Non-Canonical Subject Construction in Endangered Iranian Languages: Further Investigation into the Debates on the Genesis of Ergativity

Mohammad Dabir-Moghaddam

Abstract

This paper deals with the over a century-old debate on the genesis of ergativity in the Iranian languages. Six theories have been proposed for the origin of this construction: (a) the Passive, (b) the Possessive, (c) the Raised Possessor Construction, (d) the External Possessor Construction and Non-Canonical Subject Construction, (e) neither the Possessive nor Passive Construction, and (f) via the Middle Construction. I provide examples from a number of endangered Modern Iranian languages with split agreement systems, which also contain an array of constructions with intransitive and two-place verbs but they, like transitive past tense stems, use pronominal clitics to encode a core NP as Oblique and encode the other core NP as Direct. I propose that a Non-Canonical Subject Construction with the core meaning ‘exist’ in Old Persian triggered the genesis of ergativity. After the well-attested morphological changes which resulted in the reanalysis of Old Persian perfect forms as past stems in Middle Persian, the ergativity was grammaticalized in the past tense domain. The paper proposes that the occurrence of ergativity in Middle Persian was the consequence of an analogical extension whose effect is evident in old Persian and a reanalysis whose effect is realized in Middle Persian. The availability of the rich evidence across many Modern Iranian languages justifies reconstruction of these constructions with the oblique logical subject back to older stages. The presence of the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in Proto-Indo-European and in a number of currently spoken languages globally substantiates the widespread use of this construction and that this construction outlives ergativity.

Keywords: genesis of ergativity, non-canonical-subject constructions, Iranian languages, split agreement, dative-subject constructions, oblique subject constructions, non-nominative subject, differential subject marking, quirky subjects, non-canonical agreement, non-canonical case-marking, subject-like oblique

1. Introduction

The majority of Modern Iranian languages show some degree of ergativity. Ergativity refers to a pattern in which the subject of an intransitive verb (S) and the object of a transitive verb (O) are identically marked, while the agent of a transitive verb (A) is marked differently. 1 The existence of such a pattern indicates an Ergative-Absolutive type language. In Iranian languages, we observe split ergativity. This means that the ergativity pattern, when it exists, is found in clauses containing verbs formed with past stems. In clauses with verbs formed from present stems, S and A are identically marked, while O is marked differently. Thus, in the present tense domain, these languages are of the Nominative-Accusative type. Relevant examples from Modern Iranian languages that show split ergativity are presented in section (3) of the paper. But as an illustration of split ergativity, consider examples (1)–(4) from Larestani, a Southwestern Modern Iranian language. In this set, S is encoded as a verbal suffix, i.e., -en, (examples (1) and (2)). The A argument of a transitive verb formed with a present

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1 For standard descriptions of ergativity, see Comrie (1978) and Dixon (1994).
stem is also encoded on the verb by the same verbal suffix that encodes S (example (3)). In contrast, A of a past tense transitive verb is encoded by an Oblique Proclitic, i.e. \( om= \), while O is encoded by means of a verbal suffix, i.e., \(-en\), (example (4)). The encoding of O in (4) is the same as the encoding of S in (1) and (2).

(1) \( ænæ-iya \) \( da-en \)
    s/he-PL come-3PL
    ‘They come.’

(2) \( ænæ-iya \) \( ond-en \)
    s/he-PL came-3PL
    ‘They came.’

(3) \( ænæ-iya \) \( ketab-ü \) \( æ-sæ-en \)
    s/he-PL book-DEF INCOMPL-buy-3PL
    ‘They buy the book.’

(4) \( mæ \) \( ænæ-iya \) \( om=binæd-en \)
    I s/he-PL 1SG.OBL=saw-3PL
    ‘I saw them.’

A well-known fact about Middle Persian, the official language of the Persian dynasties, the last one being the Sasanians, in south-western Iran (ca. 200 B.C.–651 A.D.), is that it was a split ergative language. Middle Persian is descended from Old Persian of the Achaemenid period (ca. 558–330 B.C.). Old Persian is commonly characterized as a Nominative-Accusative type language with a relatively rich inflectional morphology. An important question that has been addressed with respect to the mentioned Iranian languages is the genesis of split ergativity.

Examples (5) and (6) below from Old Persian, which I quote from Haig (2008: 25), clearly show that S and A are uniformly case-marked as Nominative and that the verb also agrees with them, while O is case-marked as Accusative.

(5) pasāva \( \text{adam(A) kāram (O) frāišayam Bābirum} \) [14]
    thereupon 1SG.NOM army.ACC send.PST.1SG to-Babylon
    ‘Thereupon I (A) sent an army (O) to Babylon’ (Kent 1953: DB 3. 84).

(6) \( \text{adam (S) xšāya\text{ɪya} abavam} \) [15]
    1SG.NOM king become.PST.1SG
    ‘I (S) became King’ (Kent 1953: XPf, 36–37)

In contrast, Middle Persian exhibits the ergative construction in the past tense domain. In this language, A is in the Oblique case (frequently an enclitic pronoun), and O is in the Direct case. The verb normally agrees with O. Example (7), which I quote from Skjærvø (2009b:228), substantiates this observation.

(7) \( \text{guft ō awēšān ka=[š dād būd hēnd] kū mard-ēd} \)
    said to them when=[he. A create.PST PRET be.3PL] that man-be.2PL
    ‘(he) said to them when he had created them: You are men’ (Dk 7.1.9).

In (7), the enclitic \( =š \) encodes A and \( hēnd \) shows agreement with O. In the final clause of this example, the suffix \(-ēd\) encodes agreement with S.
With regard to the genesis of ergativity in the Iranian languages, six theories have been proposed: Benveniste (1952/1971), who proposed a Possessive account; Cardona (1970) and in line with that Skjærvø (1985), who advocate a Passive analysis; Bynon (2005), who suggested the Raised Possessor Construction; Haig (2008), who argues for the External Possessor Construction and Non-Canonical Subject Construction; Jügel (2010), who proposed the neither Possessive nor Passive Construction; and Jügel (2015), who claims that the Middle Construction facilitated the formation of ergativity in Iranian languages. In this paper, I first provide a review of the aforementioned literature on the origin of ergativity in Middle Persian (section 2). Second, I describe the ergativity pattern as found with past tense transitive verbs as well as in a group of intransitive and two-place verbs in selected Modern Iranian languages (section 3). My specific hypothesis is that the rich evidence from the synchronic behaviour of Modern Iranian languages with respect to agreement (and occasionally case marking) illuminates the genesis of ergativity in Middle Western Iranian. Third, I propose an analysis of the genesis of ergativity in Iranian languages. I specifically propose that a Non-Canonical Subject Construction with the general configuration $NP$-Oblique $NP$-Direct $V$ (‘exist’), in which the verb agrees with the $NP$-Direct, which was an ancient Indo-European construction still productive in Old Persian, was extended to the participial form of transitive verbs and hence triggered the emergence of ergativity in that language. Subsequently, the well-attested morphological changes that are found between Old and Middle Persian in the verbal system led to the reanalysis of the Old Persian perfect forms as past tenses. Hence, in Middle Persian, ergativity was grammaticalized in the past tense domain of transitive verbs (section 4). This observation implies that the emergence of ergativity in Iranian languages was epiphenomenal. I furthermore claim that the Non-Canonical Subject Construction was also analogically extended to a group of intransitive and two-place verbs that share the semantic feature of stativity. Hence, I will claim that a reanalysis (between Old and Middle Persian and more generally between Old Iranian and Middle Iranian) and an analogical extension explain the split agreement systems of a large number of Modern Western Iranian languages. Thus, I will rely on the synchronic behavior of Iranian languages to shed light on the diachronic developments of these languages. In another section, I will make use of the insights of Barðdal and Smitherman (2013), who argue for a reconstruction of “oblique subject constructions in Proto-Indo-European” (p. 28).
2. Review of the Previous Analyses

2.1. Benveniste

Benveniste (1971:153), originally published in French in 1952, writes that in 1893, Geiger talked about “the passive structure of the transitive past in the Iranian languages”. Geiger had referred to the expression repeated in (8) below in Old Persian and claimed that “the preterite” was in fact “a passive construction” (ibid).2

(8) ima tya manā krtam
   this.NOM.N.SG what.NOM.N.SG I.GEN.SG do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
   ‘here is what I have done’, lit., ‘what by me has been done’ (DB 1.27; 4.1,49)

According to this analysis, manā krtam of Old Persian continued as man kart in Middle Persian and in Modern Persian as man kardam, where the affixation of the personal ending -am in the verb shows that the construction became “active” and “transitive” again (p. 154). Benveniste writes that it is now half a century since this theory received wide acceptance, and the description of Ancient and Modern Iranian languages are based on the passive source of the past tense transitive verbs (ibid). In his paper, Benveniste provides a completely different analysis of sentence (8).

