μαγο to the usual form =μo, the former seems “longer” by an element -αγ- that looks like the extremely frequent nominal suffix, or alternatively might be a particle as it often happens in pronouns (cf. French *celui-ci*). Even more intriguing is the 2SG =φαγο, likewise showing -αγ-, but here, the basis does not even look similar to the common clitic (=δo etc.). There is a certain parallelism in that Sorani shows a form =u besides expected =t. Two forms thus seem to be necessary for Central Iranian. Seeing that Bactrian -φ- corresponds to Sorani =u in their both being a non-d/t 2SG, one might assume that the 2PL =ū might correspond to a Middle Ir. form containing *f as well.

So far as the variation =(V)t/d in the 2nd person is concerned, one might assume that they are either sandhi variants at least in the plural (i.e., depending on the preceding word-final, [+voiced]=dān, [-voiced]=tān). The same variation could have been introduced into the singular (where, however, one rather expects an epenthetic vowel when the preceding word ends in a consonant), or =t may have been adjusted to the free pronoun (or both), which would make =d in a way the *lectio difficilior*. For the moment being, I opt for =d/t as variants for Central Iranian PB.

There are also (at least) two different forms for the 3SG, =(V)š in Parthian being clearly unrelated to the vocalic clitics in the other languages. While it does not seem immediately

⁶⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS (BD II:41), GHOLAMI (2009:133).

⁷⁰ DURKIN-MEISTERERNST (2014:209f.); see also KORN (2009b:160) for more details on the distribution of these forms.

⁷¹ MACKENZIE (1961b:76f.).

⁷² Sorani is not the only Western Ir. language in preserving PL clitics not based on the SG ones (see KORN 2009b for more discussion).

obvious which vowel to reconstruct for the vocalic clitic, nor whether it should be one or more forms, a long vowel (or diphthong) seems probable.⁵²

Here as well, Sogdian contributes interesting data (**Fig. 24a**), which also shed light on some more obscure forms of the neighbouring languages. Agreeing with Bactrian, Parthian and Middle Persian, Sogdian shows PL forms based on the singular ones (even if the *-a-* is short here); and the 2PL is *=fan*, agreeing with the **=f* already assumed. Unless one wishes to integrate Sorani into “Central Iranian”, reconstructing **=fān* to match the other PL forms seems a viable option. It also matches the 2SG **=f* assumed to account for Bactrian (and Sorani).

Fig. 24: *Central Iranian pronominal clitics

24a	Sogdian ⁷³	24b	*Central Ir. PB revised	24c	*Central Ir. PBS
1SG	<i>=m(ī)</i> , PREP= <i>mā</i>		<i>=(u)m</i>		GEN/DAT <i>=m(ī)</i> otherwise <i>=(u)m</i>
2SG	GEN/DAT <i>=t(ī)</i> ACC, INST/ABL <i>=f</i> , PREP= <i>fā</i>		OBL I <i>=(V)d/t</i> , OBL II <i>=f</i>		GEN/DAT <i>=(V)t(ī)</i> , otherwise <i>=f</i>
3SG	<i>=š(ī)</i> , ACC= <i>šu</i>		OBL I <i>=š</i> , OBL II <i>=ē(i?)</i>		GEN/DAT(?) <i>=š(ī)</i> , otherwise <i>=ē(i?)</i>
1PL	<i>=man</i>		<i>=mān</i>		<i>=mān</i>
2PL	<i>=fan</i>		OBL I <i>=d/tān</i> , OBL II <i>=fān</i>		GEN/DAT <i>=tān</i> , otherwise <i>=fān</i>
3PL	<i>=šan</i>		OBL I <i>=šān</i> , OBL II <i>=yān</i>		GEN/DAT(?) <i>=šān</i> , otherwise <i>=yān</i>

The most important point about the Sogdian forms is that “some texts show case distinctions” (YOSHIDA 2009:290), noted in **Fig. 24a**, which gives a clue to the presence of two forms in the other languages. The distribution seen in the 2SG, *=t(ī)* for the GEN/DAT vs. *=f* for the other cases, would then seem to be apply also in the 2PL.⁷⁴

Sogdian does not provide data for the distribution of 3SG **=š* vs. **=ē(i?)*. There are only forms from *=š*, although one expects the 3SG to be the most frequent pronominal clitic. A possible hypothesis, even if speculative, could be the following: since 2SG *=t(ī)* is GEN/DAT, one might perhaps tentatively assume that *=š(ī)* is originally a GEN/DAT form as well, and ACC *=šu* shows the nominal case ending *-u* (see **Section 4.3**). If this is so, **=ē(i?)* could perhaps be the original ACC form, which in Sogdian would have been replaced by *=šu* by a secondary adjustment to the nouns.⁷⁵ The same then would hold for the 2PL *=šān*, possibly likewise originally GEN/DAT, which would leave **=yān* for the other OBL functions. However, this scenario seems less certain than that for the 2nd person.

