

Language Change in Time and Space

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Heterogeneity within a language in terms of variation, while compatible with regularity and structure, seems to be the most exciting area of linguistic studies. In fact the true regularity of linguistic patterns in individual speaker and speech community can be seen in on-going changes inherent in all languages. This approach will bring two axes of 'synchrony' and 'diachrony' together again.

So, a language in a given time and in a given space is an aspect of inter-relation of linguistic variation and change in a continuum of linguistic differences in which the varieties are related 'dynamically' and they represent successive stages of development not only synchronically but also historically. So, with a 'synchronic cut' across a community to be a situation of inherent variation is in fact the equivalent of a 'diachronic cut' through history: (petyt 1980:195).

The following piece of research on the language of an ancient area of Iran leads me to agree with the mentioned framework.

The history of the area, Sistan, also known as Sagastan, Sagaztan and Sajastan, goes back to 3000 B.C. . The people of saka were Iranian and they were the inhabitants of the east, northeast of Iran, the central Asia and Khotan. Apparently some Saka tribes later inhabited in south eastern part of Iran, known at present time as Sistan.

Saka language is a branch of old Iranian languages Fig (1)

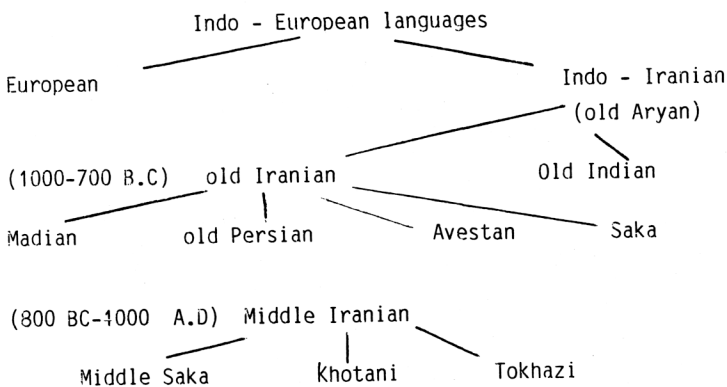


Fig (1) .

From old Saka, except certain words in Greek, Latin and Indian texts, no evidence is left. Old Saka structurally was quite related to Madian and old Persian as they were close to their common ancient ancestor. Middle Saka, Khotani and Tokhazi were the branches of

eastern Middle Iranian languages. From Middle Saka lots of material concerning Medicine, Commerce and Stories in Brahmanian writing are left. They are mostly translated from Sanskrit and Tibetan. Middle Saka is considered as the ancestor of pamir dialects.

There are ample evidence concerning variations which extend from Middle Iranian right through to present day, and they have an on-going geographical and social distribution in time and in space.

They are as follows:

a. Vowel raising

It seems that a strong vowel raising process has started to operate some time from Middle Iranian period to Modern persian.

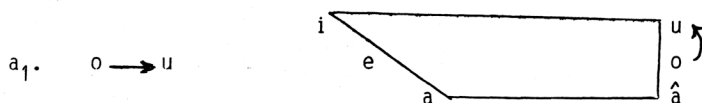


Fig 2.

Mid-Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
dōst	dōst ~ dust	dust	'friend'
rōd	rōd ~ rud	rud	'river'
gōš	gōš ~ guš	guš	'ear'
rōz	rōz ~ ruz	ruz	'day'
čō(b)	cō(b) ~ čub	čub	'wood'

a₂. a → e

in final position

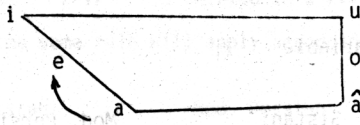


Fig. 3

Mid. Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
-	xona ~ xone	xune	'house'
-	lona ~ lone	lune	'nest'

a₃. e → i

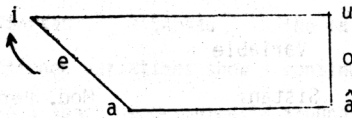


Fig. 4

Mid. Iranian	Sistani	Mod Persian	Meaning
mēš	mēš ~ miš	miš	'sheep'
*deval	devâl ~ divâl	divâr	'wall'

b. Monophthongization:

ow \longrightarrow â + b

Mid-Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
*xow	xow ~ xâb	xâb	'sleep'
*mahtow	mahtow ~ mahtâb	mahtâb	'moon-light'
*aftow	aftow ~ aftâb	aftâb	'sun'
*gow	gow ~ gâv(b)	gâv(b)	'cow'

c. Fronting of high, back vowel:

u \longrightarrow i Variable

Mid-Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
—	puramard ~ Pirmard	pirmard	'oldman'
—	purazan ~ Pirzan	Pirzan	'oldwoman'

d. P \longrightarrow f Variable

Mid. Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
gospand	gospe ~ gusfand	gusfand	'sheep'

e. v \longrightarrow b Variable

Mid-Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
*zvon	zvo ~ zebon	zebân	'language, tongue'