His first point in this discussion is that the expression in (8) “… is not a ‘preterite’ but a perfect, or rather an expression that in Old Persian served to make up for the lack of the ancient perfect.” (p. 154). He then provides examples in (9), which are similar to (8), and writes:

“In this list, whether the subject is represented by a noun [=maiy pissa ‘my father’] or by a pronoun whose form is full (manā) or enclitic (=maiy, =taiy, =šam), the case form remains the same. The actor is denoted by the genitive-dative.” (Benveniste 1971: 154)

(9) a. utā=maiy vasiy astiy krtam
   and=1SG.GEN much is do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
   ‘I have still done many [things]’ (DB 4. 46)

b. ava=išām avā naiy astiy krtam
   that=3PL.GEN.M as much not is do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
   yaθā manā ... krtam
   as I.SG.GEN do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
   ‘they have not done as much as I have done’ (DB 4.51)

c. tya manā krtam utā
   what.NOM.N.SG I.SG.GEN do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG and
   tya=maiy pissa krtam
   what.NOM.N.SG=1SG.GEN father.GEN.M.SG do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
   ‘that which I have done and that which my father has done’ (XP a, 19–20; c, 13–14)

Benveniste asks “[b]y what criterion do we recognize that this construction is passive?” (p.154). He did not find the facts that the actor in this construction is in the genitive-dative

2 The examples that I quote from Benveniste and Cardona do not have interlinear glosses. I added the interlinear glosses based on Kent (1953). The examples from other studies I quote are presented with minor modifications in the glosses, for the sake of uniformity.
and that the verb is represented by the verbal adjective sufficient to consider the construction passive. He presents example (10) from Old Persian as the real morphological passive of this language. This passive verb is marked with the passive morpheme -ya, and the actor is expressed by the ablative preposition hača.

(10) tya=šām hačā=ma aḏah-ya
what.NOM.N.SG=3PL.GEN.M from.ABL=1SG.ABL declare.IPF-PASS
‘that which by me was commanded them’ (DB 1.19–20,DN a20: XP h18)

According to Benveniste, the most notable fact in the analysis of the construction in examples (8) and (9) is the existence of a construction in which a noun or a pronoun is in the genitive-dative case and its predicate is a form of “to be”, which “serves to denote the predicate of possession” (p. 155). Examples in (11) are among those that he provides for this construction.

(11) a. utā=taiy yāvā tahuṁa ahatiy
and=2SG.GEN as long as strength.NOM.N.SG be.SBJV
‘and as long as you will have seed’(DB 4.74,78)

b. dārayava[h]auš pussā aniyačiy ahantā
Darius.GEN.M.SG son.NOM.M.PL other.NOM.M.PL be.3PL.IPF.MID
(Lit. ‘to Darius were other sons’) (XP f28)
‘Darius had other sons’

c. avahyā ka(n)būjiyahyā brātā
that.GEN.M.SG Cambyses.GEN.M.SG brother.NOM.M.SG
brdiya nāma āha
Brdiya.NOM.M.SG name be.IPF
‘this Cambyses had a brother named Brdiya’(DB. 1.29–30)

According to Benveniste, the Old Persian perfect “… is an active perfect of possessive expression, which as early as Western Old Iranian has been realized in the periphrastic type…” (p. 156).

2.2. Cardona and Skjærvø

Cardona (1970) is a return to Geiger’s analysis of the ima tya manā krtam, example (8), as “a passive construction”. Cardona (1970:1–2) presents example (12) and argues that, in this example, the passive verb ayadiya ‘was revered’, which contains the passive morpheme -ya, has the genitive enclitic =šam ‘them’ as its agent, rather than taking the preposition hača ‘from’ which is found elsewhere in this passive construction.

(12) avaiy ūvjiyā
those. NOM.M.PL Elamite.NOM.M.PL
The Elamites were faithless and Ahuramazda was not revered by them. I revered Ahuramazda.' (DB 5.15–16)

Skjærvø (1985:217) believes “BENVENISTE’s statement that the m-k constr. [manā kartam construction] is a possessive construction (i.e. formally) is a meaningless statement when applied to a synchronic description of OP [Old Persian]…” for the following two reasons. First, “… manā kartam obviously functions as a verbal clause in OP, not a noun clause, …” (ibid). Secondly, Benveniste’s analysis “… leaves completely out of consideration the agentless passive perfect taya kartam ‘what has been done’” … where the past perfect “on no account can be a mere verbal adjective, but clearly belongs in the system of the OP finite verb”(ibid).

However, in Skjærvø (2009a), it appears that his previous position is to some extent modified. He mentions that the Old Persian past participles exist for both intransitive and transitive verbs. Skjærvø (2009a: 144) adds “when it is from a transitive verb and the agent is not expressed, it corresponds to a passive imperfect”. However,

“If an agent (noun or pronoun) is expressed, it is in the genitive-dative, and the perfect corresponds to an active imperfect. The only examples are with karta ‘done, made’, and the construction is formally identical with possessive constructions in which karta means ‘work, achievement’…” (Skjærvø 2009a: 145)

2.3. Bynon

Bynon (2005) describes the historical source of the ergative construction in Indo-European. She names a number of languages of the world with “a split marking system” from various language families, and points out:

“[in] all of these it is the transitive clause in the perfective aspect (or the past tense) which attracts the ergative-absolutive type of alignment while all other clauses have nominative-accusative alignment. The reverse distribution, although theoretically conceivable, is unattested in the languages of the world.” (Bynon 2005: 2)

Even though the final sentence in the above-mentioned quotation is a well-known fact in the literature on the emergence of ergativity in the Iranian languages, it still deserves particular attention in the analysis of the source of ergativity in these languages. Bynon also makes it clear that “their [namely, split marking systems] origins are in major respects still unresolved” (Bynon 2005: 3). She adds:

“Even in the Indo-Iranian family of Indo-European, which has a documented language history of some three thousand years, the issue is in fact still controversial.” (Bynon 2005: 3)
What Bynon considers uncontroversial is that “it is the ergative marking pattern which here represents the innovation” (Bynon 2005: 3). Bynon then specifies her objectives:

“The historical derivation of the ergative construction to be developed in this paper is designed to account for two essential facts hitherto unclarified, (i) the clause-initial position of the agent and (ii) the grammatical function of the source construction in early Indic and, ultimately, Proto-Indo-Iranian.” (Bynon 2005: 3)

I also consider these last two essential facts highly pertinent to the reconstruction of the source structure of the ergativity pattern in the Iranian languages.

Bynon is of the opinion that “[t]he immediate ancestors of the present-day ergative construction of the Indic and Iranian languages are readily identifiable” (2005: 6). The Old Persian construction that she cites as the immediate ancestor of the present-day ergative construction in Iranian languages is given in example (8). Bynon mentions that this construction has the following grammatical characteristics:

(i) “the verb [i.e., krtam] is in the form of the past participle functioning as a finite verb”
(ii) “the patient [i.e., tyā] is in the unmarked nominative case”
(iii) “the agent [i.e., manā] is oblique-marked”, more specifically, it is “genitive”
(iv) “the construction would initially have had the status of a perfect (with current relevance at the time of speaking) and, like many perfects elsewhere, would subsequently have become a past tense” (Bynon 2005: 6–7).

The four characteristics listed above are realized in the constituents, which have formed a construction with the linear order of NP-Direct NP-Oblique Verb (see tyā manā krtam in example (8)). In that Old Persian construction, the verb agrees with the NP-Direct. Bynon argues that this construction and its Sanskrit counterpart were already an ergative clause. In this ergative clause, the “morphological subject properties are with the morphologically unmarked patient”, namely, the NP-Direct in the above-mentioned construction, “whereas discourse-syntactic criteria identify the agent as the subject”, namely, the NP-Oblique in that construction (Bynon 2005: 14–15). Bynon makes it clear that:

“From the perspective of the historical grammar of Indo-Iranian, however, it is to be noted that this particular ergative clause structure lacks direct counterparts in both the earliest Old Indic … and Old Iranian …” (Bynon 2005: 15)

Therefore, the analysis of example (8) would be that tyā is the morphological subject, whereas manā is the discourse-syntactic subject. As Bynon has pointed out:

“Benveniste’s strongest argument in favour of his ‘Possessive’ analysis is the existence of a structural parallelism between transitive perfects and possessive predications found in quite a number of languages.” (Bynon 2005: 37)

It is needless to mention that example (8) represents the transitive perfect construction and that example (11b) is one representative of the possessive predication construction. In both of these examples, the following structural parallelisms hold: (a) There is one NP-Oblique actant (namely manā and dārayava[h]auš, respectively, which are genitive), (b) one NP-Di-
rect actant (that is to say, *tya* and *pussā aniyaičiy*, respectively, which are nominative), and (c) the verb agrees with the NP-Direct actant. In contrast, Bynon proposes an “alternative analysis … which treats the genitive agent [i.e., *manā* in example (8)] as a raised adnominal possessor” (Bynon 2005: 39–40). Bynon uses the phrase “pre-ergative construction” (p. 25, 42, 43, 45, 64, and 66) to refer to any raised adnominal possessor construction, whether it contains an intransitive non-action verb (e.g., examples (11a–c) or a transitive action verb (e.g., examples (8) and (9a–c). Thus, a raised adnominal possessor construction is a construction whose “two noun phrases form a possessive relationship. The genitive phrase (or clitic) can accordingly be interpreted as a raised possessor and an extra actant of the verb” (Bynon 2005: 58).

