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A CORPUS-BASED CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE ON THE
NORTHERN SAMOYEDIC PREDESTINATIVE SUFFIX

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1. INTRODUCTION

Northern Samoyedic languages are known for featuring a suffix, often called “predestinative”, which shows comparatively rare distributional and functional properties. It has attracted the attention of Uralic and Typological Linguistics alike due to its debated reconstruction and its non-prototypical role with ditransitive verbs, which has earned it the label of typological *rarissimum* (Creissels & Daniel 2006, Khanina & Shluinsky 2014). Several studies have been published addressing the peculiarities of the predestinative suffix in single Northern Samoyedic languages (cf. Leisiö 2014, Khanina & Shluinsky 2014, Nikolaeva 2010, 2015). Therefore, the present work aims at conducting a corpus-based analysis of the suffix across all Northern Samoyedic languages in order to examine the constructions in which it occurs as well as the lexical trends outlined by predestinative-marked noun phrases and by co-occurring verbs

In the second chapter, I provide an extensive introduction on the diachronic development and on the sociolinguistic situation of Northern Samoyed languages, namely Nenets, Enets and Nganasan. In the third chapter, I describe the predestinative suffix from a morphological and typological point of view, devoting special attention to the different proposals for its categorisation. The following fourth chapter hosts the corpus-based research, which is based on a monolingual corpus for each language and examines the distribution of the predestinative suffix to define its functions accordingly. Quantitative analyses are also employed to highlight common or divergent trends among the languages under examination. In the fifth chapter I discuss the genealogical and areal factors that may shed light on the diachronic development of the predestinative suffix and of its functions. In conclusion, I propose a possible grammaticalization path relying on Luraghi’s (2014, 2016) works on the grammaticalization of markers for beneficiaries and related roles.

2. THE NORTHERN SAMOYEDIC LANGUAGES

The present chapter provides an overview of the Samoyedic languages with special regard to their Northern subgrouping. Section 2.1 addresses the development of Samoyedic languages from Proto-Uralic. Section 2.2 introduces a broad taxonomy of the attested languages while Section 2.3 describes their shared typological features. Subsections 2.4 to 2.6 host sociolinguistic sketches of single Northern Samoyedic languages.

2.1 Development of the Samoyedic branch from Proto-Uralic

There is no doubt in current linguistic literature as to the classification of Samoyedic languages as a subgroup of the Uralic family. Older genealogical accounts (cf. e.g. Rédei 1988-91, Abondolo 1998a) indeed considered Proto-Samoyedic as the first proto-language to part away from a supposedly compact Proto-Uralic-speaking community, thus giving rise to a binary distinction between Proto-Samoyedic and Proto-Finno-Ugric. According to this view, then, the resulting Proto-Finno-Ugric core would have slowly branched westwards and led to the existing Finno-Ugric daughter languages via several unattested intermediate proto-languages as shown in Figure 1 (taken from Sámmol Ánte 2022: 4). Evidence for such a remote departure

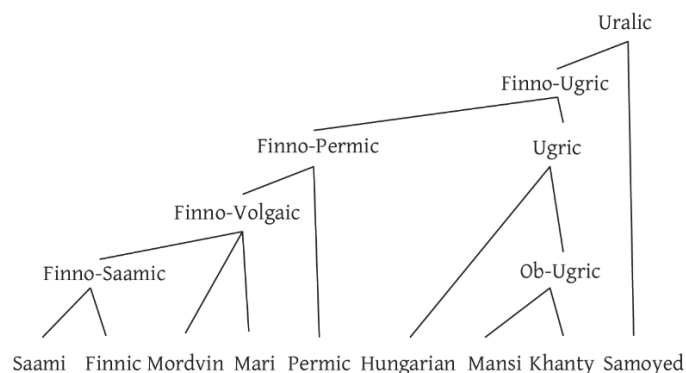


Figure 1. Reconstructed leftward branching of the Uralic family (taken from Sámmol Ánte 2022: 4)

of Proto-Samoyedic has been usually found in the relatively small set of comparable Uralic lexicon attested in modern Samoyedic languages together with the virtual absence of Indo-Iranian loanwords, otherwise widely attested in the Finno-Ugric group (Grünthal et al. 2022: 499 and *passim*).

However, two main factors have now led scholars to question the traditional view in favour of alternative reconstructions (but cf. Janhunen 2001, 2009 in favour of the traditional model). Firstly, the supposed intermediate stages (e.g. Finno-Permic) prove extremely difficult to reconstruct due to a substantial lack of diagnostic innovations (Grünthal et al. 2022: 491-492, Sámmol Ánte 2022: 3-4). Secondly, the received lexical exotism of the Samoyedic branch has been alternatively explained as resulting from the scarce documentation for these languages, which is considered, in itself, as a major hinderance to the discovery of new related etyma (Sámmol Ánte 2022: 4). Furthermore, Samoyedic languages feature quite conservative morphology, which is strongly reminiscent of reconstructed Proto-Uralic and thus may suggest limited independent development (Grünthal et al. 2022: 499).

Therefore, new reconstruction hypotheses have gained momentum since the turn of the century, most notably Jaakko Häkkinen's split between East and West Uralic, and the nowadays widely accepted rake model. Häkkinen's (2009) proposal envisages an alternative grouping of Uralic languages into East Uralic and West Uralic, the former including both Samoyedic and Ugric languages. Such hypothesis is largely based on the assumption that an analogous diagnostic shift of the reconstructed Proto-Uralic sibilant series can be traced back to both Samoyedic and Ugric languages, thus grouping them together as opposed to the Western Uralic branch. This proposal is however challenged by Zhivlov (2023: 143-144), who provides evidence for an independent development of reconstructed sibilants in single daughter languages from the Ob-Ugric subbranch.

Recent research thus generally favours the hypothesis based on the so-called rake model or bush-like genealogy (Grünthal et al. 2022: 492, Saarikivi 2022: 31-32). In this view, Proto-Uralic unity loosened quite early and fast and eventually branched into the protolanguages of those linguistic groups that still surface nowadays (possibly with the sole exception of a Ugric intermediate subbranch comprising Hungarian, Mansi and Khanty), as shown in Figure 2 (taken from Saarikivi 2022: 31). Other undocumented languages may have also emerged, such as those sparsely mentioned in Old Russian historical accounts (cf. e.g. Manzelli 1988 on Merya).

According to the detailed reconstruction by Grünthal et al. (2022), largely informed by both linguistic and archaeological evidence, Proto-Uralic was originally spoken by a hunter-gatherer community around 4.500 years ago in Western Siberia. Then, massive climatic and demographic changes dating back to 4000 years ago supposedly brought about an abrupt breakup of Proto-Uralic unity into several mutually intelligible varieties. However, Proto-Samoyedic fits rather problematically into such reconstruction due to its peculiar combination of very conservative morphology, comparatively few Uralic cognates and almost no Indo-Iranian loanwords. According to the authors' proposal, Proto-Samoyedic might have been the first branch to separate from Proto-Uralic, even though such event could not have taken place too long before the Proto-Uralic breakup. In addition, Proto-Samoyedic is believed to be the

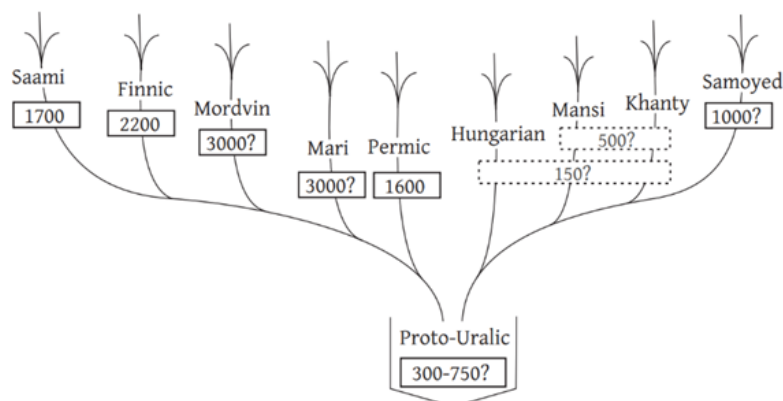


Figure 2. Bush-like genealogy of Uralic languages. The numbers in boxes represent the common reconstructed word roots for each proto-language (Saarikivi 2022: 31).

only branch to migrate eastwards, which may successfully explain the lack of Indo-Iranian loanwords and the current geographic location of the daughter languages.

2.2 Overview of the Samoyedic languages

In both older and up-to-date genealogies Samoyedic languages represent the easternmost subgrouping of Uralic languages. There is poor consensus, however, as to their internal taxonomy, which stems from a prolonged misinterpretation of the first grouping proposed by Castrén (1854). Carrying out two expeditions to Western Siberia in 1841-44 and 1845-49, Mathias Alexander Castrén (1813-1852) was the first linguist to provide accurate descriptions of Samoyedic languages (Simoncsics 2023: 217 and *passim*). In his works these languages are grouped on a geographical basis, but this grouping increasingly came to be understood as a proper genealogy and other taxonomies have not enjoyed wide acceptance so far (Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi 2022: 659-660). On the other hand, according to Janhunen's (1998: 458-459) alternative view, very recently repropoed by Salminen (2023: 104), Nganasan could be reconstructed as the first language to move away from Proto-Samoyedic, which would correlate with its highly conservative traits and its northernmost location. The second language to part could have been Mator, i.e. the southernmost Samoyedic language once spoken on the Sayan Mountains. The remaining languages may have broken off more slowly, thus experiencing longer mutual contacts, as shown in Figure 3 (from Janhunen 1998: 459).

Due to the persisting lack of a unanimously accepted genealogical classification, however, Castrén's areal grouping will be proposed here as well. Samoyedic languages can thus be split into Northern Samoyedic and Southern Samoyedic. The Northern grouping comprises Nenets, Enets and Nganasan (cf. Sections 2.4 to 2.6 for more information) together with Yurats, an extinct transition language between Nenets and Enets whose only record

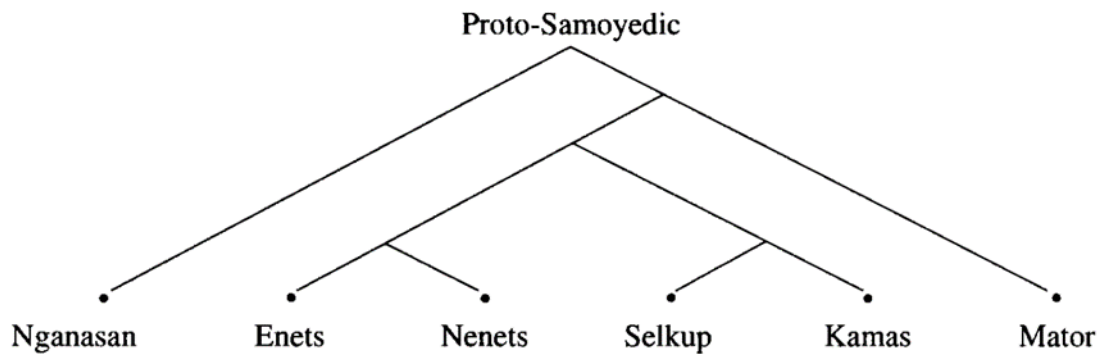


Figure 3. Alternative genealogy for Samoyedic languages as proposed by Janhunen (1998: 459).

consists in a wordlist (Salminen 2023: 106). Southern Samoyedic includes Selkup and the Sayan Samoyed subgrouping. Selkup is now spoken in several districts of Tomskaja oblast', in the Krasnoselkup and Pur districts of the Jamalo-Nenets autonomous okrug, and in the Turuxansk district of Krasnojarskij kraj. It counts ca. 600 active speakers and, unlike other Samoyedic languages, displays an intricate dialectal continuum, consisting of Northern, Central, Southern and Ket' dialects, all of which but the Northern ones are moribund (Kazakevič 2022: 777-780). The Sayan Samoyedic subgrouping comprises two extinct languages once spoken in the Sayan Mountains, i.e. Mator and Kamas. Mator used to be spoken in the Eastern Sayan Mountains and became extinct even before Castrén's expeditions; it is only documented by sparse wordlists (Salminen 2023: 109). Kamas was mostly spoken in the Abalakovo village in the Minusinsk Basin and is documented by data spreading across three generations. Earliest data were collected in 1847 by Castrén during his second expedition while further fieldwork data date back to 1914 and coincide with the expedition of the Finnish linguist Kai Dönnér (1888-1935). Data collected in the 1960s, instead, differ from the previous ones in that they consist in the conjoint work by Estonian linguist Ago Künnap with the last surviving heritage speaker, Klavdija Zaxarovna Plotnikova, whose death in 1989 also marked the death of Kamas language (Klumpp 2022: 817-818, Salminen 2023: 108).