F. P \longrightarrow b variable

Mid. Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
pkâr	pkâr ~ bekâr	bekâr	'plant'
psâz	psâz ~ besâz	besâz	'bvild'
pka(n)	pka ~ bekân	bekan	'dig'
pxâr	pxâr ~ bexor	boxor (boxor)	'eat'

g. Change in syllabic structure of word, in which monosyllabic words have changed into disyllabic ones;

ccvc \rightarrow cv/cvc

Mid. Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
brinj	brinj ~ berenj	berenj	'rice'
droʃ	droʃ ~ doruʃ	doruʃ	'lie'
bratar	bradar ~ baradar	baradar	'brother'
stun	stun ~ sotun	sotun	'pillar'

g₁. When initial /ʔv/ is deleted in a /ʔvcc/ construction, the same rule will apply according;

Mid. Iranian	Sistani	Mod. Persian	Meaning
ašma	šmâ ~ šomâ	šomâ	'you'
aškamb	škamb ~ šakam	šakam	'belly'
afrâz	frâz ~ farâz	farâz	'over'

g₂. When negative marker / ne/ or present tense marker / mi/ is joined to verb form, the same process applies:

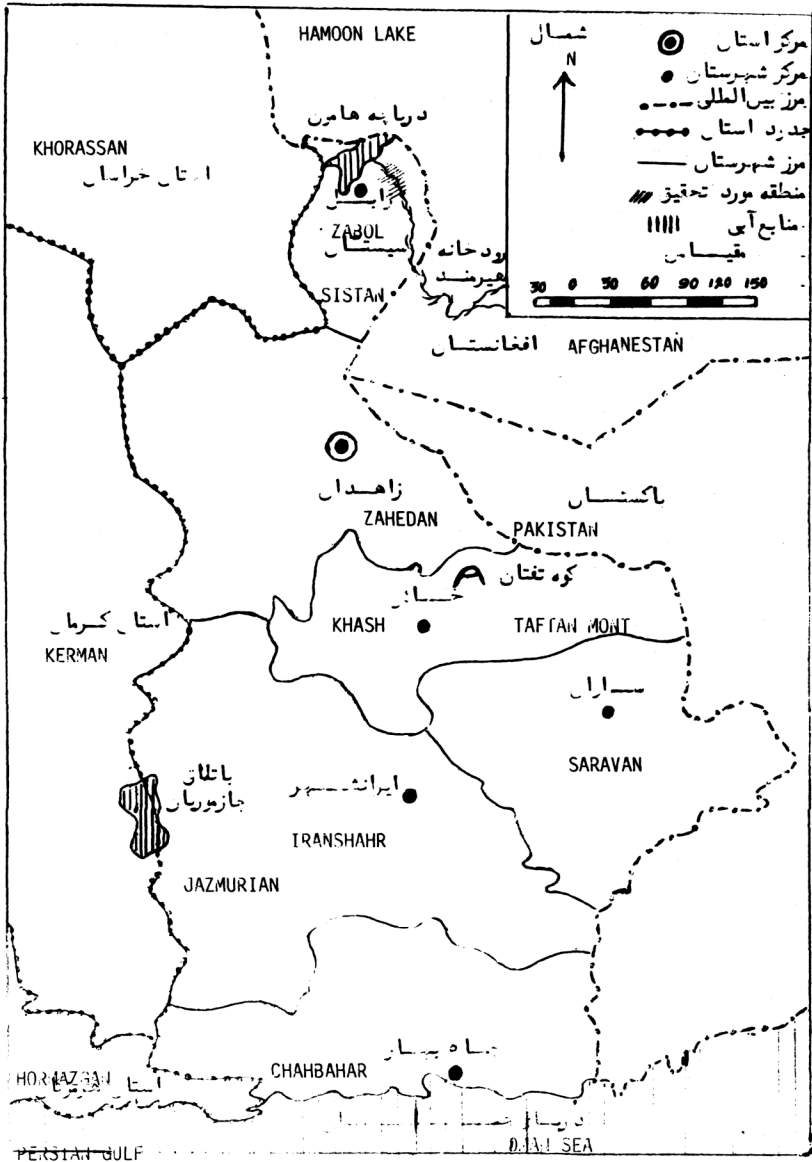
nmexarde	nemixorad	nemixorad	'doesn't eat'
mtarsa	mitarsad	mitarsad	'he is afraid'

All the above mentioned variations show a continuum of linguistic items distributed in time a space geographically around Sistan province and socially in terms of speaker's age (10-30) and 31⁺, the level of education (possible exposure to Modern Persian), illiterate, literate and University graduates, in Sistan speech community. The linguistic

Patterns introduced so far show not only the on-going stages of progress in a language at a given time and given space, but more important, its natural relationship to historically older form and contemporary sister language in a continuum of closely connected linguistic variations.

SISTAN

موقعیت دشت سیستان در استان سیستان و بلوچستان



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