Finally, Bynon summarizes her “admittedly speculative sequence of events” that led to the emergence of ergativity in Indo-Iranian (p. 63). In her words,

> “the pre-ergative construction is likely to have originated with non-agentive intransitive (un-accusative and ergative [in the generative linguistics terminology]) verbs. It would then have spread to transitive verbs through the intermediary of ergatives such as ‘break’, which could enter both intransitive-spontaneous and transitive-causative constructions, [namely, ambitransitive verbs] the latter allowing the possessor to be identified with the transitive agent.”

(Bynon 2005: 66)

2.4. Haig

Haig (2008) reassesses the *ima tya manā kartam* construction. In his detailed investigation of this construction, he relies on four parameters. One of them is “the syntactic status of the Agent-Phrase” (p. 45). He argues that

> “If the A [i.e., Agent-Phrase] can be shown to be a peripheral element, to which no syntactic rules make reference, then we would have strengthened the case for treating the m.k. construction as a passive. If, on the other hand, it can be demonstrated that the Agent-Phrase possesses at least some properties of a core argument, then the passive interpretation is weakened.”

(Haig 2008: 45)

The syntactic rule that he examines is “the cliticization process”, in which these clitics are attached “to the first word of the clause of which they are syntactically constituents, regardless of the syntactic category of that word (i.e., a Wackernagel position)” (p. 46). Haig’s examples of the “Genitive Clitics” are quoted in (13) and (14), and one of his examples of the “Accusative Clitic Pronouns” is presented in (15) (p. 27,47).

(13) \[utā=\text{maiy} \text{ aniya} \text{ vasiy} \text{ astiy} \text{ kartam} \]

and=1SG.GEN much else COP.PRS.3SG do.PTCP

‘and much else was done by me’ (Kent 1953: DB 4. 46)

(14) \[aita=\text{maiy} \text{ Auramazdā} \text{ dadātuv} \]

this=1SG.GEN Ahuramazda may. give

‘may Ahuramazda give this to me’ (Kent 1953: DNa, 53–55, cf. also DPd, 23–24; DPh, 8; DNa, 50–51, 54–55)

(15) \[kāra hya \text{ Aθuriya hau}=\text{dim} \text{ abara yātā} \text{ Bābirauv} \]

people which Assyrian DEM=3SG.ACC brought to Babylon

‘the Assyrian people – they brought it to Babylon’ (Kent 1953: DSf, 32–33)
Haig’s remarks on the placement of the Accusative Clitic in the last example are quite interesting.

“The last example shows that cliticization is sensitive to syntax rather than pragmatics: The phrase kāra hya Aṭhuriya is a fronted topic, external to the clause, and is thus not treated as a first constituent for the purposes of cliticization. The Accusative Clitic attaches to the first grammatical constituent of the clause, the subject pronoun hau …” (Haig 2008: 47)

On the basis of the insightful observations that the pronoun manā in example (8), which is a m.k. construction, has the clitic counterpart =maiḍ in example (13), which is the same as (9) a, and that the host for this clitic is the first syntactic constituent of the sentence, Haig suggests that the aforementioned pronoun or its clitic form are core syntactic arguments in these examples. In contrast, in examples (14) and (15), which contain transitive verbs, the Genitive Clitic in the first example and the Accusative Clitic pronoun in the latter constitute core arguments, which are also attached to the first syntactic constituent of the sentence. Thus, Haig has identified a well-defined syntactic rule, namely, the cliticization rule, which, as illustrated in the preceding examples, is restricted to Accusative and Genitive pronouns. Haig, at this point, reminds the reader about one of the most prominent properties of a prototypical Agent-Phrase. He quotes Comrie (1988: 16), who proposed that “few if any syntactic rules refer to the A (agent phrase)” (Haig, p. 47). Haig concludes:

“This constitutes one piece of evidence in favour of considering the Genitive a structural rather than a semantic case, and hence against considering the A of the m.k. construction to be an Agent-Phrase of a prototypical passive.” (Haig 2008: 47)

Haig also relies on a semantic and pragmatic parameter to further substantiate his aforementioned conclusion. In his words:

“It is remarkable that in all the attested m.k. constructions, the Agent-Phrase is maximally topical and animate: either a personal pronoun, most commonly first person singular manā (or clitic =maiḍ), or third person plural (clitic =šam, referring to humans), or (in one example) a kinship term ‘my father’. This distribution of animacy and topicality is precisely what one would expect of the A of an active transitive construction. It is precisely what one would not expect of the Agent phrase of a passive construction.” (Haig 2008: 51, original emphasis)

Haig believes that the manā kartam construction is an extension of an External Possessor Construction. He then quotes Haspelmath (1999: 109), who has proposed that an External Possessor Construction involves a possessive modifier that “does not occur as a dependent constituent of the modified NP, but NP-externally as a constituent of the clause” (quoted in Haig 2008: 61).

Haig’s analysis of the m.k. construction and his stance on the genesis of the ergative construction in Iranian languages are cited below:

“[… I have presented the justification for abandoning the theory that ergativity in Iranian arose from an agented-passive construction. I have also developed an alternative, according to which the m.k. construction is an extension of an External Possessor Construction [EPC], already present in Old Iranian, from which the m.k. construction inherited crucial structural
features. In particular, the semantic, pragmatic and syntactic constellation associated with possessors in EPCs coincide with those associated with Agenthood, thus easing the shift from EPC to m.k. construction, and ultimately an ergative construction.” (Haig 2008: 82)

According to Haig, the m.k. construction gradually compensated

“for the loss of the finite tense forms, until it became the sole available means of expressing past transitive propositions throughout [the Middle] Iranian. The mechanism involved in this process is thus primarily one of extension, driven ultimately by changes in verbal morphology, rather than syntactic reanalysis of the construction itself.” (Haig 2008: 85–86)

In his concluding remarks, Haig reiterates and to some degree clarifies further his position on “the emergence of ergativity in Iranian”. He says:

“I believe that deeper insights into the Iranian developments can be gained through the literature on External Possessors, and on non-canonical subjects.” (Haig 2008: 87)

He adds:

“In a sense, the story of the emergence of ergativity in Iranian can be seen as the extension of non-canonical subjects to a specific, morphologically-defined environment: the past tense of transitive verbs. In other languages which have non-canonical subjects, they are generally restricted to a semantically-defined group of predicates, in particular psych-verbs or verbs of possession. The shift to the past transitive environment in Iranian was, as I have argued, largely motivated by highly specific developments in the verbal morphology, which were largely restricted to the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European and are therefore rare elsewhere.” (Haig 2008: 87)

Haig terminates his analysis by providing examples from Badīnānī, which belongs to the Northern group of Kurdish, and has “existential predicates” with “a fronted oblique, yielding an External Possessor Construction” (Haig 2008: 258). These examples, which are adopted from MacKenzie (1961, 1962), are quoted in (16) and (17) below:

(16) naqlakē hākim-ak-ī sē kuṟ ha-bō-n. [258]
at. a. time prince-INDF.SG-OBL three son existent-COP.PST-PL
‘Once a prince had three sons’ (lit. once to-a-prince three sons existed)
(MacKenzie 1962: 320)

(17) 2SG.OBL qalam ha-ya? [259]
‘Have you got a pen?’ (lit. to-you is there a pen?) (MacKenzie 1961: 191)

It should be stressed that the arguments in the Direct case, i.e. sē kuṟ and qalam, govern agreement suffixes on the predicates.