2.3 Shared linguistic features in the Samoyedic branch

In general, all Samoyedic languages feature pervasive agglutinative morphology, often accompanied in the Northern languages by complex morphophonological phenomena (cf. e.g. Nikolaeva 2014: 20-22 on consonant alternations in Tundra Nenets, Wagner-Nagy 2018: 74-78 on Nganasan consonant gradation). Regarding nominal inflection, they share most inflectional categories, which can be in turn ascribed to Proto-Samoyedic following Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi (2022: 663-664). It is thus possible to reconstruct three values for number, i.e. singular (unmarked), dual and plural, and seven cases. Cases are usually subdivided into grammatical and local. The three grammatical cases are nominative (unmarked), accusative and genitive; the four local cases comprise lative, locative, ablative and prolative, the latter encoding “the path of an action or movement” (Kazakevič 2022: 792). After number and case suffixes, a final slot is optionally open for possessive suffixes. Therefore, through possessive inflection the head noun is marked for person and number of the possessor in addition to own number and case. In Northern Samoyedic languages, however, markers for number, case and possession have often fused together resulting in a wide range of portmanteau suffixes.

Verbal inflection, instead, is cross-linguistically more varied and so yields a less comprehensive reconstruction based on common features, as shown by Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi (2022: 665-671). All Samoyedic languages display two inflectional patterns for transitive verbs, usually referred to as subjective and objective conjugation, the latter marking the verb for both subject person and number and for direct object number. However, the full objective paradigm seems to have developed after the break of PS unity since Southern Samoyedic languages only show limited traces of it. In modern Northern Samoyedic languages, instead, objective conjugation indexes finite verbs for subject person and number together with object number, and separate dedicated suffixes exist for most of these combinations. Two

specific markers for aorist and past tenses can be reconstructed, yet their reflexes are extremely varied in the attested languages, while the future tense is always an independent innovation. The aorist tense itself represents a peculiarity common to the whole Samoyedic branch: it licences either a present perfect or present continuous reading depending on whether the verb is lexicalised as perfective or imperfective (Bradley et al. 2022: 908). Among the various categories for mood and evidentiality, mostly attested in Northern Samoyedic languages, only imperative and conditional moods can be ascribed to Proto-Samoyedic with a good degree of certainty. Additional common morphosyntactic features include pervasive use of nominal deverbal forms for clausal subordination, use of a negative auxiliary, postpositions, and a non-rigid SOV order paired with a rigid modifier-head structure in noun phrases.

Remarkably, all Samoyedic languages display very rich substratum vocabulary from various neighbouring languages (Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi 2022: 671-673, Janhunen 1998: 477). The most influential in this respect were Evenki (Tungusic), Ket (Yeniseian) and various Turkic languages (mainly Dolgan, Khakas and Tuvan). The influence of Turkic languages was stronger on Southern Samoyedic languages. On the other hand, Ket had relevant contacts with both Selkup and Enets, while Evenki exerted its strongest influence on Ngansan. Additionally, Northern Samoyedic languages host a good share of idiosyncratic vocabulary, mostly relating to tundra wildlife, which hints at the fact that Northern Samoyedic, like Saamic, assimilated undocumented languages spoken in the Arctic area, whose speakers are often portrayed in traditional folk narratives (Grünthal et al. 2022: 503 and *passim*, Nikolaeva 2014: 3).

2.4 *The Nenets language(s)*

The general label “Nenets” refers to two non-mutually understandable languages (likened to Estonian and Finnish by Salminen 2023: 106) known as Tundra Nenets and Forest Nenets;

different glottonyms are optionally used in Russian, namely *neneckij / nešanskij jazyk* (Burkova 2016a: 308, 2016b: 315). Etymologically, the term relates to the Tundra Nenets autonym *n'enec'°h* ≈[¹'nʲeːnʲtsʲʲ?]' '(Nenets) person' (Nikolaeva 2014: 1).

The split into two separate, yet very closely related, languages represents a recent development in Samoyedic studies (Burkova 2022: 674), prompted by an increasing attention to their mutual differences at several levels of analysis. Traditionally, they used to be considered dialects of a single language and such view still counts some supporters. It was also indirectly upheld by Soviet census policies, in which no difference was made between Tundra and Forest Nenets with the sole exception of the 1926-27 Circumpolar Census (Burkova 2016a: 309). This is also true of the most recent Russian surveys, which merge all data on the distribution of Nenets peoples and languages treating them within a single overarching label. Therefore, it becomes necessary to rely on experts' estimates to disentangle the data for the two language communities. In this chapter I will refer to Svetlana Burkova's estimates (2016a: 308-315, 2016b: 315-323, 2022: 674-677), which are in turn computed starting from the 2002 and 2010 Russian Censuses (unless specified, data refer to the 2010 census).

Tundra Nenets figures as the best-preserved Samoyedic language, counting ca. 18,600 speakers unevenly distributed across the western and central parts of the Siberian Arctic tundra. However, while the number of those who identify themselves as Tundra Nenets people has risen from ca. 39,300 in 2002 up to ca. 42,600 in 2010, the percentage of actual speakers has

¹ /°/ stands for a vowel phoneme that has been variously labelled in literature as “schwa” (Salminen 1997) or “reduced vowel” (Nikolaeva 2014). It was postulated by Salminen (1997) for phonological reasons, yet it is said to be rarely realised phonetically (Nikolaeva 2014: 18) and its very phonetic substance is uncertain (Burkova 2022: 678 suggests ≈[ə̃]). Following Staroverov's (2006) phonetic analysis of his field materials, I share some doubts as to the existence of such a phon(em)e, so I have not represented it in my IPA transliteration, which is otherwise based on Staroverov's (2006) and Burkova's (2022: 678-679) attempts to describe Tundra Nenets phonology using IPA conventions. Since, however, most works on Tundra Nenets make use of the reduced vowel, it will always be represented in quotations from such works.

dropped by more than 20%, going from ca. 67% in 2002 to ca. 43% in 2010, i.e. from ca. 27,000 to 18,600. Such dwindling figures are to be attributed to two correlated factors, namely the increasing industrialisation process of Tundra Nenets lands and the loss of language transmission in families. Industrialisation, mostly centred on oil, has indeed favoured internal migration to and from other federal districts, resulting in the expansion of the Russian language at the expense of the local idiom (Burkova 2016b: 316 and *passim*).

Currently, Nenetses live in a territory that spreads across both sides of the Ural Mountains, from the Kanin peninsula in the West up to the eastern side of lower Enisej. Within such a widespread area there exists a certain degree of dialectal variation, mostly surfacing as lexical and phonetic differences. Three dialects are usually identified, i.e. Western (from the Kanin peninsula to the river Indiga), Central (in Malaja Zemlja) and Eastern (in Bolšaja Zemlja) (Burkova 2022: 675). In administrative terms, Tundra Nenets is spoken in the Nenets autonomous okrug (Arxangel'skaja oblast'), in the Jamalo-Nenets autonomous okrug (Tjumenskaja oblast') and in the Tajmyr district (Krasnojarskij kraj). Smaller communities can be also found in the northern districts of the Komi Republic and in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous okrug (Tjumenskaja oblast'). Nomad reindeer herders by tradition, Nenetses used to roam the tundra according to tightly established migration routes in line with herding cycles. In the 30s, however, Soviet collectivisation policies forced them into settlements so that those still leading a nomad lifestyle are now a small minority. Forced relocation to the mainland targeted the Nenetses living on the island of Novaja Zemlja before it was turned into a nuclear test area in the 50s (Burkova 2016b: 315, Burkova 2022: 674).

The language is best preserved in the North-eastern areas, where are smaller settlements with a lower share of Russian-speaking population from other ethnic groups. This usually translates into half of the Nenets population consisting of native or otherwise proficient speakers of the language: 55% in the Jamalo-Nenets autonomous okrug (ca. 15,640 speakers),

48% in the Komi Republic (ca. 240 speakers) and 46% in the Tajmyr district (2187 speakers in 2002). Such ratio drops sharply in the Western areas, with as few as 10% Nenets mastering their language in the Nenets autonomous okrug (ca. 750 speakers) and 6% in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous okrug (ca. 60 speakers). Besides Russian, Nenets is very often in contact with minority languages in the area: cases of Nenets speakers being also fluent in Komi or Khanty are indeed frequent (Burkova 2016b: 318-319).

Tundra Nenets has a standard Cyrillic-based writing system established in 1937, which replaced a Latin-based script proposed in 1931 (Burkova 2022: 676-677). It is taught in schools and features a limited, yet stable, presence in local medias, ranging from newspapers to radio and television programmes; its use in local administration is protected by law but remains in fact very limited (Burkova 2016b: 320-322, Burkova 2022: 677).

The Forest Nenets community, instead, counts ca. 2,000 members, most of whom live in Tjumenskaja oblast', more specifically in the Pur district of the Jamalo-Nenets autonomous okrug and in the Belojarsk and Nižnevartovsk districts of the Khanty-Mansi autonomous okrug. The vast majority of Forest Nenets people are active speakers of their native language and favour its transmission to children so that the rough number of actual speakers may be estimated at around 1,000. Besides Russian, Forest Nenets has experienced intensive contact with Khanty and some Forest Nenets speakers are fluent in this language as well (Burkova 2016a: 311-312). Three dialects are usually identified: the Pur dialect, spoken along the upper and middle course of the river Pur; the Agan dialect, spoken along the rivers Agan and Amputa; the Numto dialect, spoken in the basin of lake Num-To (Burkova 2022: 675). Unlike Tundra Nenets, Forest Nenets live in a relatively compact zone within the taiga belt and have practiced reindeer herding to a lesser scale, their major occupation being fishing and hunting (Burkova 2022: 675).

Since authorities most always assimilated Forest Nenets to Tundra Nenets, no specific writing system was developed for this language until the 90s, notwithstanding the phonetic differences. This has resulted in a shortage of written teaching materials, significantly hindering the quality of its teaching in schools. Forest Nenets is virtually absent from all medias and, like Tundra Nenets, its use in the administration is extremely rare despite its legal recognition (Burkova 2016a: 313-314).

2.5 The Enets languages

Forest and Tundra Enets are preferably classified as two separate languages by most recent literature (Siegl 2022, Khanina & Shluinsky 2023). Traditional views, instead, classify them as dialects whereas earliest literature from the 60s, which also informed Soviet censuses, even regarded Enets as a dialect of Nenets (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793). As pointed out by Salminen (2023: 105), the case of the classification of Enets partly resembles that of Nenets, even though the differences between Forest and Tundra Enets are comparatively smaller and still allow mutual understanding. A further relevant factor for such classification is speakers' self-perception as members of two separate ethnic groups with different traditional lifestyle and different material culture (Salminen 2023: 105, Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793). The umbrella label "Enets" was indeed coined in the 30s by the Soviet linguist and ethnologist Georgij Prokof'ev in line with Soviet policies for ethnic minorities and derives from the Forest Enets word [ˈenetʃiʔ] 'real person' (Siegl 2022: 709).