As in Bactrian, there are specific forms in Sogdian occurring in combination with certain prepositions. The older spelling of *čā-mā* <c'm> ‘from me’ etc. is <c'm'kh> etc.,⁷⁶ which

⁷³ YOSHIDA (2009:290f.).

⁷⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS (1996b:161, 164) derives Sogdian *=t* from GEN/DAT **tai*, and *=f* from ACC *=θwā*, ABL **θwad*. The latter thus shows the consonant cluster also present in ‘four’, where Sorani has *w* in *čwār* (see above).

⁷⁵ Nicholas SIMS-WILLIAMS (p.c.).

⁷⁶ Nicholas SIMS-WILLIAMS (p.c.).

seems to fit well with Bactrian =μαγο. Chorasmian and Munji (one of the Pamir languages) also show such forms (Munji *žāmoz* ‘from us’). Noteworthily, Chorasmian and Munji do not take part in the innovated 2PL pronoun of the pattern τωμαχο (cf. fn. 38): Chorasmian shows a form possibly based on the 2SG pronominal clitic (*hβy*), and Munji has the probably inherited *mof*.⁷⁷ It thus seems that these formations are best treated as areal phenomena.

The contribution of the Sogdian data here is quite different than that in **Section 4.2.1**: while Sogdian essentially shares the paradigm of personal pronouns found in Bactrian and Parthian, showing (as per the final vowels) a somewhat earlier stage of the same paradigm, the Sogdian pronominal clitics thus explain a distribution of multiple forms synchronically found in the neighbouring languages. It thus seems reasonable to reconstruct a case distinction already for Central Iranian PB, which in fact might also be suggested by the specifically pronominal forms of Bactrian. The system emerging from this argument might thus be rather on the level of **Fig. 18b**, exploiting the data available for a revised paradigm of Central Iranian PB, established with a little help of data from beyond.

It is not immediately obvious how to label the slots, given that “GEN/DAT” emerge from Sogdian, and have also been assigned by our knowledge of earlier stages of Iranian and are thus would not be permitted in the present approach. A label OBL I/II thus seems adequate.

For Central Iranian PBS, on the other hand, the cases as found in Sogdian can surely be assumed (**Fig. 24b**). For this stage, additional considerations seem to be appropriate. For instance, judging by the difference in vocalism between the Sogdian 2SG =*t(ī)* vs. =*f*, one might perhaps speculate that the *-ī* of the 1SG belongs to the GEN/DAT as well for Central Iranian PBS. There is no evidence for a case distinction in the 1PL, though.

For the 2SG, Sogdian seems to confirm the variant =*t* over =*d*, and this might indeed be more fitting for the earlier stage of Central Iranian PBS, and which I thus assume also for the 2PL although sandhi variants *=*d/tān* would likewise appear possible.

4.3 The case system again

The system established in **Fig. 24b**, showing a case distinction in the oblique domain for Central Iranian PB, seems to encourage another look at the case system discussed in **Section 4.1**.

In this perspective, it is noteworthy that there are two different forms for the family terms in the slot DIR.SG (**Fig. 17**): *pid*, *pidar*, the latter also being the form of the OBL.SG and the DIR.PL. The two forms being distributed in an odd way may hint at there being originally more slots.

At this point, a look at Sogdian might again be of help. Sogdian shows a double paradigm of noun inflection: “heavy stems” share the SG paradigm of **Fig. 15**, but “light stems” have a rather elaborate paradigm: NOM *-i*, ACC *-u*, GEN-DAT *-e*, LOC *-ya*, INSTR-ABL, VOC *-a*.⁷⁸ The *-u* of the ACC seen here (as in the 3SG clitic, **Section 4.2**) would then possibly be the same element assumed for the DIR.SG slot in **Fig. 18b**.