Lastly, Haig presents examples from other verbs which contain fronted obliques. As an illustration of this observation, he says: “Badīnānī has a verb vyān, which is intransitive and basically means ‘be necessary, be desirable’. It is regularly used with a fronted Oblique ‘Needer/Wanter’ and a Direct ‘Needed/Wanted’ …” (p. 260). Example (18) supports his observation. Here, “the needed entity … governs agreement on the verb” (p. 261).
For Haig, examples (16)–(18) are instances of a construction with an intransitive verb containing a non-canonical subject. The construction that is realized in examples (16)–(18) and similar examples contains “an intransitive predicate, of which a Direct NP is the morphological subject, to which a fronted oblique is grafted. The fronted oblique, however, controls syntactic subject properties” (Haig 2008: 261). The syntactic subject properties that Haig has discussed and has provided examples for are the reference for the reflexive pronoun and the coreferential deletion, which are standard syntactic tests for subjecthood (Haig 2008: 261, ex. 269 and 270). Haig also discusses examples such as (19), from the Northern Group of Kurdish, which represent a past transitive construction with an A in the Oblique case and an O in the Direct case. He considers examples such as (19) as “canonical ergative construction” (Haig 2008: 214):

(19) min tu dît-î
1SG.OBL 2SG see.PST-2SG
‘I saw you.’ (Haig 2008: 214, ex. 185)

Haig notes the same essential syntactic features between examples (16)–(18) on the one hand and example (19) on the other hand, and concludes that “the parallels bespeak of a close relationship between ergativity in Iranian and non-canonical subject constructions” (Haig 2008: 268). Haig conjectures that:

“While the developments in Badīn.[ānī] are certainly no proof that ergativity in Iranian emerged in the manner I have depicted …, they do provide striking support for theories that assume that the A originated not from a by-phrase of a passive construction … but through the extension of a pre-existing non-canonical subject construction.” (Haig 2008: 273)

With respect to the argument structure of the m.k. construction (namely, example (8)), I notice a close resemblance between its treatment by Bynon and Haig. Both of them analyze the Oblique NP argument of this construction (i.e., manā) as the syntactic subject and its Direct NP argument (i.e., tyā) as the morphological subject.

### 2.5 Jügel (2010)

Jügel (2010) mentions that “[i]n Old Iranian a nominal construction appears with the verbal adjective in -ta- as its head which is commonly called the past participle (passive) … [shortly] the PP construction” (p. 99). Jügel refers to the Old Persian (OP) manā krtam construction in example (8) and adds that in this construction “the logical subject (A) [namely manā] is always in the genitive/dative … [and] [t]he logical object (O) [namely tyā] is always in the nominative” (p. 101). He, then, concludes that “there is a good reason to interpret the PP construction of OP [namely the manā krtam construction] as an ergative construction” (Jügel 2010: 101).

Jügel then investigates the PP constructions in Avestan, another Old Iranian language, which is more archaic than OP. He has divided the Avestan PP constructions into those “PPs
[which] are used nominally” and those “PPs [which] are used verbally” (p. 102–103). In the first group, “they [i.e. PPs] are an attribute or a predicate” and “the PP can occur in cases other than the nominative” whereas in the second group “they [i.e. PPs] are a predicate noun, i.e. they are constructed with the copula (which need not be overt), and they are always in the nominative” (Jügel 2010: 103). Jügel’s survey of the nominal use of the PP constructions, which he presumes “cannot be the forerunner of the ergative construction” (p. 103), leads him to conclude:

“Nominally used PP constructions do not exhibit a grammaticalized case for the agent. On the contrary, it seems that the different cases are assigned according to the semantics of the verb. This implies that the PP construction is neither a possessive construction, which would require, e.g., the genitive, nor a passive construction, which might be likely to require, e.g., the instrumental.” (Jügel 2010: 106)

Instead, Jügel presupposes that “the verbal use of the PP may be the predecessor of the later ergative PP construction” (p. 106). Hence he discusses these instances in more detail. The conclusion that he arrives at with respect to these PP constructions is as follows:

“In Avestan, on the other hand, the PP construction does not seem to be grammaticalized as in OP yet because the case of the possible agents varies. Furthermore, PP constructions with agents are rather rare.” (Jügel 2010: 111)

But he makes it clear that “the few instances which contain a possible agent in the genitive/dative are remarkably similar to the OP ergative construction” (ibid). Jügel’s concluding remarks about the verbal use of the PP constructions is that “the Avestan data does not support the hypothesis of a possessive or a passive construction” (p. 111). He believes that the Avestan verbal PP construction “is a nominal clause – in form and meaning. The verbal adjective in -ta is the predicative noun of this nominal clause” (p. 112).


Jügel (2015) agrees with Brugmann (1916: 781), who suggested that “the introduction of the resultative construction into the verbal system presumably proceeded in later Proto-Indo-European” (Jügel 2015, English summary XXXII). Jügel proposes that the Middle construction facilitated the emergence of ergativity in Iranian. The following quotation summarizes his analysis:

“We may think of resultative construction [namely past participles] which not only stated that the logical object was now in a new state that resulted from a previous action, but that this result was also achieved for the benefit of somebody (dativus commodi). This benefactive could be the instigator of the action at the same time, e.g., a king who ordered to build a palace. The coalescence of these two roles (benefactive and instigator) appears in another part of the grammatical system, viz, in the middle. The grammatical subject of a middle verb is affected by the action and can also be its instigator or agent. It could be possible that the middle reading of a dativus commodi in a resultative construction was brought up by the acquisition of aorist and perfect functions. If then the resultative construction remains the only expression for aorist and perfect functions, the construction could have become diathetically indifferent, …” (Jügel 2015, English summary XXXIII)
3. Ergativity Pattern in Modern Iranian Languages

In this section, I present evidence from a number of endangered Modern Iranian languages that reveal split agreement systems sensitive to tense and transitivity. In these languages, the subject of all intransitive verbs (S) and the agent (A) of transitive verbs formed from the present stem are systematically encoded by verbal suffixes. In contrast, the agent (A) of transitive verbs formed from the past stem is encoded by oblique pronominal clitics. An oblique pronominal clitic, in addition to its function of encoding the agent (A) of past tense transitive verbs, is used as a genitive clitic, and it also encodes the object (O) of transitive verbs formed with present stems. The Agent-clitics in the Iranian languages are mobile. These mobile clitics may appear with various hosts in the clause. The O of transitive verbs formed with past stem, if cross-referenced, is encoded via the same verbal suffixes that show agreement with the S. All the data to be presented, unless specified otherwise, are from my own corpus of Modern Iranian languages.

The main objective of this section is to introduce a number of constructions with intransitive and two-place verbs, which behave in terms of agreement like constructions with transitive verbs formed with past stems. These constructions are found in both the Southwestern and Northwestern group of Iranian languages currently spoken in Iran. The specific hypothesis of this paper, as was mentioned in the Introduction (section 1), is that the behavior of these constructions with respect to agreement reveals a syntactic pattern that illuminates the genesis of ergativity in the Middle West Iranian. This syntactic pattern is a Non-Canonical Subject Construction with the core meaning of ‘exist’, and it is introduced in section (4).

3.1. Larestani

Larestani is a Southwestern Iranian language spoken in Fars province in the south of Iran. As examples (1)–(4) in section 1, from the Lari dialect clearly indicate, this language has a split agreement system.

Here I present and discuss examples of verbs that are either intransitive or two-place, yet still behave with respect to agreement similar to transitive past tense verbs. I begin with examples from a 259-year-old letter (more specifically from 1758 AD) in the Lari dialect, which was originally written in the Persian script. The letter was first published in Eghtedari (1951: 281–282). There are no grammatical differences between the dialect as reflected in the letter and Lari of the present time. I have segmented and numbered the text into 78 sentences or utterances and have added the interlinear glosses. Below, due to limitation of space, I present representative examples from the letter.

(20) xub m=æ-vayade ke boa=m š=æ-got
    well 1SG.OBL=INCOMPL-remember that father=1SG.POSS 3SG.OBL=INCOMPL-said
    ‘I remember well that my father used to say…’
    (Lit. I have in mind well that my father used to say…).

(21) ... mo=æ-vi æ eškal o-č-æm
      1PL.OBL=INCOMPL-want to hunting SBJV-go-1PL
      ‘…We want to go hunting.’

For a detailed analysis of agreement in the Modern Iranian languages of Iran, see Dabir-Moghaddam (2008), (2012), and (2013).
Before I discuss the above-mentioned examples from the Lari text, I provide sentence (31) from the same text to exemplify an instance of the ergative-absolutive construction based on agreement. In (31), the light verb of the compound transitive past tense verb hosts the A-clitic as well as the O-suffix. For a similar construction see example (4).

(31) gül šo=zaet-æm
cheating 3PL.OBL=hit-1PL
‘They cheated us.’