Both languages are moribund, with ca. 40 speakers altogether out of 227 ethnic members as of the 2010 Russian Census (Salminen 2023: 709). This estimate should also be considered relatively optimistic as it includes all possible speakers, regardless of their proficiency level, none of whom ultimately uses the language on a daily basis (Khanina &

Shluinsky 2023: 793). Demographically, all speakers are aged around fifty or over and their life expectancy is low due to poor healthcare and alcoholism (Siegl 2013: 51, 56). All of them live in the Tajmyr district. Forest Enets counts a dozen speakers in Dudinka, the district capital, and another dozen in the settlement of Potapovo. As to Tundra Enets, ca. five speakers live in the settlement of Voroncovo, while ca. ten speakers still lead a nomadic lifestyle with some Tundra Nenetses (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793).

The reason for the sharp decrease in the number of Forest Enets speakers can be traced back to two main historical events. The oldest one is the Tundra Nenets expansion in the Tajmyr peninsula between the 17th and 18th centuries. Living in the taiga belt, Forest Enetses led a nomadic lifestyle but never engaged in massive reindeer herding, usually keeping ca. 40 heads per family for transportation. On the other hand, the large-scale herding of Tundra Nenets eventually caused them to look for new pastures, thus coming into contact with Forest Enetses (Siegl 2013: 46-48). This resulted in conspicuous contacts and several skirmishes that eventually led to the partial assimilation of the Forest Enets population; even today, trilingualism in Forest Enets, Russian and Tundra Nenets is frequent (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793). The second factor that heavily affected the stability of the Forest Enets community, instead, was the flourishing of Potapovo (337 inhabitants as of the 2010 census) in Soviet times. From the 40s onwards, several Volga Germans and Finns were indeed deported in Potapovo and elsewhere in the Tajmyr peninsula, and in the meantime a fur farm and a dairy farm were established in the village, which attracted Belarusian and Ukrainian colonists. Thus, Russian quickly became the most reliable lingua franca and Forest Enetses started shifting to it (Siegl 2013: 48-51). This was also aided by the establishment of a Russian-speaking boarding school, where no Forest Enets was taught, and by the widespread custom of interethnic marriages (Siegl 2013: 51-53). Notably, Forest Enets also shows curious traces of ancient contacts with

Ket (Yeniseian), which only surface in borrowed forms for the second and third person pronouns without any further lexical cognate (Siegl 2022: 712).

Less information is available regarding the decrease in the number of Tundra Enets speakers and mostly relates to Soviet times. Leading a nomadic life with large-scale reindeer herding, Tundra Enets people were first forced by Soviet authorities to settle in the village of Voroncovo. In the 30s, part of them migrated to the Avam tundra, merging with the Nganasans, while in 70s a further migration wave led several of them to the Tuxard tundra, where they merged with Tundra Nenetses (Šluinskij & Xanina 2016: 589).

Both languages lack a dedicated writing system and are occasionally written through spontaneous adaptations of the Cyrillic alphabet (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793). School teaching and media coverage are precarious and rely on individual efforts that most often address Forest Enets. In fact, Forest Enets used to be taught in Dudinka's high school until the teacher's death in 2009 and is the only language for which some teaching material is available. The local newspaper hosts instalments in Forest Enets and radio broadcasts also used to be in Forest Enets with occasional Tundra Enets insertions. However, no dedicated radio programmes have been broadcast in either language since 2002, when the reporter in charge left (Siegl 2022: 711-712, Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793). Nowadays, only a 30-minute daily radio programme is broadcast but is shared with Tundra Nenets and Nganasan (Gusev 2016: 306). Forest Enets is currently taught as an optional subject in Potapovo's school while a language revival attempt is taking place in Potapovo's language nest established in 2011 (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793).

2.6 The Nganasan language

Nganasan is the northernmost language of Eurasia and is spoken in a few settlements of the Tajmyr district. The ethnonym / glottonym was introduced in the 30s by Prokof'ev based on the Nganasan word *nganasa* [ˈŋɑnɑˈsɑ] ‘human, person’ (Wagner-Nagy 2022: 754) while Nganasans use the autonym *nyaa* [ˈŋɑ.ɑ] ‘companion’ (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 3).

The language is critically endangered as it counts no more than 50 fluent speakers, all of whom are at least sixty years old, out of an ethnic pool of ca. 800 individuals (according to the 2010 Russian Census). Speakers from younger generations could also be included in the set of speakers but their proficiency level is much lower so that their use of the language is even stigmatised by older community members (Salminen 2023: 104).

Nganasans traditionally led a nomadic lifestyle in the tundra but, unlike Tundra Nenetses and Tundra Enetses, reindeer herding used to be a side occupation as they mostly relied on hunting, fishing and gathering. In previous centuries, they had a hostile relationship with Evenkis (speakers of a Tungusic language), often resulting in open warfare, while contacts with Enets people were friendly. Also hostile was their relationship with Tundra Nenetses after they started expanding deep into the Tajmyr peninsula in the 18th century (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 4-5). The first contact with Russians and with the Russian language took place in the 17th century but was not impactful until Soviet times. In the 30s, indeed, collectivisation began, and kolkhozes were founded out of private reindeer herds. In the 60s, Soviet authorities forced Nganasans to settle in villages that were mostly inhabited by Dolgans, who speak a Turkic language. Gradually from the 30s onwards, compulsory Russian-language education also had harsh consequences on the stability of the Nganasan community since children were forced to live in boarding schools outside of their Nganasan-speaking milieu (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 7-12).

Most Nganasans now live in five settlements. In the western side of the Tajmyr peninsula are the most densely populated ones, i.e. the district capital Dudinka and the villages of Ust'-Avam and Voločanka; fewer Nganasans instead live on the eastern side, in the villages of Novaja and Xatanga. Accordingly, it is possible to identify a western dialect, referred to as "Avam", and a minor eastern dialect labelled "Vadeev". As expected, dialectal variation amounts to phonetic and lexical differences (Wagner-Nagy 2022: 753, Wagner-Nagy 2023: 754).

A standardised writing system for Nganasan was introduced in 1986 by the linguist Natal'ja Tereščenko and underwent minor adjustments three years later. Some teaching materials are available, but the language is only taught as a minor subject in the schools of Ust'-Avam and Voločanka (Wagner-Nagy 2022: 754-755). Roughly once per month an instalment in Nganasan appears in the local newspaper while a short radio programme is broadcast daily, though with very low reach (cf. Section 2.5). A language revival project is ongoing thanks to the efforts of activists and linguists (Salminen 2023: 105).

Interim summary

Samoyedic languages represent the easternmost branch of the Uralic family. According to the most recent reconstructions (Sámmol Ánte 2022, Grünthal et al. 2022), Proto-Samoyedic is considered the first language to part off from Proto-Uralic, as shown by its conservative traits, scarcity of Uralic lexical cognates, and lack of Indo-Iranic loanwords. Samoyedic languages are normally divided on a geographical rather than genealogical basis, thus distinguishing between the Northern Samoyedic group (Nenets, Enets, Nganasan), and the Southern Samoyedic group, further split into the Selkup language and the extinct Sayan Samoyedic languages (Kamas and Mator). Internal comparison allows to reconstruct a number of common

features dating back to Proto-Samoyedic. Nominal inflection features three numbers (unmarked singular, dual, plural), three core cases (unmarked nominative, genitive, accusative), and four local cases (lative, locative, ablative, prolative); optionally, possessive suffixes for all person-number combinations can be added after the suffixal chain of number and case markers. Common verbal features are fuzzier: besides a marker for the imperative mood and for the aorist aspect-tense combination, a partially developed distinction between subjective and objective conjugation is reconstructed, the latter marking the verb both for subject and for some features of the direct object as well. Syntax is primarily SOV with a rigid modifier-head structure.

Focussing on Northern Samoyedic languages, it should be observed that both Nenets and Enets work as umbrella terms covering two closely related languages each. Tundra and Forest Nenets are the best-preserved Samoyedic languages: Tundra Nenets is spoken by ca. 18,600 people, mostly in the Jamalo-Nenets and Nenets autonomous okrugs and in the Tajmyr district; Forest Nenets counts ca. 2000 speakers in the Jamalo-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi autonomous okrugs. Forest and Tundra Enets count as few as ca. 40 elderly speakers altogether distributed in some settlements of the Tajmyr district, i.e. the district capital Dudinka, Potapovo, and Voroncovo. Nganasan is also spoken in the Tajmyr district, in the settlements of Dudinka, Ust'-Avam, Voločanka, Novaja, and Xatanga; it counts ca. 60 elderly speakers. All languages but Tundra Nenets are underrepresented in local media and school teaching; Enets languages also lack a standardised writing system.

3. THE PREDESTINATIVE SUFFIX

The present chapter introduces the state of the art about the predestinative suffix across the Northern Samoyedic languages. In line with the most recent reference handbooks on Uralic languages (Bakró-Nagy et al. 2022, Abondolo & Valijärvi 2023), Nenets and Enets will be treated as single linguistic entities.

Section 3.1 describes the structure of predestinative-marked noun phrases in the three languages from a morphological and functional perspective. Section 3.2 is devoted to the traditional interpretation of the predestinative suffix as a derived type of possessive inflection paradigm with benefactive value. Section 3.3 illustrates its new possible reading as an instance of nominal tense marking bound to possessive contexts. Section 3.4 comments on the typological peculiarities of the suffix and on its role as a recipient-encoding strategy in the context of ditransitive verb patterns.

Before starting, however, a terminological note is in order. The label “predestinative” is chosen here among the possible translations proposed for the original Russian adjective *prednaznačitel’nyj*, used in the first works addressing this phenomenon (cf. e.g. Prokof’ev 1937, Tereščenko 1977). “Predestinative” is found in works that mostly relate to Nenets (cf. e.g. Salminen 1997, Nikolaeva 2014, Nikolaeva 2015, Burkova 2022) and, as a cross-Samoyedic label, in Abondolo & Valijärvi’s (2023) reference handbook. It was preferred to the shorter alternative “destinative”, used e.g. by Wagner-Nagy (2018, 2022, 2023) for Nganasan, to prevent any terminological overlap with the unrelated destinative participle of Selkup (Kazakevič 2022: 801) and with the Tungusic destinative case (Pakendorf & Aralova 2020, Oskolskaya 2024). It was also preferred to the alternative label “benefactive”, found in the works on Enets by Siegl (2013, 2022), as it sounds intrinsically less committed to a specific and restricted interpretation of the suffix’s function.

3.1 Morphological and functional description

Predestinative marking represents a peculiarity shared by all Northern Samoyedic languages, which sets them apart from Southern Samoyedic as from the rest of the Uralic family. It is carried out by a dedicated suffix attached to a nominal head to encode “the intended destination of an object to a given person” (Tereščenko 1977: 95, my translation²). The categorial status of such suffix within the nominal inflection system of each Northern Samoyedic language is similar and equally debated and will be addressed in further detail in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

In order to introduce the structure of a predestinative NP it is fundamental to highlight its very close structural parallelism with attributive possession. A resumptive view of the strategies for attributive possession of Northern Samoyedic is thus presented below by drawing from the most recent grammatical descriptions of these languages, i.e. Nikolaeva’s grammar of Tundra Nenets (2014), Siegl’s documentary work on Forest Enets (2013) and Wagner-Nagy’s grammar of Nganasan (2019), together with chapters dedicated to each language in the reference handbooks edited by Bakró-Nagy et al. (2022: Burkova for Nenets, pp. 674-708; Siegl for Enets, pp. 709-753; Wagner-Nagy for Nganasan, pp. 754-776) and by Abondolo & Valijärvi (2023: Wagner-Nagy for Nganasan, pp. 753-792; Khanina & Shluinsky for Enets, pp. 793-852; Mus for Nenets, pp. 853-896).