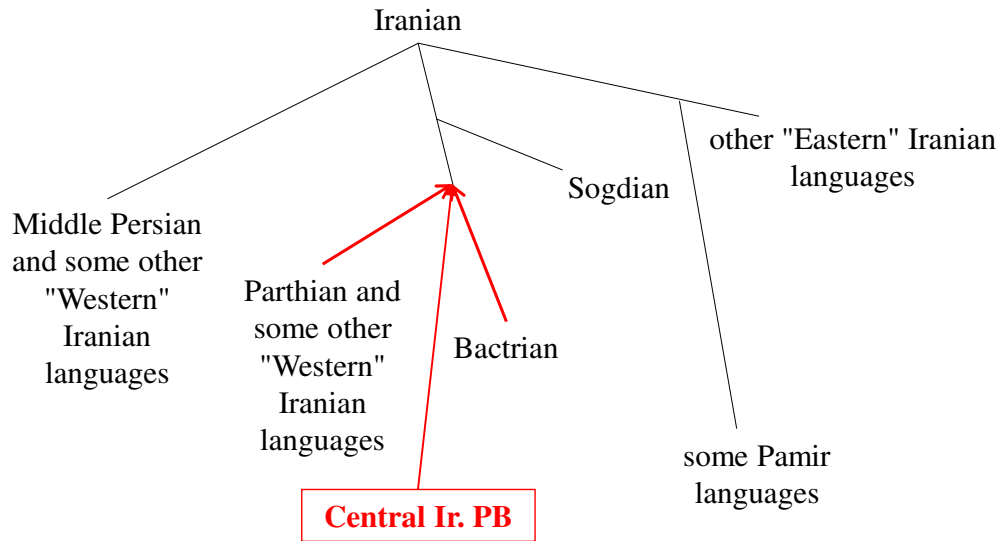
⁷⁷ Cf. WENDTLAND (2009:180, 182f.) for discussion of these forms. Yaghnobi shares neither the innovated 2PL pronoun nor the prepositional forms.

⁷⁸ YOSHIDA (2009:288). The PL has been remodeled in clearly secondary fashion, using a marker *-t*, to which the endings of the SG.F are added. For the history of the Sogdian case system, see SIMS-WILLIAMS 1990.

In combination with the case distinction seen for the pronominal clitics, one possible solution might be to postulate a separate OBL II for the family terms as well. Assuming that the shorter form *pid* is the “real” DIR, this would leave *pidar* for the OBL II.

Fig. 25: Nominal system of *Central Iranian PB

		DIR	OBL II	OBL I
pronominal clitics	1SG	–	= <i>m</i>	= <i>m(ī)</i>
	1PL		= <i>mān</i>	
	2SG		= <i>f</i>	= <i>t(ī)</i>
	2PL		= <i>fān</i>	= <i>tān</i>
	3SG		= <i>ē(i?)</i>	= <i>š(ī)</i>
	3PL		= <i>yān</i>	= <i>šān</i>
family terms	SG	–∅	– <i>ar(u/o?)</i>	– <i>ar(ē)</i>
	PL		– <i>ar(ē?)</i>	– <i>ar-ān</i>
other nouns	SG		– <i>u/o</i>	– <i>ē</i>
	PL		– <i>ē</i>	– <i>ān, -īn, -ūn</i>
personal pronouns	1SG		<i>az</i>	<i>man</i>
	1PL		<i>amāx</i>	
	2SG		<i>tō</i>	<i>tau</i>
	2PL		<i>(ə)šmāx</i>	



5. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the reconstructions presented in **Section 4.** are not meant as more than a sketch, and as a clearly preliminary attempt of suggesting an alternative to the traditional assumption of the Iranian family tree. However, I argue that this attempt does not look absurd *a priori*, and at any rate not much worse than the traditional assumption of the branches “Eastern” or “Western” Iranian, the impossibility of which has been shown since long ago.

If, then, **Fig. 25** is a fair representation of what one arrives at by bottom-up reconstruction of “Central Iranian”, nouns and full pronouns would share a system of two cases and two numbers while the family terms and the pronominal clitics pattern slightly differently, having three case slots. In addition to the innovations in the verbal system discussed in **Section 3.2.2.**, it is chiefly the pronominal clitics that are specific for this branch so far as the nominal system

is concerned.

Much of the pronominal inflection is shared with Sogdian (particularly parallel are the personal pronouns), but the inflection of nouns is considerably different. Bactrian and Sogdian also share specific clitics after prepositions, but do not share the peculiar 2PL personal pronoun. Conversely, the inflection of nouns is shared with Middle Persian, which, on the other hand, is different insofar as the pronouns are concerned.

Re-considering the statement quoted in **Section 2.1.1** to the effect that an attempt to reconstruct Proto-Eastern Iranian in fact yields Proto-Iranian, the branch suggested here appears to have more chances not to result in the same dilemma: Central Iranian seems to be sufficiently different from Proto-Iranian.

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