Now I turn to examples (20)–(30), which are directly related to the main theme of this paper. These examples reveal a pattern in which the present tense verb requires two core arguments. One argument is encoded by an oblique proclitic, i.e., it behaves like an A. The other argu-

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5 The form *he* can replace *essi* (Eghtedari 1951: 296, last line).
ment in these examples is third person singular and has no overt encoding on the verb, i.e., it behaves like an O. The verbs that appear in these examples mean ‘have’, ‘want’, ‘exist/be’, ‘must’, and ‘can’, respectively. The syntactic pattern described in this paragraph is shown in the configuration (32) below. It may be noted that the NP-Direct argument is sometimes expressed by a subordinate clause.

(32) \[ NP-Oblique \rightarrow NP-Direct \rightarrow V(Existential-Stative/Possessive/Wanting/Modal) \]

As an illustration of the pattern (32), in (20), the NP-Oblique is the first person pronoun, the full form which is dropped and instead encoded by the proclitic \( m= \), and the NP-Direct is the subordinate clause that begins with the complementizer \( ke \) ‘that’. In example (21), the NP-Oblique is realized as the proclitic \( mo= \), and the NP-Direct is the subordinate clause. In example (23), the NP-Oblique is the overt pronoun \( æma \) ‘we’, which the proclitic \( mo= \) agrees with and the NP-Direct is \( ææ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃æ̃ǣ-1

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\[^{6}\] It is worth mentioning that the third person singular agreement suffix in the Lari dialect shows the following variants: -Ø~ -Ø~ -Ø~.\[^{6}\]
preposition æz ‘from’. Therefore, the predicate bæd da ‘dislikes; hates’, which has the present tense third person singular conjugation, requires two oblique arguments. The commonality of example (37) with the other examples is that example (37) uses an oblique proclitic for cross-referencing its first argument, namely, its logical subject. It differs from the other examples in that its second argument is also oblique.

(37) mar æz podonæ š=bæd da dær-e
snake from pennroyal 3SG.OBL=bad comes door-EZ
amonæ=š sowz æ-biū
hole=3SG.POSS green INCOMPL-become
‘Snake hates pennroyal [a kind of plant], but it grows next to its hole.’
(Quoted from Eghtedari 2005: 113, ex. 89).

Examples (38) and (39), which are from the Khonji dialect of the Larestani language, are also compatible with the syntactic pattern in (32).

(38) ia æql šo=nì
these ration 3PL.OBL=not. exists/is
‘These do not have ration.’ (Quoted from Khonji 1999: 58).
(Lit. to them ration not exists/is).
(39) pul ot=hæ’
money 2SG.OBL=exists
‘Do you have money?’ (Quoted from Khonji 1999: 177). (Lit. to you money exists?)

3.2. Davani
Davani is a Southwestern Iranian language spoken in the village Dævan, locally pronounced dovu, which is located in Fars province in the south of Iran.

I begin my description and analysis of Davani with an excerpt of a tale published in Sallami (2002: 515). The distribution and occurrence of the A-clitics in the excerpt are relevant to our discussion in this paper.

(40) i=š ga vo=š xalæ golu æ: xunæ=šu
this=3SG.OBL said and=3SG.OBL aunt cat from house=3SG.POSS
gossa æ dær vo=š ga degær=om
threw to out and=3SG.OBL said anymore=1SG.OBL
noma to=t be-ven-e
not. want that=2SG.OBL SBJV-see-1SG
‘She said this and threw the aunt cat out of their house and said “I do not want to see you anymore”.’

In example (40), the direct object of the first clause, which is also the first present constituent in that clause, namely, the deictic i ‘this’, hosts the A-clitic. In the second clause, the coordinator vo ‘and’, which is the first constituent in that clause, is the A-clitic host. The same observation holds true for the third clause. In all of these examples, the verb of the clause is a past tense transitive verb. In the last clause, which consists of a main clause with the present tense verb noma ‘do not want’ and a complement clause with the verb ‘to see’, the first constituent of the main clause, which is the adjunct degær ‘anymore’, serves as the A-clitic
host. Thus, in Davani, the present tense form of the verb ‘want’ behaves like the past tense transitive verbs with respect to agreement with the A. It is also worth mentioning that the A-clitic placement rule in Davani obeys Wackernagel’s Law.

Examples (41)–(45) are also two-place verbs formed with present tense stems. In these examples, too, the A-clitics are used for agreement, and the first constituent of the clause is its host. The first constituent in these examples is, in fact, the first argument in the syntactic pattern (32) that is encoded as an Oblique actant via pronominal A-clitics.

(41) \( ušu=šu \ ma \ dærs \ bo-xun-en \)

they=3PL.OBL want lesson SBJV-read-3PL

‘They want to study.’

(42) \( ušu=šu \ ne-me:-ša \ be-š-en \)

they=3PL.OBL not-INCOMPL-can SBJV-go-3PL

‘They cannot go.’ (Lit. to them it is not possible they would go).

(43) \( ko-y-æku=š \ degær \ šekal \ ni \)

mountain-hiatus-DEF=3SG.OBL anymore prey not. exists/is

‘The mountain does not have prey anymore.’ (Lit. to mountain anymore prey not exists/is).

(44) \( aðæm-e \ kur=eš \ tsa \ to \ čiš \ he \)

person-EZ blind=3SG.OBL four counter eye exists

‘A blind person has four eyes.’ (Quoted from Salami 2002: 489). (Lit. to a blind person there exists four eyes).

(45) \( mæ=m \ tsn \ to \ bærzegær \ ma \)

I=1SG.OBL some counter farmworker want

\( om=ošu \ va-ne-me:-fer-e \)

but=3PL.OBL PREV-not-INCOMPL-find-1SG

‘I want some farmworkers, but I don’t find them.’

It is noteworthy that in examples (41)–(43), the second argument, namely, the NP-Direct, in the syntactic pattern (32), is third person singular. As the regular third person singular is unmarked, i.e., Ø marked, in the verb, it is practically impossible to decide whether or not the agreement with the NP-Direct takes place in these examples. However, one might argue that, as in example (44), the NP-Direct is plural and that the agreement suffix with a third person plural NP in Davani is -en (see the agreement suffix in the embedded verbs in examples (41) and (42)); therefore, the default form of the verb stem in the syntactic pattern (32) as realized in Davani is the third person singular form. Furthermore, it may be noted that the second conjunct in example (45) contains the transitive verb ‘to find’ formed with the present stem. In this clause, the coordinator \( om \) ‘but’ hosts the Oblique clitic =ošu, which encodes the O, and the verbal suffix -e marks agreement with the A.

In Davani, there is another interesting related structure with the verb that means ‘to be fond of’ and its negative form ‘to dislike’, as exemplified in items (46) and (47) below. In these examples, the first argument, according to the pattern (32), is the host of the A-clitic, which agrees with that argument itself. In these examples, the embedded clause is the second argument in (32).

(46) \( oy=eš \ xæš \ ma \ ke \ to \)

s/he-3SG.OBL pleasant comes that you.SG
Taking into consideration examples (46) and (47) with the main clause verbs ‘to like/dislike’, I modify the syntactic pattern in (32) as (48) below. It should be recalled here that the NP-Direct could be a subordinate clause instead, which appears post-verbally.

(48) NP-Oblique NP-Direct V(Existential-Stative/Possessive/Wanting/Modal/(dis)Liking)

With respect to the modified syntactic pattern in (48), I propose that the verbs belonging to this pattern share the common feature [+stative] and that their logical subject is an experiencer.

In Davani, related to examples (46) and (47) are single clause sentences such as (49), in which the second argument in the syntactic pattern (48) is another oblique NP marked with the preposition æ: ‘from’. Doubtlessly, the syntactic configuration in these examples is oblique-oblique whereby the first oblique argument is realized by an oblique A-clitic, whereas the second argument is marked by the preposition æ: ‘from’.

(49) bæybu=š æ: reza vo mæ:mæð xæš ma
gardener=3SG.OBL from Reza and Mohammad pleasant comes
‘The gardener likes Reza and Mohammad.’

3.3. Vafsi

Vafsi is a Northwestern Iranian language spoken in Vafs area in the Central Province in Iran. My data are from Vafs village. But I will also quote examples from Stilo (2004), who describes the dialect of Gurchān village.

Vafsi is split in terms of its case and agreement systems, as shown in examples (50)–(57) below. In examples (50)–(53), the S is in Direct case, and it is also encoded as a verbal suffix. The same holds true for the A in examples (54) and (55). In these two examples, the O is in the Oblique case. In contrast, in examples (56) and (57), which contain transitive verbs formed with past stems, the A argument is in Oblique case and also encoded by A-clitics. The O is in Direct case. It is also the host for the A-clitics. There is no Wackernagel’s position in this language.

(50) æz ætta-ym(e)
1.DIR come.INCOMPL-1SG
‘I come.’