Two strategies, shared with several Uralic languages, are employed for attributive possession in Northern Samoyedic and alternate based on whether the possessor is a noun or a pronoun. In case of nominal possession, a dependent-marking strategy is used, in which the dependent noun takes the genitive case and precedes the head noun in a modifier-head structure. The overt realisation of the genitive case changes across languages. Nenets always marks it through a dedicated and clearly segmentable suffix (Nikolaeva 2014: 61-62, Burkova 2022:

² “предназначение какого-либо предмета тому или другому лицу”.

683) as in (1), while Nganasan and Enets do not. The Nganasan genitive shows a complex realisation pattern due to pervasive morphophonological rules acting on different stem types and, as such, cannot be addressed here in detail (cf. Wagner-Nagy 2018: 176-185, 190-193 for a full description); an example of nominal possession in Nganasan is given in (2). The case of Enets is extreme in the opposite sense: due to a general loss of final consonants (Siegl 2013: 148), all core cases (i.e. nominative, genitive and accusative) are now undistinguishable for most stem types while just a minority of them draws a distinction between nominative *vs.* genitive and accusative in the singular. This has eventually led scholars such as Khanina & Shluinsky (2014, 2023) to dispose of the case labels “accusative” and “genitive” and to subsume them under a newly established oblique case, as shown in (3).

(1) Tundra Nenets (Nikolaeva 2014: 142)

noxə-h³ t̄ɛwə
 polar.fox-GEN tail
 ‘Polar fox’s tail’

(2) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2019: 196)

ŋülʲiäðð kuhu
 wolf\GEN skin
 ‘Wolf’s pelt’

(3) Forest Enets (Khanina & Shluinsky 2014: 1398)

mɛz dʲi
 tent\OBL tent.cover
 ‘The cover of the tent’

³ The phoneme /h/ of Tundra Nenets, also written <ʔ₂> (see Burkova 2022), represents the nasalisable glottal stop (Nikolaeva 2014: 20, Burkova 2022: 678), as opposed to the non-nasalisable glottal stop (<q> or <ʔ₁>). Pronounced as a true glottal stop only before pause, it turns into a homorganic nasal when followed by an obstruent consonant. Therefore, the above example is realised as ≈[ˈnoːx̃n ˈt̄ɛ:w̃].

Pronominal possession, instead, is head-marked by means of dedicated possessive suffixes encoding possessor person and number (1st, 2nd, 3rd + singular, dual or plural). The head noun encodes the possessee and pronominal possessive suffixes are placed on its suffixal chain after case suffixes. In case of a non-singular possessee, its number is cumulatively encoded by a further alternative set of possessive suffixes, while the dual number also makes use of an additional dual suffix. This gives rise to a very complex inflection paradigm referred to as “possessive declension” as opposed to the standard, non-possessive declension usually labelled “absolute”. Pronominal possessive suffixes are most always easily segmented from local case suffix, whereas they sometimes merge with core case suffixes (accusative and genitive, the nominative is unmarked cf. Section 2.3) into portmanteau morphemes. Languages vary in their transparency. In Nenets, for instance, all persons but the first allow for a clear segmentation of core case suffixes from possessive suffixes. In Nganasan, instead, genitive and pronominal possession are always cumulated in a single unanalysable morpheme. Enets displays the highest degree of syncretism. Other differences exist across languages, which are not of primary importance for the present goals, so the reader is referred back to the grammatical descriptions of each language. Example sentences with possessive inflection are given in (4) to (6).

(4) Tundra Nenets (Nikolaeva 2014: 437)

s'abu-n'i *t'er^o* *yəŋku=n'uq*
 cargo.sledge-GEN.1SG content no=EXCL
 ‘My big sledge is empty.’

(5) Forest Enets (Siegl 2013: 153)

ped'i-da *d'obtu-š pä*
 drum-ACC.3SG hit-CVB start.3SG
 ‘he started to beat his drum’

(6) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 208-209)

maad'a tuj-mə səi-ŋi-ðə
why fire-NOM.1SG shoot-INTER.REFL-3SG.REFL
'Why is my fire crackling?'

Albeit rare, double marking is also made possible by a combination of both strategies (cf. e.g. Wagner-Nagy 2014 for Nganasan): the head noun is pre-modified by a noun or by a pronoun and also bears a co-referring possessive suffix.

Having introduced the formal strategies of possession marking in Northern Samoyedic, we can now turn to the predestinative NP. Reference to the above sources also proves useful to introduce a working description of this phenomenon. The predestinative value is marked in all languages by a reflex of the reconstructed Proto-Samoyedic morpheme **-tə* (Janhunen 1989 in Sámmol Ánte 2022: 15)⁴. Both Nenets languages display the morpheme *-ta* ≈[tã] (Burkova 2022: 685), which is usually realised in Tundra Nenets with a voiced dentoalveolar stop ≈[dã] due to the widespread voicing of voiceless stops after vowels (Nikolaeva 2014: 20). For both Enets languages, Khanina & Shluinsky (2023: 804) list three allomorphs, whose distribution is conditioned by the stem type they attach to: *-zo*⁵, *-to*, *-do*. Three allomorphs are also reported for Nganasan by Wagner-Nagy (2018: 211), their distribution being determined by morphophonological alternations: *-tə*, *-ðə*, *-čə*.

The predestinative suffix can attach to all nouns (and to interrogative pronouns); it is placed right after the nominal stem or after derivational suffixes, if any. When a noun is marked

⁴ A detailed discussion on the exact origin and function of this reconstructed suffix goes beyond the scope of the present Chapter; it will be dealt with in more detail in Ch. 5.

⁵ The phonetic realisation of /z/ varies between [ð] and [z]. As observed by Xelimskij (2007: n.7), the voiced interdental fricative started changing into a voiced sibilant during the last century owing to the massive russification of Enets phonology. Unlike Khanina & Shluinsky, however, Siegl only acknowledges the interdental realisation and thus writes <đ> (Siegl 2013) or <ð> (Siegl 2022) accordingly.

with a predestinative suffix, it has to enter a possessive construction. Both pronominal and nominal possessive structures are possible, but there are differences. In the case of pronominal possession, which is the more frequent, the head noun can take possessive declension suffixes encoding one of the three core cases. In general, the syntactic functions of such forms are rather straightforward as far as the nominative and accusative cases are concerned. The predestinative nominative represents the subject of finite verbs as well as the direct object of verbs in the imperative mood, in line with the general rule holding for Samoyedic languages (cf. also Kazakevič 2022: 788 for Selkup). The accusative case represents the direct object of non-imperative verbs but never triggers object agreement on the verb, namely the only possible conjugation for verbs with predestinative-marked objects is the subjective one, while the objective is banned. The genitive predestinative, instead, displays a totally different function from its prototypical one as it occurs as an essive-translative adjunct expressing a secondary object predicate translatable as “as someone’s x”, “in the capacity of someone’s x”⁶. Given such a peculiar function for genitive predestinative NPs, there is a trend in literature to adopt an alternative label that privileges function over formal morphology so that genitive predestinative NPs are usually defined as “translative” (*naznačitel’nyj* in most works in Russian, cf. Prokof’ev 1937, Tereščenko 1977).

In the less frequent case of nominal possession, instead, the head noun is marked by the predestinative suffix and pre-modified by the possessor in the genitive, but the head noun itself cannot carry any case suffix. The only syntactic functions that this subtype of predestinative NP can instantiate are subject and object⁷. Given that no formal case marking is present on the

⁶ Owing to the case conflation of Enets described above, the genitive predestinative has merged with the accusative into the oblique case and only the syntactic environment can disambiguate the accusative function from the genitive / translative one.

⁷ To express the translative-essive function in case of nominal possession, as well as outside of possessive contexts, Northern Samoyedic languages rely on a different strategy, i.e. the converbal form of the copula, which has

head noun, syntactic functions are disambiguated by word order and context, the only exception being instances of double marking. These structures are exemplified in Table 1.

TUNDRA NENETS				
	1SG possessor	2SG possessor	3SG possessor	nominal possessor ⁸
NOM	<i>ηəno-də-m'i</i>	<i>ηəno-də-r^o</i>	<i>ηəno-də-da</i>	<i>ηəno-d^o</i>
ACC		<i>ηəno-də-mt^{o9}</i>	<i>ηəno-də-mta</i>	<i>ηəno-d^o</i>
GEN	<i>ηəno-də-n^o</i>	<i>ηəno-də-nt^o</i>	<i>ηəno-də-nta</i>	//
NGANASAN				
	1SG possessor	2SG possessor	3SG possessor	nominal possessor
NOM	<i>kʰiga-ðə-mə</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə-rə</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə-ðu</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə</i>
ACC		<i>kʰiga-ðə-mtə</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə-mtu</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə</i>
GEN	<i>kʰiga-ðə-nə</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə-tə</i>	<i>kʰiga-ðə-tu</i>	//
FOREST ENETS				
	1SG possessor	2SG possessor	3SG possessor	nominal possessor
NOM	<i>ne-zɔ-jʔ</i>	<i>ne-zɔ-r</i>	<i>ne-zɔ-za</i>	<i>ne-z</i>
OBL	<i>ne-zɔ-nʲʔ</i>	<i>ne-zɔ-d</i>	<i>ne-zɔ-da</i>	<i>ne-z</i>

Table 1. Predestinative-marked forms for singular pronominal possessors and lexical possessors of Tundra Nenets *ηəno* ‘boat’ (based on Nikolaeva 2014: 72), Nganasan *kʰiga* ‘book’ (based on Wagner-Nagy 2018: 203, 211-212) and Forest Enets *ne* ‘woman, wife’ (based on Khanina & Shluinsky 2014: 1397); predestinative suffix in bold.

grammaticalized into a proper translative case suffix in Nenets and Enets but not in Nganasan (Jalava 2017, Siegl 2017, Szeverényi & Wagner-Nagy 2017).

⁸ Cf. n.1. Following a morphophonological rule postulated by Salminen (1997), Nikolaeva writes the vowel of the predestinative suffix in word final position as a reduced vowel.

⁹ The accusative and genitive forms for the 2nd and 3rd person of Tundra Nenets could be also analysed as consisting of separate morphemes for case and possession: e.g. *ηəno-də-m-t^o* = boat-PRD-ACC-2SG, *ηəno-də-n-ta* = boat-PRD-GEN-3SG. For all glossed examples reported in the present work it was chosen to keep the two morphemes together to accommodate the cases of portmanteau morphemes in a consistent way.

However, a crucial difference should be pointed out which sets Nenets apart from Enets and Nganasan: the Nenets predestinative NP does not encode any number distinction. Nouns carrying a predestinative suffix can only receive singular possessive declension suffixes, thus becoming unspecified for the category of number. On the other hand, a corresponding set of plural predestinative markers is reported for both Enets and Nganasan, encoding plural predestinative possessives. The phonological structure of the plural predestinative marker is similar in the two languages and contrasts with its singular counterpart in the presence of a close front vowel, i.e. *-zi*, *-ti*, *-di* in Enets, and *-ti*, *-đi*, *-či* in Nganasan. This leads to a binary number opposition (singular vs. plural) that stands in contrast with the standard tripartite number distinction (singular, dual, plural) of non-predestinative nominals. In addition, the plural predestinative marker brings about a set of restrictions: firstly, only pronominal possession is attested with it in both Nganasan and Enets; secondly, no translative (genitive) occurrences are attested. Only one form is found in Nganasan due to the consistent merger of nominative and accusative possessive markers for non-singular possessives. The case of Enets is different: nominative and oblique forms are distinguished in the plural possessive declension, but oblique forms are underused, and their role is very often taken up by their nominative counterparts¹⁰. Forms with the plural predestinative marker are summarised in Table 2.