(51) ane ætta-nde
they.DIR come.INCOMPL-3PL
‘They come.’
Interestingly, in examples (58) and (59) whose main verbs are ‘want/must’, we witness the same syntactic pattern presented in (48). In these examples, the first argument is in the Oblique case and the second argument is a subordinate clause. In the second example, agreement with the first argument is by means of an A-clitic (which is a proclitic here) as well.

Furthermore, in examples (60) and (61), which contain the verb ‘to be’ formed with the present stem, the syntactic pattern in (48) is observed.

It is important to note that example (61) can be expressed with another syntactic pattern. Example (62) reveals that pattern.
In the syntactic pattern represented in (62), the NP-Direct is encoded as a verbal suffix on the copula, which is preceded by a predicative adjective. Stilo (2004) has discussed similar examples to our items (58)–(61) above, providing data from the Gurchān dialect of Vafsi. In his Tale A11, I have found interesting data, some of which are quoted in examples (63)–(66) below. Stilo has named the construction realized in these examples “a dative construction” (p. 218).7

(63) \textit{tini hič øwlád=es n-æ’r-be}

he.OBL no children=3SG.OBL not-INCOMPL-be

‘Who [he] couldn’t have children.’ Lit. ‘No children would become to him.’ (Stilo 2004: 144, 145, and 218).

(64) \textit{či’es ær-go}

what=3SG.OBL INCOMPL-want

‘What does he want?’ (Stilo 2004: 144 and 145).

(65) \textit{esdæ øwlád=i n-æ’r-bæ}

you.SG.OBL children=2SG.OBL not-INCOMPL-be.SBJV

‘You can’t have children.’ (Stilo 2004: 144 and 145).

(66) \textit{esdæ do laze=y-r-bæ}

you.OBL two son=2SG.OBL-INCOMPL-be.SBJV

‘You will have two sons.’ (Stilo 2004: 144 and 145).

Examples (63)–(66) are compatible with the syntactic pattern in (48). In this set, example (63) contains a past tense copula; example (64) whose first argument is dropped but is encoded as an A-clitic, has the present tense form of the verb ‘want’; and examples (65) and (66) have the present tense form of the copula. Also noteworthy is the fact that the second argument in example (66), i.e., \textit{do laze} ‘two sons’, is clearly plural, yet the copula does not show any agreement with it.

3.4. Naini

Naini is a Northwestern Iranian language spoken in Isfahan province in the center of Iran. The variety of Naini that will be dealt with here is the dialect of the village Neyestanak, thirty-five kilometers north of the city Nain.

Naini has a split agreement system. In examples (67) and (68), S is encoded as a verbal suffix. In example (69), as the verb is transitive and formed with the present stem, A is encoded as a verbal suffix. In example (70), however, whose verb is transitive and is formed from a past stem, the A is encoded by an A-clitic, and the O is not marked on the verb. Therefore, technically speaking, Naini is a tripartite type of language in the past tense domain: S is encoded via verbal suffix; A is encoded by an Oblique clitic; and O is not encoded. The O argument in example (69) is the A-clitic host, and there is no Wackernagel’s position in this language.

(67) \textit{ina æ-y-en}

they INCOMPL-come-3PL

‘They come.’

7 The morphemic segmentations and interlinear glosses in the examples are added by me.
(68) *ina yomæy-en*  
they came-3PL  
‘They came.’

(69) *ina kutab æ-rin-en*  
they book INCOMPL-buy-3PL  
‘They buy the book.’

(70) *on dot-a=š=oš ve ma day*  
he daughter-PL=3SG.POSS=3SG.OBL to we gave  
‘He gave his daughters to us.’

Example (71), in which the main clause verb is ‘to want’, encodes A by a clitic, more specifically, by a proclitic.

(71) *ina ši=va dærs ver-xon-en*  
they 3PL.OBL=want lesson PREV-read-3PL  
‘They want to study.’

Example (71) is in line with the syntactic pattern in (48). Its first argument is encoded by an A-clitic, and its second argument is a subordinate clause. The modal verb ‘must’, which has the same form as the verb ‘to want’, also reveals the syntactic pattern of (48). Example (72) supports this observation.

(72) *m=û-va šoy*  
1SG.OBL=COMPL-must to go  
‘I must go.’

However, the behavior of the modal verb ‘can’ is different. The present tense conjugation of this verb behaves like other present stems in that it uses verbal agreement suffixes to index its subject, whereas its past tense conjugation uses A-clitics for agreement. Examples (73) and (74) substantiate this point.

(73) *æ-š-e šoy*  
INCOMPL-can-1SG to go  
‘I can go.’

(74) *m=æ-ša šoy*  
1SG.OBL=INCOMPL-could to go  
‘I could go.’

Similarly, it is quite noteworthy that the present stem form of the verb ‘to have’ uses agreement suffixes to encode its A, whereas its past stem uses A-clitics. Example (75) contains a present stem, and item (76) is its past tense counterpart.

(75) *me do ta buyar dar-e*  
I two counter brother have-1SG  
‘I have two brothers.’

(76) *me do ta buyar=om dart*  
I two counter brother=1SG.OBL had  
‘I had two brothers.’
3.5. Talyshi

Talyshi is a Northwestern Iranian language spoken in the Talysh area in Gilan province in the north of Iran. The variety of Talyshi described here is the dialect of the Anbaranbala village, close to the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan. This dialect belongs to the Northern Talyshi group.

As examples (77) and (78) indicate, in this dialect, S is in Direct case and is also encoded as a verbal agreement suffix. Example (79) has a transitive verb formed with the present stem. In this example, A is in Direct case and is encoded by a verbal suffix as well. Here, O is marked with an Oblique case suffix.

(77) | az | umæn-æm  
| I.DIR | come-1SG  
‘I come.’

(78) | az | umey-m  
| I.DIR | came-1SG  
‘I came.’

(79) | az | kitob-ə | bæst-æm  
| I.DIR | book-OBL | buy-1SG  
‘I (will) buy the book.’

In contrast, in examples (80) and (81), which contain transitive verbs formed from past stems, the A argument is in Oblique case and is also encoded by an A-clitic. The A-clitics in this dialect do not occur in Wackernagel’s position.

(80) | æv-ə | bæ=š | kilidændæ | u-karde  
| s/he-OBL | door=3SG.OBL | key-with | open-did  
‘S/he opened the door with the key.’

(81) | (man) | kitob=ɔm | bæ | mæræm-ə | do  
| I.OBL | book=1SG.OBL | to | Maryam-OBL | gave  
‘I gave the book to Maryam.’

Therefore, it is clear that this dialect is split in terms of case marking and agreement.

But relevant to our concern in this paper are examples (82) and (83), in which the main verbs are the present form of the verb ‘to want’, yet in both of these examples, the logical subject of this verb is in Oblique case. The verb piyænæy also means ‘to like’. Further details about the alternations in example (83) are provided after the example.

(82) | man | piyænæy | ən | kitob-ə | bæ-hand-əm  
| I.OBL | want | this | book-OBL | SBJV-read-1SG  
‘I want to read this book.’

(83) a. | man | kæʃævaəz-üın | piyænæy  
| I.OBL | farmer-PL | want  
‘I want those farmers.’

b. | man | kæʃævaəz-üın=ɔm | piyænæy  
| I.OBL | farmer-PL=1SG.OBL | want  
‘I want those farmers.’
Examples (82) and (83) comply with the syntactic pattern of (48). In these examples, man is the NP-Oblique in that pattern. In example (82), the subordinate clause appearing after the verb *piyanay* stands for the NP-Direct in that pattern. In examples (83), the NP-Direct is *kašaværz-un*. In examples (83b) and (83c), the NP-Direct is the host for the A-clitic. In example (83c), the verbal suffix *-n* encodes agreement with O. Therefore, example (83c) reveals all the markings of a prototypical ergative-absolutive construction in terms of both case and agreement.

The verb ‘to exist; to be’ also requires an Oblique core argument and a Direct core argument. This configuration is compatible with the syntactic pattern in (48). In examples (84a) and (84b), the first argument has the Oblique case marker *-ǝ* and the dative postposition *-ru*. The second arguments in these examples, which are unmarked, are in Direct case. In example (84b), the Oblique argument is also encoded by the Oblique enclitic, and its host is the second argument.

(84) a. *æv-ǝ-ru hordan ni*  
   s/he-OBL-for child.DIR not. exists/is  
   ‘S/he does not have child.’ (Lit. to him/her child not exists/is).

b. *æv-ǝ-ru hordan=ǝš ni*  
   s/he-OBL-for child.DIR=3SG.OBL not. exists/is  
   ‘S/he does not have child.’ (Lit. to him/her child not exists/is).

Examples (85) and (86) further substantiate the observation above. In example (85), the Direct argument is singular, whereas in example (86), this argument is plural. However, in both examples, the verb *heste* ‘exists’ shows the third person singular conjugation. It may be noted that the third person plural verbal agreement suffix in this dialect is *-in ~ -on ~ -n* (cf. example (83c)).

(85) *æv-ǝ-ru šikor/šekar/šakur heste*  
   s/he-OBL-for prey.DIR exists  
   ‘S/he has prey.’ (Lit. to him/her prey exists).

(86) *mohæmmæd-ǝ-ru ilæ zue bo ǝ=glæ kinae heste*  
   Mohammad-OBL-for one son.DIR and two-counter daughter.DIR exists  
   ‘Mohammad has one son and two daughters.’  
   (Lit. to Mohammad one son and two daughters exists).

Schulze (2000) is a “booklet…on the morphosyntax of Northern Talysh… that I recorded in Baku (Azerbajdzhan) in 1986. The dialect of this account…is that of Shuvi.” (p. 5). He makes an interesting observation, which I quote below:

“The actual way to encode verbal possession (‘have’) can be regarded as a relict of the underlying ‘possessive’ construction: Talysh lacks a verb ‘have’. Instead the language refers to the strategy of long distance possession, …” (Schulze 2000: 52)

The only example that he presents is quoted in (87):
(87) mavot ayi loš=ǝš hest-ǝda-n
it.seems he.OBL prey=3SG.POSS (>A) be (=have)-PRES-3PL.S (>O)
‘Obviously he has preys.’ (Schulze 2000: 52, ex. 71)

Schulze’s comment on this example is quite important. It is quoted below:

“Note that the overt possessor is marked by the obliquus and not by the possessive form čayi. This indicates that (71) [i.e., (87)] is treated as a transitive structure rather than an intransitive one. (71) [i.e., (87)] has retained features of O(<S)-agreement which is plural here (-n) because of the collective interpretation of loš ‘prey(s).’” (Schulze 2000: 52)

I add three points here about example (87). First, the subordinate clause ayi loš=ǝš hest-ǝda-n in this example is completely compatible with the syntactic pattern of (48). Second, this clause is an instance of a prototypical ergative-absolutive construction; because ayi is Oblique in case and also it is encoded via the A-clitic =ǝš ‘3SG.OBL’ which the second argument whose case is Direct, namely, loš ‘prey’, is its host and the verb encodes this argument with the verbal suffix -n ‘3PL’. Third, the verb of this clause is in present tense.

4. Locating the Genesis of Ergativity in the Iranian Group

In this section, I intend to locate the specific construction in Old Persian that triggered the emergence of ergativity. I argue that the triggering construction was a Non-Canonical Subject Construction with five peculiarities: (1) it was a two-place predicate construction; (2) it included a verb with the core meaning ‘exist’; (3) its first argument was Oblique; (4) its second argument was Direct; and (5) its verb encoded agreement with the NP-Direct. This Non-Canonical Subject Construction is presented in (88).

(88) NP-Oblique NP-Direct V (‘exist’)

I propose that the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in (88) with the core semantic feature [+stative] explains the semantic spectrum of the predicates that comply structurally with this construction. More specifically, the syntactic pattern in (48) embraces the predicates that are the analogical extension of the stativity feature of the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in (88). I suggest that, as a consequence of the well-attested morphological changes in the verb system found between Old Persian and Middle Persian, more specifically, the reanalysis of the perfect forms ending in -ta in Old Persian as past stems in Middle Persian, the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in (88) was extended to the transitive verbs whose verbal forms were past participles. As past participles are adjectival in nature and hence semantically [+stative], the analogical extension of the Non-Canonical Subject Construction to the past participial domain makes sense. It could be argued that this extension already occurred in Old Persian and that the m.k. construction exemplifies that extension. The alignments between the Non-Canonical Subject Construction and the transitive constructions whose verbs were, in fact, past participial forms that in a later stage were used as past stems, are illustrated in (89) below.
Non-Canonical Subject Construction in Endangered Iranian Languages

According to the extension illustrated in (89), I claim that the emergence of ergativity was epiphenomenal: The analogical extension of a specific Non-Canonical Subject Construction to the perfect domain of the transitive verbs.

Now I review examples from Old Persian that verify the existence of the construction (88) in that language. I begin with example (11b) in section 2.1 of this paper. That example is repeated in (90) below.

(90)  dārayava[h]auš  pussā  aniyaičiy  ahantā  
      Darius.GEN.M.SG  son.NOM.M.PL  other.NOM.M.PL  be.3PL.IPF.MID  
‘Darius had other sons.’ (Lit. ‘to Darius were other sons.’)

This example is translated in Kent (1953: 150) as “other sons of Darius there were”. Example (90) is completely compatible with the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in (88). What makes this example crucial for my analysis is that the copula agrees with the NP-Direct (i.e. pussā ‘sons’, which is ‘nominative plural’) in person and number, which means that this NP expresses the morphological subject of the construction.

Similarly, example (11c), which I have repeated in (91), complies with the syntactic pattern in (88). Here, the copula āha ‘was’ is singular as the NP-Direct, namely, brātā, is singular.

(91)  avahyā  ka(n)būjiyahyā  brātā  brdiya  
      that.GEN.M.SG  Cambyses.GEN.M.SG  brother.NOM.M.SG  Brdiya.NOM.M.SG  
      nāma  āha  
      name  be.IPF  
‘this Cambyses had a brother named Brdiya’

Kent’s translation of this example is ‘of that Cambyses there was a brother, Smerdis by name’ (p. 119), which more clearly reveals the syntactic pattern of this example. Example (11a) which contains the non-past form of the copula ‘be’ is also compatible with the syntactic pattern (88). I have repeated that example in (92).

(92)  utā=taiy  yāvā  tauhmā  ahatiy  
      and=2SG.GEN  as long as  strength.NOM.N.SG  be.SBJV  
‘and as long as you will have seed’

Kent’s translation, which is ‘as long as unto thee there is strength’ (p. 132), is closer to the literal meaning of this example.

Now, I turn to examples in (9), where we find the past participle krtam or as recorded in Kent kartam. I begin with (9a), which is repeated in (93).

(93)  utā=maiy  vasiy  astiy  krtam  
      and=1SG.GEN  much is  do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG  
‘I have still done many [things]’
In Kent’s version of this example (p. 129), right before vasiy the noun aniyašciy ‘other. NOM.N.SG’ (p. 168) is added. Example (93) is also compatible with the syntactic pattern (88). The form =maiy, as genitive enclitic, corresponds to the first argument in that syntactic pattern, aniyašciy, as it is ‘nominative’ as the NP-Direct argument, and the whole periphrastic participle form, in which the participle agrees in case, number, and gender with the NP-Direct along with the copula astiy, matches with the V (‘exist’). On that basis, the literal translation of (93) would be ‘and of me much else there is done’.

Before I elaborate on another important example from the set (9) of examples, I add example (94) in which kartam is used before the copula āha ‘was’. The translation of the example is quoted from Kent (1953: 150).

(94) tya=mai y piça kartam āha
what.NOM.N.SG=1SG.GEN father.GEN.M.SG do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG be.IPF
‘what had been built by my father.’ (XPf, 38)

In example (94), the relative pronoun tya, which is the NP-Direct in the syntactic pattern of (88), hosts the NP-Oblique, which is realized in the form of an enclitic as well as the noun piça, and kartam āha is the periphrastic past participle plus the copula. The literal translation of example (94) would be ‘what of my father there was done’.

At this point, I discuss example (9b), which is also important. That example is repeated in (95).

(95) ava=išam avā naiy astiy kartam
that=3PL.GEN.M as much not is do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
yaθā manā ... kartam
as 1.SG.GEN do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
‘they have not done as much as I have done’

In this example, the dots represent the adjuncts vašnā Auramazdāha hamahyāyā θardā ‘by the favor of Ahuramazda in one and the same year’ (Kent 1953: 129). Furthermore, avā is correlative to yaθā (ibid: 172). My point with respect to example (95) is that here, there is a parallelism between ...=išam ...astiy kartam and manā ... kartam. I suggest that in the second part of this parallel expression the missing copula astiy ‘is’ could be considered as an instance of discourse deletion (vide example (93)). Thus, the literal meaning of this expression would be ‘of them there is not much done as of me there is done’, in which two occurrences of the syntactic pattern (88) are used side by side.

Finally, I address example (8). This example is repeated in (96).