In fact, the very existence of dual and plural paradigms for the Nenets predestinative became a topic for debate as some early accounts actually reported such forms. This is the case of Castrén's (1854) fieldnotes, based on an older stage of Tundra Nenets, and of two works by Tereščenko (1947: 112-115; 1977). Salminen (1997), however, rejects both accounts as unreliable. In his fieldnotes, indeed, Castrén himself admitted not witnessing such forms but

¹⁰ The alternation between nominative and oblique forms in object marking of possessive and predestinative NPs in both Enets languages is governed by complex rules that cannot be addressed here. For an exhaustive description see Khanina & Shluinsky (2014: 1414-1420).

NGANASAN			
	1SG possessor	2SG possessor	3SG possessor
NOM	<i>kńiga-đi-ńə</i>	<i>kńiga-đi-čə</i>	<i>kńiga-đi-či</i>
ACC			
FOREST ENETS			
	1SG possessor	2SG possessor	3SG possessor
NOM	<i>ne-zi-nʲʔ</i>	<i>ne-zi-z</i>	<i>ne-zi-za</i>
{ OBL		<i>ne-zi-t</i>	<i>ne-zi-da }</i>

Table 2. Predestinative forms with plural predestinative marker (plural possessee) for singular pronominal possessors of Nnganasan *kńiga* ‘book’ (based on Wagner-Nagy 2018: 203, 211-212) and Forest Enets *ne* ‘woman, wife’ (based on Khanina & Shluinsky 2014: 1397); plural predestinative suffix in bold.

inferring them “by analogy” (Castrén 1854: 221 in Salminen 1997: 129, my translation). On the other hand, the forms reported by Tereščenko are believed by Salminen to represent artificial creations obtained during elicitation sessions. This seems to be confirmed by the total absence of non-singular predestinative forms in other grammatical works on Nenets, including the most recent ones (Nikolaeva 2014, Burkova 2022). For my part, no such forms were found in my dataset either.

Analogous problems are also posed by Enets. For one, Siegl rejects the existence of plural predestinative forms in Enets (Siegl 2013: 383), which stands in contrast with Khanina & Shluinsky’s accounts and with the clear parallelism of the Nnganasan predestinative plural morpheme. Secondly, some rare instances of dual predestinative forms have been reported in Xanina & Šluinskij (2010), Khanina & Shluinsky (2014) and, in former times, by Castrén (1854: 340-342). However, Khanina & Shluinsky (2014: n.5, 2023: 804) regard their own occurrences as disputable and, as such, opt for excluding them from their works on the topic.

Regarding my Enets dataset, plural predestinative forms do occur whereas occurrences in the dual are missing entirely.

Reverting to Tereščenko’s definition of the function of the predestinative suffix (see above), attention should be paid to its intrinsic relational nature; instances of predestinative NPs in use are provided in sentences (7) to (9).

(7) Forest Enets (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 804)

fuzebitʃu-ku-zo-daʔ bazi-ta-zʔ
tale-DIM-PRD-OBL.2PL tell-FUT-1SG
‘I will tell you a tale.’

(8) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 211)

mənə kʰiga-ðə-mtu mi-sʲiə-m
1SG book-PRD-ACC.3SG give-PST-1SG
‘I gave him/her a book.’

(9) Forest Nenets (Verbov 1973: 77 in Burkova 2022: 687)

mʲeja-j nʲe-ta-nta mæ:ŋa-t
sister.in.law-ACC.1SG woman-PRD-GEN.3SG take-2SG>SG
‘You married my sister-in-law.’
[lit. ‘You took my sister-in-law as a woman for yourself.’]

The possessor, however encoded in the predestinative NP, is going to receive or somehow benefit from the entity denoted by the predestinative-marked nouns, which brings about a series of semantic and distributional restrictions. As reported by Wagner-Nagy on Nganasan (2018: 212), predestinative forms in the accusative are the most frequent and, in a similar vein, Siegl (2013: 391-394) notices for Forest Enets the usual association of accusative predestinative forms with verbs denoting volitional activities and accomplishments like ‘take’, ‘look for’,

‘cook’, ‘fish’ etc. As pointed out by Nikolaeva (2015: 121), all verbs governing predestinative objects indeed define the start of a functional relation between the recipient(-beneficiary) and the object. This is due to semantic construal of such verbs, which most often include an existential component. When such component is not included, the start of the functional relation is always implied by contextual information.

3.2 Traditional reading: benefactive value

The first definitions of the predestinative suffix were centred on its benefactive semantics to be found in all Northern Samoyedic languages. Such is the stance taken by Prokof’ev (1937: 32-33), Tereščenko (1977, cf. Section 3.1) and later on by Salminen (1997), who regard the predestinative suffix as the peculiar marker of a third inflectional paradigm of Northern Samoyedic deriving from possessive declension, i.e. the predestinative declension (*(lično-)prednaznačitel’noe sklonenie*), alternatively labelled “desiderative” (*dezitderivnoe*) in Tereščenko (1977). Only forms hosting both a predestinative and a possessive suffix (cf. first three columns of Table 1) were regarded as part of the paradigm, which was also limited to the three core cases due to the restrictions seen in Section 3.1. On the other hand, those forms marked only by a predestinative suffix and occurring in cases of nominal possession were treated as separate instances of productive nominal derivation that would function as a basis for predestinative declension proper (Tereščenko 1977). A similar approach is also followed in the recent descriptive work by Siegl (2013), who groups together all forms of predestinative marking of Forest Enets into a so-called “benefactive declension” (Siegl 2013: 378-403).

Khanina & Shluinsky’s (2014) corpus-based work also relies on the benefactive interpretation and ascribes the suffix to an ad hoc paradigmatic category due to its unique distribution. In specific, they claim that both cases of benefaction discussed in typological

literature by Kittilä (2005), i.e. recipient-benefaction and substitutive benefaction, can be instantiated by predestinative marking. In the former case the beneficiary becomes the actual owner of something while in the latter case the beneficiary benefits from something done for their sake. Recipient-beneficiary cases are reported to occur more often, while the less frequent substitutive benefactive uses are believed to represent subsequent diachronic development. In recipient-benefaction, the tie between the predestinative suffix and its nominal host is indeed both semantic and syntactic in nature as the suffix marks the event participant that is being transferred, i.e. the theme. On the other hand, there is no such semantic motivation in the substitutive benefactive occurrences, where the placement of the predestinative suffix only follows syntactic criteria based on the priming of recipient-benefactive readings (Khanina & Shluinsky 2014: 1406-1407).

At least in Nganasan, however, predestinative marking does not represent the only available strategy to encode benefactive semantics as it competes with a postpositional construction based on the dedicated postposition *d'aði?kü* 'for' (Wagner-Nagy 2017: 263). Distributional differences between the two constructions have not yet been clarified.

3.3 Alternative reading: TAM marking

Following the very influential paper by Nordlinger & Sadler (2004) on nominal TAM, some linguists in the field of Uralic studies argued for a reanalysis of the predestinative suffix as a nominal TAM marker. In specific, such approach was maintained by Nikolaeva (2010, 2015) for Tundra Nenets and by Leisiö (2014) for Nganasan.

In her first study, Nikolaeva (2010) proves that the predestinative suffix can be analysed as an instance of nominal TAM as it matches the four definitional properties outlined in Nordlinger & Sadler's (2004) article, namely:

- (i) nouns (or other NP/DP constituents) show a distinction in one or more of the categories of tense, aspect and mood, where these categories are standardly defined as they would be for verbs;
- (ii) this TAM distinction is productive across the whole word class, and not simply restricted to a small subset of forms;
- (iii) the TAM distinction is not restricted to nominals functioning as predicates of verbless clauses, but is encoded on arguments and/or adjunct NP/DPs in clauses headed by verbs;
- (iv) the TAM marker is a morphological category of the nominal word class, and cannot be treated as a syntactic clitic that merely attaches to the NP/DP phonologically.

(Nordlinger & Sadler 2004: 778)

Within such view, the predestinative suffix is understood by Nikolaeva as a type of nominal tense marker having its scope limited to possessive contexts, as documented in Nordlinger & Sadler (2004) for Hixkaryána (Cariban; Brazil). On the other hand, the predestinative suffix still poses a crucial issue to nominal TAM typology. Since it predicates a future possessive relation, it is categorised as nominal future tense, but this counters Nordlinger & Sadler's (2004) implicational hierarchy, according to which nominal future is only found in languages already showing nominal past. That is not the case of Tundra Nenets and Enets (but see below for Nganasan) and such issue also occurs in Khanina & Shluinsky's (2014) work as a counterargument against the nominal TAM interpretation.

In her subsequent work, however, Nikolaeva (2015) adopts a more complex approach, reinterpreting the predestinative suffix through the much stricter definitional criteria for nominal TAM proposed by Tonhauser (2007, 2008). Firstly, she formalises the function of a predestinative-marked NP as follows:

For an entity x denoted by the predestinative NP, the possessive relation \mathfrak{R} is meant by the speaker to become true of x at a time t_{poss} subsequent to the NP time t_{np} but is false at any time prior to t_{poss} .

(Nikolaeva 2015: 111)

Secondly, based on her formal analysis of the suffix's semantic properties she argues for an alternative categorisation still within the paradigm of nominal TAM. She notices that predestinative-marked NPs refer to an abstract category instead of a concrete entity as they do not trigger a presupposition of existence for their referent, which is not specific. In turn, the lack of a presupposition of existence is associated with an absence of truth commitment from the beneficiary's viewpoint. In other words, the possessive relation does not hold true at the moment of utterance because its truth value is postponed to a later potential time depending on the beneficiary's perspective. Therefore, given that what best expresses truth-commitment within the verbal domain is the category of mood, the predestinative suffix is understood by Nikolaeva (2015: 120-122) as an instance of nominal mood with a subjunctive / irrealis value.

Concerning Nganasan, instead, in 1994 Xelimskij pointed out that the predestinative and nominal past suffixes of Nganasan “can be regarded as the future and past tenses of the noun” (Xelimskij 1994: 204, my translation¹¹). Unlike other Northern Samoyedic languages, Nganasan indeed displays, along with the predestinative suffix, a nominal past suffix and a newly discovered, yet very poorly attested, nominal counterfactual¹² suffix (Gusev 2005). Pursuing Xelimskij's insight, Leisiö (2014) analyses the distributional properties of Nganasan

¹¹ “могут быть приравнены к будущему и прошедшему временам имени”.

¹² The nominal counterfactual suffix has received different labels by different authors. Gusev (2005) calls it “irrealis” (*irreal'nyj*) and Wagner-Nagy (2018) “destinative irrealis”, while Leisiö (2014) uses the term “future in the past” (*buduščee v prošedšem*). The label “counterfactual”, instead, is found in Creissels & Daniel (2006) and Daniel (2009) and is preferred here due to its early attestation and because it prevents overlaps with the subjunctive / irrealis function of the predestinative suffix described by Nikolaeva (2015) on Tundra Nenets data.

nominal TAM suffixes. However, Daniel (2009) already exposed the difficulties in subsuming all markers under a coherent paradigm. On the one hand, the nominal past suffix appears to have no cooccurrence restrictions: it can occur with all Nganasan cases, i.e. both grammatical and local, and is not bound to a possessive context, as shown in (10).

(10) Nganasan (translated from Leisiö 2014: 53)

bahi-d'əə taamuqə

wild.reindeer-PST become.tamed.3SG

‘The wild reindeer has become tamed.’

[lit. ‘The former wild reindeer has become tamed.’]

On the other hand, the predestinative suffix is well known for being bound to possessive uses and the same is true of the counterfactual marker, which expresses possessive relations that should have taken place but did not. The counterfactual marker is a complex suffix consisting of the opaque derivational suffix *-tətə* combined with the nominal past suffix *-d'əə*. A further element can be optionally interposed, i.e. the irrealis verbal suffix *-təə*, thus resulting in the form *-tətə(təə)d'əə*. Unlike the predestinative suffix, however, it can take any case suffix, as shown in (11).