(96) ima tya manā kartam
this.NOM.N.SG what.NOM.N.SG I.GEN.SG do.PST.PTCP.NOM.N.SG
‘here is what I have done’

I assume that the copula astiy ‘is’ before kartam is implicit. Thus, my literal translation of (96) is: ‘this is what of me there is done’. With this assumption, example (96) will be another instance of the syntactic pattern (88): tya is the NP-Direct, manā is the NP-Oblique, and kartam, which agrees in case, number, and gender with the NP-Direct, is the past participle that corresponds to the V (‘exist’).
5. Conclusion and Discussion

To conclude, I reiterate the points that constitute my analysis of the genesis of the split ergativity in the Middle Iranian:

(1) A productive Non-Canonical Subject Construction with the core meaning ‘exist’ is attested in the syntax of Old Persian. This construction, which had two arguments, one Oblique and the other Direct, is represented in (88).

(2) In this Non-Canonical Subject Construction, the Direct argument is the morphological subject of the construction with which the verb agrees in person and number (vide particularly example (90)).

(3) This Non-Canonical Subject Construction underwent an analogical extension based on the stativity feature of its verb. As past participles are adjectival in nature and thus inherently [+stative], the Non-Canonical Subject Construction was extended to the construction containing the past participle transitive verbs already in Old Persian, as illustrated in (89). Furthermore, as a result of the well-attested morphological changes in the verb system of Old Persian, the perfect forms of the verbs in this language were reanalyzed as the simple past tense in Middle Persian. The Old Persian m.k. construction exemplifies this extension. In other words, I claim that the Old Persian m.k. construction has all the hallmarks of a canonical ergative-absolutive construction. Thus, this extension and the subsequent reanalysis explain the occurrence of the ergativity in the past-tense domain, namely its grammaticalization in this domain, in Middle Persian, and hence, the split ergative morphosyntax of that language. The assumption that the m.k. construction was an ergative-absolutive construction is explicitly mentioned in Bynon (2005) and Jügel (2010), see section 2. Therefore, the occurrence of ergativity in Middle Iranian in the past tense domain was the epiphenomenon of a reanalysis.

(4) The synchronic state-of-the-art in those Modern Iranian languages that show split systems was diachronically triggered by the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in (88). Therefore, I assume that the Non-Canonical Subject Construction constituted the syntactic base for the genesis of ergativity in the Iranian group. This conclusion about the genesis of ergativity in Iranian languages differs partly from Haig’s remarks about alignment in Old Persian:

“Alignment in Old Persian was accusative throughout all tenses, and this can be assumed to be representative of Old Iranian generally. S and A took a uniform case, the Nominative, and the verb agreed with them, while O was marked with a special case, the Accusative.” (Haig 2008: 25)

Haig, then, provides one example of a past-tense transitive verb and one example of a past-tense intransitive verb from OP to “demonstrate the formal identity of S and A, both in case marking and agreement on the verb, and the accusative marking of O” (Haig 2008: 25). He also states that “[l]ikewise in Old Avestan we find in all tenses accusative alignment, shown in the case marking and verbal agreement” (Haig 2008: 25).

The conclusion which Haig expresses about Old Persian seems to be too strong in the context of the examples he presents and discusses for the m.k. construction. The fact is that past-tense transitive verbs in Old Persian show a nominative-accusative alignment but the ergative-absolutive alignment was restricted to the perfect domain of the transitive verbs in
that language. Example (97) is quoted from Haig (2008: 44, ex. 30), which he characterizes as “a construction widely attested”. This example contains the past-tense form of the verb ‘to do’, which agrees with the A that is the nominative form of the first person singular pronoun (namely, *adam*).

(97) \textit{ima tya adam akunavam}
\begin{tabular}{lll}
            & this & which 1SG \hline
do.PST.1SG &       & ‘this is that (which) I did.’ (Kent 1953: DBIV, 5–6)
\end{tabular}

In regard to the reanalysis under discussion, I found the behaviour of Yagnobi, an Eastern Iranian language spoken in Tajikistan, highly pertinent and informative. John Payne (1979) reports:

“The Old Iranian participial constructions also have direct reflexes in one of the eastern Iranian languages …, namely Jagnobi … Jagnobi is however a rarity amongst the Iranian languages in having also preserved a reflex of the regular Old Iranian past, with the result that the participially-based forms are perfect and pluperfect in nature, rather than simple past. There are two cases in Jagnobi, which, as before, we shall call absolute and oblique. In the present and simple past, subjects are marked with the absolute case and definite direct objects with the oblique case, giving the anticipated nominative-accusative system.” (Payne (1979: 440)

After providing the relevant examples, he adds:

“By contrast, the case-marking system in the perfect and pluperfect is ergative, with transitive subjects in the oblique case, intransitive subjects in the absolute case, and all direct objects in the absolute case.” (Payne 1979: 441)

Again, relevant supporting examples are provided here.

This means that since the reanalysis of the perfect forms as past stems did not take place in Yagnobi, we do not find the grammaticalization of ergativity in the simple past tense domain in this language.

(5) Barðdal and Smitherman (2013) have attempted “A Reconstruction of Oblique Subject Constructions in Proto-Indo-European” (p. 28). In their words

“The oblique subject construction is a complex syntactic construction in which the subject-like argument is not in the nominative case, but is non-canonically case marked. In those Modern Indo-European languages that still have the construction, this non-canonical case may be the accusative, dative or the genitive, for instance.” (Barðdal and Smitherman 2013: 28).

They, then, provide synonymous examples from five Indo-European branches with the meaning ‘need’. The examples are from Old Norse-Icelandic, Latin, Ancient Greek, Old Russian, and Lithuanian. I have quoted their example from Latin, the well-known *mihi est* construction, in (98).

(98) \textit{mihi necesse est}
\begin{tabular}{lll}
me.DAT & necessary & is \hline
‘I have a need’ (Barðdal and Smitherman 2013: 29, ex. (1b).
The authors, then, describe the range of constructions that fall under their “oblique subject construction”, as follows:

“With the term *oblique subject construction* and *dative subject construction*, we thus refer to constructions where the so-called logical subject is in an oblique case, for instance the dative. Our notion of oblique subject constructions also covers predicates where there is a nominative argument, like the nominative logical object of Dat-Nom predicates.” (Barðdal and Smitherman 2013: 29).

Barðdal and Smitherman “conclude that oblique subject constructions must have existed in Proto-Indo-European” (p. 31). They also argue that “non-canonically marked, subject-like arguments behaved syntactically as subjects even in the oldest attested periods of these languages” (p. 35). Stassen (2009) provides examples of the occurrence of the Non-Canonical Subject Construction in various language families today.

6. Summary

In this paper, I addressed the genesis of ergativity in Iranian languages by providing evidence from a number of endangered Modern Iranian languages. In section (2), I reviewed the Passive, Possessive, the Raised Possessor construction, the External Possessor Construction and Non-Canonical Subject Construction, the neither Possessive nor Passive Construction, and the Middle Construction as the six theories that have been proposed to account for the genesis of ergativity in Iranian languages. In section (3), I discussed in some detail the Western Modern Iranian languages Larestani, Davani, Vafsi, Naini, and Talyshi, which share a split agreement system. Although tense is a crucial factor that determines the encoding of A by a verbal suffix versus its encoding via a pronominal clitic, there is an array of intransitive and two-place predicate constructions in Modern Iranian languages that use the pronominal clitic to encode a core NP as an Oblique argument while marking the other core argument of the construction as a Direct NP. In other words, these intransitive and two-place predicate constructions behave in terms of the encoding of their core arguments similar to an ergative-absolutive construction of the transitive verbs. The array of the constructions that behave this way are *Existential-Statitive*, *Possessive*, *Wanting*, *Modal*, and *(dis)Liking* predicates, which share the common semantic feature of *stativity*. This common feature is shared by the past participial form of the transitive verbs. The past participial form is adjectival in nature and hence semantically stative. In section (4), these observations were relied on to suggest the following: (1) the grammaticalization of ergativity in Middle Iranian was the epiphenomenon of a reanalysis (namely, the past participial forms of the Old Persian were used as past tense forms in Middle Persian); (2) Old Persian contained the Non-Canonical Subject Construction presented in the syntactic pattern of (88), which triggered the emergence of ergativity in Old Persian, the effect of which is seen in the m.k. construction which has all the hallmarks of a canonical ergative-absolutive construction; and (3) the array of the existing constructions which are structurally compatible with the syntactic pattern (88) is the consequence of an analogical extension based on the semantic feature of stativity. In section (5), I cited the recent literature that argues that the Non-Canonical Subject Construction (i.e., the syntactic pattern (88)) must have existed in Proto-Indo-European and is currently found in various language families globally. This means that the Non-Canonical Subject Construction outlives ergativity.
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ABBREVIATIONS

(a) Abbreviations of grammatical terms:

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(b) Abbreviations of texts:

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REFERENCES