(11) Nganasan (translated from Gusev 2005: 16)

tənə tobəkəə-əətəd'əə-tənu-nə hoi'tə-ndj-ŋ

2SG axe-CNTRF-LOC-1SG make.lumber-PRS-2SG

‘You are making lumber with the axe that should have been mine.’

Finally, Creissels & Daniel (2006) points out that those contexts in which a non-possessive occurrence of the predestinative suffix seems licenced in Nganasan can be explained away by context retrievability. Therefore, despite showing clear nominal TAM attributes, as

discussed by Leisiö (2014), the different TAM markers of Nganasan display fairly divergent distributional properties, which may speak against categorising them as a fully-fledged nominal TAM paradigm.

3.4 Typological remarks

Predestinative marking has also attracted the attention of typologists for its role in the ditransitive constructions of Northern Samoyedic languages. As can be seen from ex. (8) above, the basic ditransitive verb *mis'i* ‘give’ governs only one argument, i.e. the theme, which is marked by the predestinative suffix. This gives rise to an unusual ditransitive pattern, whereby the recipient is encoded inside the theme NP as a possessive suffix. Nominal possession with a noun in the genitive that pre-modifies the predestinative-marked head is also possible, albeit comparatively rarer.

Such “monotransitive ‘give’-construction” (Creissels & Daniel 2006) of Northern Samoyedic, first analysed from a typological viewpoint by Creissels (1979) in his PhD thesis, has been addressed by Malchukov et al. (2010a) in their comprehensive typology of ditransitive constructions. Their cross-linguistic categorisation of ditransitive patterns is based on a re-interpretation of the concept of alignment as applied to ditransitive verbs. The following alignment types are distinguished based on whether it is the theme (T) or the recipient (R) to be encoded as a patient-like argument (P) of a monotransitive verb (Malchukov et al. 2010a: 3-8):

- Indirective alignment: T is encoded as P, R receives different marking, e.g. dative (English¹³: *They gave [money]^T [to the winner]^R)*

¹³ Introspective examples from English are employed here for practical reasons, although not all languages necessarily show all three alignment types (Malchukov et al. 2010: 18-21).

- Secundative alignment: R is encoded as P, T receives different marking (English: *They provided [us]^R [with the equipment]^T*)
- Neutral alignment: T and R are encoded alike (English: *They gave [him]^R [money]^T*).

Following the above classification, Northern Samoyedic languages are said to show indirective alignment. What is remarkable is the encoding strategy they employ. Malchukov et al. (2010a) label it “possessive adnominal strategy”, drawing on previous typological work by Margetts & Austin (2007). Within this strategy, the recipient is encoded as a modifier of the theme NP, which is cross-linguistically rare. Unlike the cases discussed by Margetts & Austin (2007), however, Samoyedic languages do not simply encode the recipient(-beneficiary) as a possessor but do so by resorting to a special suffix that licences such reading, i.e. the predestinative suffix. It is also worth noting that Malchukov et al. (2010a: 15) cursorily refer to such difference as a special case of agreement that they call “designative agreement”, holding between the theme and the prospective possessor.

According to Creissels & Daniel (2006), the typological rarity of this structure can be explained through a comparison with external possessor constructions, which are interpreted as a functional opposite of possessive adnominal strategy. In the case of external possession, the actual possessor is so affected that it receives separate encoding as a third argument displaying benefactive-like semantics. On the other hand, in a possessive adnominal strategy, the recipient is encoded as a real possessor that is syntactically dependent from the theme NP. Here lies the typological rarity of such strategy in Creissel & Daniel’s (2006) view: it is cross-linguistically dispreferred to privilege the formal encoding of prospective, potential possession to the detriment of an actual benefactive meaning that is always intrinsically present in transfer events and that is generally realised by encoding the recipient as a third independent argument.

It should be noted, however, that Northern Samoyedic languages can also employ an alternative lative encoding for recipient arguments (Nikolaeva 2014, 2015; Khanina &

Shluinsky 2014, 2020; Wagner-Nagy 2017, 2018). In specific, Nikolaeva’s study on Tundra Nenets discusses the functional differences between the two encoding strategies, trying to shed light on their distribution and on the triggers of their alternation. In pragmatic terms, she highlights the lack of specificity (in the sense intended in von Heusinger 2002) associated with the denotatum of a predestinative-marked noun (Nikolaeva 2014: 72-73), which cannot be modified by any determiner. Whenever the theme happens to be specific, only the lative case can be used for encoding recipients. Additionally, when concrete recipient and beneficiary do not coincide, the predestinative-marked noun is always understood as encoding the beneficiary role, so that lative encoding is left for the recipient, as shown in (12).

(12) Tundra Nenets (Nikolaeva 2015: 104)

Maša-n^oh kniga-də-mt^o m’iq̄a-d^om

Masha-LAT book-PRD-ACC.2SG give-1SG

‘I gave Masha a book for you.’

Similar observations were also drawn for Enets by Khanina & Shluinsky (2014: 1409) as they argue that the indefiniteness and lack of referentiality of predestinative NPs is cause to their scant occurrences as subjects, which are prototypically referential. On the same line, their subsequent corpus study on Enets (Khanina & Shluinsky 2020) provides quantitative evidence for the relationship between referentiality and distribution of predestinative *vs.* lative encoding. They find that predestinative marking is overall more frequent and, in particular, is chosen in case of an indefinite non-specific theme, while definite themes trigger the lative encoding of recipients.

Interim summary

Northern Samoyedic languages feature a peculiar suffix usually labelled “predestinative”, which is bound to possessive contexts and derives from the reconstructed Proto-Samoyedic form **-tə*. Its function is that of qualifying the possessive relation predicated by the NP as intended, prospective. Possession is expressed in these languages by means of either of two constructions, whose distribution is determined by the lexical category of the possessor. For pronominal possession, a head marking strategy is found, whereby the specific pronominal possessive suffixes are placed after the inflectional chain consisting of number and case markers resulting in the so-called possessive inflection: portmanteau morphemes are frequent in such context. For nominal possession, instead, a dependent marking strategy is used, according to which the possessor occurs in the genitive case and premodifies the head. The predestinative suffix is found in both instances of possession but there are differences. Cases of pronominal possession allow the predestinative suffix to combine to the three core cases (cf. Table 1). Notably, the genitive form of a predestinative NP does not display a possession-marking function but encodes a translative/essive value roughly translatable as ‘as someone’s x’, ‘in the capacity of someone’s x’. Cases of nominal possession, instead, do not allow any case suffix and are limited to the standard functions of nominative and accusative cases, which have to be disambiguated by context. In addition, it should be remarked that Enets and Nganasan, unlike Nenets, also feature a cognate plural predestinative suffix (cf. Table 2).

Its role in the system of nominal inflection is debated: it cannot be defined as a case since it occurs together with core case markers (genitive and accusative) but is much more productive than a derivational suffix. The first approach, proposed by Soviet linguists (Prokof’ev 1937, Tereščenko 1977), regarded it as a dedicated benefactive marker occurring in a specific declension pattern called “predestinative” (*prednaznačitel’nyj*); a similar stance is

nowadays adopted by e.g. Siegl (2013, 2022) and Khanina & Shluinsky (2014, 2023), who work on Enets. An alternative approach, instead, was proposed after the spread of nominal TAM as a cross-linguistic category (Nordlinger & Sadler 2004). Working on Tundra Nenets data, Nikolaeva (2015) regards the predestinative suffix as an instance of nominal irrealis mood bound to possessive contexts, whose function consists in predicating a possessive relation removed to a possible future context. Leisiö (2014), instead, analyses the predestinative suffix of Nganasan along with its nominal past and counterfactual markers trying to outline a paradigm of nominal tenses, in which the predestinative suffix would count as nominal future.

Language typology has also paid attention to the predestinative suffix owing to its peculiar and comparatively rare role in ditransitive constructions. Despite featuring a standard lative encoding of recipients, Northern Samoyedic languages also allow predestinative-marked NPs to occur as themes of ditransitive verbs. However, this implies that the recipient is encoded as a possessor inside the theme's NP, thus making ditransitive verbs formally monotransitive. In their typology of ditransitive construction, Malchukov et al. (2010a) classify the predestinative strategy as a case of indirective alignment, namely a set of cases featuring patientive encoding for themes and special encoding for recipients. What is remarkable, however, is the presence of a dedicated suffix, i.e. the predestinative, whose occurrence is conditioned by ditransitivity itself.

4. CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS

The current chapter illustrates the corpus-based analysis carried out according to functional and semantic criteria. As pointed out in Ch.3, Nenets and Enets are treated as single linguistic entities. Section 4.1 contains a description of the corpora used to create the final working dataset together with a preliminary comment on methods and related shortcomings. Section 4.2 explores the most frequent function found in the corpus for predestinative NPs, namely predestinative object complements, trying to draw a semantic divide between autobenefactive and self-benefactive contexts. Section 4.3 analyses predestinative NPs in subject position across Northern Samoyedic languages. In a similar vein, Section 4.4 is devoted to the semantic properties of the translative (i.e. genitive) form of predestinative NPs in the three languages. Section 4.5 eventually comments on the least prototypical occurrences to be found in the dataset.

4.1 Materials, methods and limitations

Three corpora were used to create the final dataset for the present analysis. All relate to the project “Grammatical Descriptions, Corpora and Language Technologies for Indigenous Northern Eurasian Languages” (INEL for short) at the University of Hamburg. The project is not in fact limited to Uralic languages and aims at providing corpora and related tools for under-resourced languages spoken in Siberia within an 18-year timespan, from 2016 to 2033 (Arkhipov & Däbritz 2018).

Data on the two Enets varieties come from a preliminary version of the INEL Enets Corpus (Shluinsky et al. 2024)¹⁴. The Forest Enets subcorpus contains 158,607 tokens and consists of annotated texts recorded across roughly two generations. Earlier texts were collected between the 1960s and the 1990s mostly by linguists Irina Sorokina, Dar’ja Bolina, Kazimir Labanauskas, Evgenij Xelimskij, journalist Nina Bolina and musicologist Oksana Dobžanskaja; later texts were collected by the corpus compilers Olesya Khanina and Andrey Shluinsky during fieldwork sessions between 2005 and 2016. For Tundra Enets, instead, part of the final Tundra Enets subcorpus was used hosting 11,167 tokens from glossed published materials that were first recorded in the 1970s by linguists Irina Sorokina, Kazimir Labanauskas and Evgenij Xelimskij. All occurrences in this corpus have an English and Russian translation. Both subcorpora were searched offline using the software FieldWorks Language Explorer™ developed by SIL International.

Nganasan data were collected from the 0.2 version of the Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus “NSLC” (Brykina et al. 2018). Conceived within the earlier Hamburg-based project “Corpus based grammatical studies on Nganasan” (2014-2017), its annotation scheme served as a basis for all INEL corpora. It contains spoken language data in Nganasan from various sources and periods paired with their respective audio files. Older audio recordings come from the Institute for Linguistic Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg and from the archives of the University of Tomsk, while more recent data were collected on purpose between 1997 and 2017. All audio files have been transcribed and annotated, and the overall size of the corpus is 142,445 tokens. It is freely downloadable and was accessed offline through the EXMARaLDA software bundle (Schmidt & Wörner 2014). An online version has been

¹⁴ I am indebted to Olesya Khanina and Andrey Shluinsky for kindly sharing with me the preliminary version of their corpus. All figures given for this corpus are based on the preliminary version.

recently made available within the INEL project through the Tsakorpus interface. Occurrences from this corpus do not always display an English translation, Russian being the only available language in some cases.

For Nenets, data were taken from the unpublished working version of the INEL Nenets corpus (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)¹⁵, which contains annotated texts in both Tundra and Forest Nenets for a total of 49,825 tokens. Texts come from various sources and were collected between 1950 and 2003 mostly by linguists Svetlana Burkova, Kazimir Labanauskas and Valentina Šilova. The corpus was accessed via the EXMARaLDA software bundle. Translations are available in up to three languages, i.e. Russian, English and German.

As summarised in Table 3, the final dataset was created by extracting 200 random occurrences per language of sentences containing a predestinative NP, thus resulting in 600 occurrences in total. For Enets, the occurrences are equally split between the Forest and Tundra Enets subcorpora. For Nenets, instead, EXMARaLDA’s filtering was used to randomly select 150 occurrences in Tundra Nenets and 50 occurrences in Forest Nenets.

Language	Occurrences	Corpus	Total
ENETS			
<i>Forest</i>	100	INEL Enets Corpus [preliminary version]	200
<i>Tundra</i>	100		
NGANASAN	200	Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus 0.2	200
NENETS			
<i>Tundra</i>	150	INEL Nenets Corpus [unpublished working version]	200
<i>Forest</i>	50		
Total			600

Table 3. Structure of the dataset.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Alexandre Arkhipov, Josefina Budzisch and Beáta Wagner-Nagy for kindly sharing with me the unpublished version of their corpus.

In all corpora, specific sentences are referred to through univocal codes displaying speaker’s initials, recording date, document title, genre tag, and sentence number (e.g. “YaVD_1977_MoonAndSun_flk.006” in the INEL Nenets Corpus). The glossing provided along with example sentences may differ from its original version in the attempt to accommodate different sources with each other and with the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

All occurrences were classified depending on whether the predestinative NP displayed an object, subject or translative function. All lexical items hosting a predestinative marker were also recorded together with the governing verb of each sentence so as to obtain a complete understanding of the semantic contexts in which the predestinative suffix can occur. An introductory figure of the distribution of the functions associated with the predestinative suffix is given in Table 4. Afterwards, all direct objects were classified according to the autobenefactive *vs.* other-benefactive opposition, a detailed description of which is given in Section 4.2.

Language	Object	Subject	Translative	Other	Total per language
Enets	162 (81%)	15 (7.5%)	20 (10%)	3 (1.5%)	200 (100%)
Nganasan	150 (75%)	30 (15%)	6 (3%)	14 (7%)	200 (100%)
Nenets	158 (79%)	6 (3%)	31 (15.5%)	5 (2.5%)	200 (100%)
Total per function	470 (78.3%)	51 (8.5%)	57 (9.5%)	22 (3.7%)	600 (100%)

Table 4. Distribution of the different functions of predestinative NPs in the dataset.

It should be considered that the representativity of the dataset is affected by the under-resourced nature of Northern Samoyedic languages. Given the scarcity of available resources, corpora documenting these languages are usually based on heterogeneous sources. This brings about two main shortcomings that relate to short diachrony and textual genres. As to short

diachrony, it has already been mentioned that all corpora employed in the present work are based on texts spreading across different generations of speakers, which inevitably leads to disregard inter-generational differences. Secondly, most texts from each corpus consist in folk texts, namely a rather conservative genre displaying clear differences from spontaneous speech. The overall composition of the dataset in term of textual genres is thus given in Table 5. Concerning annotation, instead, one major issue stems from the absence of a second annotator allowing for the evaluation of an inter-annotator agreement score. This is particularly true of cases where judgement is required on semantic rather than functional categories, which may give rise to less clear-cut contexts.

Corpus	Folk text	Biographical narrative	Conversation	Song
INEL Enets (Forest)	45 (45%)	44 (44%)	10 (10%)	1 (1%)
INEL Enets (Tundra)	90 (90%)	10 (10%)	//	//
NSLC 0.2	149 (74.5%)	43 (21.5%)	7 (3.5%)	1 (0.5%)
INEL Nenets (Tundra)	136 (90.7%)	14 (9.3%)	//	//
INEL Nenets (Forest)	32 (64%)	18 (36%)	//	//

Table 5. Distribution of genres in the dataset per occurrence.

4.2 Autobenefactive and other-benefactive objects

As shown in Table 4, the most frequent function undertaken by predestinative NPs is that of direct object. Most descriptive accounts, however, could provide a skewed image of the implications of such function by focussing on other-benefactive uses, which are given in (13) and (14).

(13) Tundra Nenets (Nikolaeva 2015: 103)

ŋəno-də-mt^o temtaə-d^om

boat-PRD-ACC.2SG buy-1SG

‘I bought a boat for you.’

(14) Nganasan (translated from Leisiö 2014: 45)

kəntə-δə-mtə meliḍiqə-m

sledge-PRD-ACC.2SG do-1SG

‘I have built a sledge for you.’

In these sentences there is no coreference between the subject and the possessive suffix encoding the recipient(-beneficiary) in the predestinative NP. A notable exception in this respect is Khanina & Shluinsky’s (2014) corpus-based work, which highlights the prevalence of autobenefactive contexts in Enets data. Based on the current dataset, this prevalence can be confirmed for all Northern Samoyedic languages, as shown in Table 6.

In autobenefactive contexts, the beneficiary of the predestinative NP and the subject co-refer. What is more, this is the most frequent construction overall to be found in the present dataset and, as such, appears to be a well-established strategy for Northern Samoyedic languages to express autobenefactive semantics in a clause. In the classification of occurrences

Language	Autobenefactive	Other-benefactive	Total per language
Enets	97 (59.9%)	65 (40.1%)	162 (100%)
Nganasan	90 (60%)	60 (40%)	150 (100%)
Nenets	90 (56.7%)	68 (43.3%)	158 (100%)
Total per function	277 (58.9%)	193 (41.1%)	470 (100%)

Table 6. Distribution of autobenefactive and other-benefactive predestinative objects across languages

as auto- vs. other-benefactive, however, a small minority of cases (5 instances from the Nganasan corpus) proved to be ambiguous in that a singular subject was referentially included in the plural or dual first-person suffix of the predestinative NP as in (15).

(15) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

tə... tahariabə taa-ði-n'ü? *təða-ʔa-m*
 well now domestic.reindeer-PRD.PL-ACC.PL.1PL bring-PFV-1SG
 ‘Well, I brought our reindeer.’ (TKF_990819_SomatuShaman_flkd.092)

Formally, there is no identity between the subject and the possessive suffix of the predestinative NP. However, from a semantic viewpoint, the subject is included in the suffix’s reference and counts as a beneficiary. Therefore, it was the semantic criterion that was followed to classify such ambiguous occurrences as instances of autobenefactive uses.

The absolute majority (68.6%) of autobenefactive contexts refers to the establishment of a new possessive relation for the benefit of the subject. As noted by Nikolaeva (2015: 105), possessive relations internal to predestinative NPs should be best understood as generic functional relations, encompassing proper possession just as one possible realisation. Thus, in autobenefactive cases, the most frequent semantic category to be found in predestinative NPs is that of artifacts, which are created by the subject for its own benefit, as shown in (16) to (18).

(16) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

mod'i teza?, man-ʔ n'e-zu? *čeze-zo-j?* *šeda-da-z?*
 1SG.NOM now say-CVB NEG-CONTR.3SG>SG lasso-PRD-NOM.1SG make-FUT-1SG
 ‘Now, I say, I will make a lasso.’¹⁶ (BAS_2009_MakingLasso_nar.001)

¹⁶ For the idiomatic use of negative auxiliaries with positive emphatic meaning see Gusev (2020).

(17) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

n'e ŋačeki waw-da-mta s'erta

woman child bed-PRD-ACC.3SG make.3SG

‘The girl made herself a bed [...]’ (YaYA_1973_ThreeDaughters_flk.158)

(18) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

n'erəbtükü? d'əŋguj-t'ə-mə meliði-ʔə-m bən'd'ə kiti-s'an'-d'əbtə

first trap-PRD-ACC.1SG make-PFV-1SG all attach-NMLZ-SOC

‘First I made traps using anchoring blocks.’ (KBD_71_PolarFox_nar.002)

Other events described, instead, concern human relational nouns, such as ‘wife’, and refer to new human relationships being sought or established, as in (19) to (21) Also frequent are food and beverages being acquired, prepared or consumed as shown in (22) to (24). Finally, a further special role is played by reindeer, which represent an invaluable asset, being caught, bred or killed as exemplified in (25) to (27).

(19) Tundra Nenets (translated from Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

n'e-d-m'i me-wa-n xarwa-dm

woman-PRD-ACC.1SG take-NMLZ-LAT want-1SG

‘I want to get married.’ (YaEA_1976_SyakuVeraTeta_flk.235)

(20) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

mintiagəni s'üara-ʔku-ðə-mə ŋəðə-tə-ndi-m

maybe friend-DIM-PRD-ACC.1SG find-FUT-PRS-1SG

‘Maybe I will find a friend.’ (MVL_080304_TwoMeryde_flk.160)

(21) Tundra Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

šize-ʔaj ne-zi-ziʔ nexaa-ʔ

two-ESS wife-PRD.PL-NOM.PL.3DU¹⁷ take-3PL

‘They both got married.’ (SNS_1977_TwoBrothers_flk.003)

(22) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

nu, kirbi-zi-naʔ, prɔdukti-zi-naʔ mu-da-aʔ

well bread-PRD.PL-PL.1PL foodstuff-PRD.PL-PL.1PL get-FUT-1PL

‘Well, we’ll take some bread and food.’ (BLD_IGA_2016_Fishing1_conv.BLD.024)

(23) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

ŋamsa-ko-da-mt weja-sawej ŋajabar-ʔ!

meat-DIM-PRD-ACC.2SG blood-PROP eat.raw.meat-IMP.2SG

‘Eat raw meat with blood!’ (YaYA_1973_ThreeDaughters_flk.144)

(24) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

maðə-mtu mej-kias’i ŋəmsu-ði-t’ü hiri-ʔə

tent-ACC.3SG do-INF.IMM food-PRD.PL-ACC.PL.3SG cook-PFV.3SG

‘He built a tent and cooked.’ (MVL_080304_TwoMeryde_flk.126)

(25) Tundra Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

ŋuuʔ ed’e-kazo tia-zo-ro nɔʔɔ-ʔ

one be.free-AGN reindeer-PRD-NOM.2SG capture-IMP.2SG

‘Catch one stubborn deer.’ (KXN_197X_Solda_flk.1086)

¹⁷ The direct object takes a nominative possessive suffix because the possessor is non-singular, cf. n.10.

(26) Forest Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

te-ta-jʔ *wata-naŋa-jʔ*, *kan't'a-što-na-jʔ* *kił'i* *t'a-xăna*
reindeer-PRD-ACC.1DU grow-FUT-1DU shoot-HAB-FUT-1DU.MD forest.GEN earth-LOC
'We will breed reindeer, hunt in the forest [...]' (AAK_200311_MyLife_nar.358)

(27) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

tə *bahi-ðə-mtə* *kotu-baðu-ŋ* *təʔ*
well wild.reindeer-PRD-ACC.2SG kill-INFER-2SG you.know
'Well, you killed a reindeer for yourself it seems.'
(MVL_090807_Hungabtadja_flks.386)

Among other-benefactive uses, instead, it is possible to draw a preliminary semantic divide between recipients proper and recipient-beneficiaries. Following the criteria proposed in Kittilä (2005: 275-276), in an event construal allowing for a recipient reading only a transfer event is portrayed, whereas for recipient-beneficiary readings the event construal can be split into two different moments, namely the concrete action done on behalf of the beneficiary and the resulting theme being transferred to the beneficiary. Therefore, the alternation between these two readings for a predestinative NP appears to be based on the verb's semantic valency (Luraghi & Parodi 2008). Recipient reading is in fact licenced for the basic transfer verb couple¹⁸ of Northern Samoyedic languages, which presupposes three participants from a semantic viewpoint. These verbs alone account for 43.5% occurrences of other-benefactive contexts, the most frequently transferred themes being food or beverages, and artifacts. Human

¹⁸ All Samoyedic languages display a cognate couple of basic transfer verbs, usually translated as either 'give' or 'bring'. Their distribution is rather straightforward and has been described for Nganasan and Selkup by Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi (2013) and for Forest Nenets by Siegl (2013: 351-353). One verb (Ng. *miš'i*, FE. *mič*) is used when the recipient is a third person, the other one (Ng. *tətud'a*, FE. *ta(ða)š*) is used in all other contexts. Based on my dataset, the same trend seems to be confirmed for the other Northern Samoyedic languages as well.

relational nouns, mainly ‘wife’, are also frequent and mainly occur in contexts describing matchmaking practices. That is exemplified in (28) to (33).

(28) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

n'e-kuči-n'i?, *bi-to-j?* *tɔza-ra?*
 child-DIM-NOM.PL.1SG water-PRD-NOM.1SG bring-2PL
 'My children, bring me water.' (BNN_1969_Cuckoo_flk.006)

(29) Tundra Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

mɔd'i *ne-zo-da* *mi?i-zod'i*
 1SG.NOM woman-PRD-OBL.3SG give-SBJV-PST.1SG
 'I'd give him a wife [...]' (KXN_197X_Solda_flk.316)

(30) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

tə... maa=güa-?ku-ðə-mtu *n'i-hiāaðə-m mid'ə-?*
 well what=EMPH-DIM-PRD-ACC.3SG NEG-IRR-1SG give-CVB
 'I want to give him something.' (TKF_031117_ThreeBrothers_flkd.358)

(31) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

iniðia-rə *miəðə-ðə-mtə* *təðu-?sutə*
 brother.in.law-NOM.2SG string.of.sledges-PRD-ACC.2SG give-FUT.3SG
 'Your brother-in-law will give a string of sledges to you.'
 (ChND_080729_Mosquitos_flkd.175)

(32) Tundra Nenets (translated from Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

n'e-da-mta *m'i-ka-n'i?*, *te-da-mta* *m'i-ka-n'i?*
 woman-PRD-ACC.3SG give-HORT-1DU reindeer-PRD-ACC.3SG give-HORT-1DU
 'Let's give him a wife and some reindeer.' (YaVD_1976_OldKhantysSon_flk.164)

(33) Forest Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

i čaŋka-ta-j ta-štu-xuŋ
and glass-PRD-ACC.1SG give-HAB-3DU

‘They gave me a shot glass.’ (AAK_200311_MyLife_nar.341)

Recipient-beneficiary reading, instead, is selected when the beneficiary is external to the verb’s semantic valency and so occurs as an add-on, thus licencing the bipartite event construal presented above. It may be also fruitful to analyse the predestinative suffix in this context through the lens of the tentative description proposed by Siegl (2014: 401), who compares the suffix’s function to that of applicative markers as they both play a role in expanding verbal valency. Such use is found in 41.4% cases of other-benefactive contexts, in which the most frequent predestinative objects from a semantic perspective consist in artifacts and food items being created or fetched for someone else’s benefit, as shown in (34) to (39).

(34) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

n’i-n’i? page-ku-z kere-n’i? sɔzura-zod’
child-PL.1SG parka-DIM-PRD self-OBL.1SG sew-PST.1SG

‘I sewed clothes for my children.’ (BVN_1969_HowWeLived_nar.102)

(35) Tundra Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

d’uu-kone ud’a-zi-zu? me-za-?
fat-LOC food-PRD.PL-NOM.PL.3PL make-IPFV-3PL

‘They make meat fried in the fat for them.’ (KXN_197X_Solda_flk.247)

(36) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

tahariābə kəhiā-đi-n’ə me-t’ə-biāŋhi-ri?
now shaman.clothing-PRD.PL-ACC.PL.1SG do-IPFV-NARR-2PL

‘They say you have to make shaman clothing for me [...]’

(TKF_990816_ShamanChild_flkd.090)

(37) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

koli-ði-t'i *mənə huuʔ-ku-ðəm*

fish-PRD.PL-ACC.PL.2DU 1SG look.for-IMP-1SG

‘I will get some fish for you.’ (ChND_99_Barusi_flk.045)

(38) Forest Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

čik'i m'et'a-tuŋ *t'et-ta-mtuŋ* *p'il'e-štu*

this daughter.in.law-NOM.3PL kettle-PRD-ACC.3PL cook-HAB.3SG

‘This daughter-in-law usually cooks for them.’ [lit. ‘boils the pot for them’]

(SAO_19980710_GreedyWoman_flk.004)

(39) Tundra Nenets (translated from Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

n'a-xaju-ta *p'iwa-koča-d* *sedi-ba-s'ti*

brother-DU-OBL.3SG reindeer.fur.shoes-DIM-PRD sew-DUR-HAB.3SG

‘He would sew boots for his brothers.’ (YaSP_1993_ThreeKhanty_flk.005)

In addition, in both auto- and other-benefactive uses a small share of instances (10.1% and 10.4% respectively) displays predestinative NPs with lexemes that refer to abstract or otherwise intangible entities. In such cases the possessive relation predicated by the NPs is to be understood as figurative, as shown in (40) to (42) for autobenefactive cases and in (43) to (45) for other-benefactive cases.

(40) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

meši-d', sɔʒza d'iri-ču-zo-duʔ *ko-š* *lɔziʔ-obi-ʔ*

roam-INF good live-NMLZ-PRD-OBL.3PL find-INF cannot-HAB-CVB

‘Wandering, they could not find a better life.’

(BVN_1969_ReindeerFormerly_nar.036)

(41) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

kuni-ðə təndə komə sərbi-ðə-mi? ɲəðə-tə-ɲu-mu?
where-ABL.ADV that.GEN except reliance-PRD-ACC.1PL find-FUT-INTER-1PL
‘Where will we find help but from him?’ (KVB_97_Djuhode_nar.031)

(42) Forest Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

tad’a d’ata-š šex’elaj-ta-j p’ul’a-t ɲe-wna
exist.CVB go-INF road-PRD-ACC.1SG search-1SG be-DRV.3SG
‘Walking, I look for my way.’ (VA_VR_200206_Wandering_nar.VA.022)

(43) Tundra Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

məd’i kane-čə-do-j? kita-?
1SG leave-NMLZ-PRD-NOM.1SG tell-IMP.2SG
‘Tell me what my way is.’ (KXN_197X_Solda_flk.903)

(44) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

mənə buəðu-ðə-mtə koi-ʔsiðə-m
1SG word-PRD-ACC.2SG leave-FUT-1SG
‘I’ll leave a word for you [...]’ (KNT_960809_WildAnimals_flkd.105)

(45) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

xə mun-ʔ n’ema-d-m’i n’i-ʔ ta-mb’u-ʔ
thunder.GEN sound-NOM.PL dream-PRD-ACC.1SG NEG-3PL give-DUR-CVB
‘The thunder keeps me awake.’ [lit. ‘the sounds of the thunder don’t give me a dream.’]
(YaVD_1976_ThreeShamans_flk.005)

As shown in (43) and (45), the predestinative suffix can be also employed in other-benefactive contexts to encode an addressee

All the occurrences that have been introduced so far seem to be compatible with a nominal TAM interpretation in that the functional relation predicated within the predestinative NP is demoted to a prospective, hypothetical time in the future. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, besides abstract contexts, the nominal semantic categories that the predestinative suffix combines with are very close to those outlined by Tonhauser (2007: 842) for another candidate to the status of nominal TAM marker, i.e. the nominal future suffix *-rȧ* of Paraguayan Guaraní (Tupian; Paraguay).

However, as it was highlighted by Khanina & Shluinsky (2014) for Enets, there exists a set of cases in which the predestinative suffix is used for reference to relations that already hold at the moment of speech. This is also confirmed for current data on all Northern Samoyedic languages and mostly occurs with autobenefactive contexts, representing 21.3% of autobenefactive cases. In such instances, shown in (46) to (48), the self-oriented nature of the action is emphasised, but new possessive relations are not involved.

(46) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

pogu-zi-naʔ či-go-š kan'ie-eʔ

net-PRD.PL-1PL set-DUR-INF leave-1PL

‘We left to install our nets.’ (SNI_2010_HowWeWereInTundra_nar.007)

(47) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

tahari̇aa ŋanaʔsa-ði-t'ə konu-ʔ, tovarə-ði-t'ə

now person-PRD.PL-NOM.PL.2SG take.away-IMP.2SG product-PRD.PL-NOM.PL.2SG

‘Take your people away and your goods.’ (PKM_93_Njisyme_flk.384)

(48) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

xar-da-mta čuxulŋa

knife-PRD-ACC.3SG pull.3SG

‘He immediately pulled out his knife.’ (LEP_1977_YonggadaSyarmuj_flk.204)

Analogous other-benefactive uses, instead, are much scarcer, and only amount to 4.7% of all other-benefactive cases. In (49), the only licenced reading seems to be substitutive benefaction: given that the beneficiary is supposedly already related to the predestinative-marked object, the only possible benefit consists in an action done on said object on behalf of the beneficiary. In (50), instead, a transfer event is reported but the theme already belongs to both recipient and giver, as it is clear from the co-text.

(49) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

kat=ej, adu-zo-jʔ εba-xon pe-lo-ʔ
 girl.NOM=EXCL louse-PRD-NOM.1SG head-LOC look.for-INCH-IMP.2SG
 ‘You girl, look for lice in my head.’ (SDA_1969_OldMan_flk.064)

(50) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

wesuʔ, xor’ec’a-da-m’i ta-ʔ
 husband worn.panitsa-PRD-NOM.1SG bring-IMP.2SG
 ‘Old man, bring the old panitsa.’ [the panitsa is an item of festive clothing for women]
 (LMM_1950_WhiteDog_flk.015)

Therefore, despite representing a minority, such set of contexts in which the predestinative object is already possessed by the recipient-beneficiary (formally: *tpos* < *tnp*, as in Nikolaeva 2015) may ultimately support the traditional benefactive reading as a safer interpretation.

4.3 Subject position

Predestinative NPs functioning as subjects are not very frequent overall, accounting for 8.5% of the occurrences in the dataset (cf. Table 4). From a lexical point of view, nouns occurring in

this position mostly belong to the semantic categories of human relations, artifacts, and intangible and abstract entities, as shown in (51) to (54).

(51) Tundra Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

kuuno-zo nixo-zo-za toa
 where-ABL.ADV force-PRD-NOM.3SG come.3SG
 ‘Where from has his strength appeared [, his father thought...]’
 (KXN_197X_Solda_flk.819)

(52) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

bajku=əu hingaʔa-tə-mi təðu-ʔ, n'üə-ðə-mi
 old.man=EXCL pillow-PRD-NOM.1DU give-IMP.2SG child-PRD-NOM.1DU
ŋətumi-ʔə
 appear-PFV.3SG
 ‘Old man, give me our pillow, our child was born.’ (ChZS_080212_Djajku_flkd.013)

(53) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

miəðə-ti-nüʔ bət'ü-ru-gə-ta-ndəʔ
 string.of.sledges-PRD.PL-PL.1PL join-PASS-ITER-PRS-3PL.REFL
 ‘They connected sledges in a caravan for us.’ [lit. ‘Strings of sledges would be connected for us.’] (ChND_041213_Reminiscence_nar.149)

(54) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

č'i=ŋejʔ, n'enej n'a-d-m'i to=n'uʔ
 here=EMPH true friend-PRD-NOM.1SG come.3SG=EMPH
 ‘Now here comes the real helper for me.’ (YaEA_1976_OldWomanMarincha_flk.035)

It was pointed out by Salminen (2014: 292, 2024: 237) that, in contrast with Enets and Nganasan, predestinative subjects in Nenets are very infrequent and might be possibly understood as temporary formations. This does not imply, however, that predestinative NPs in

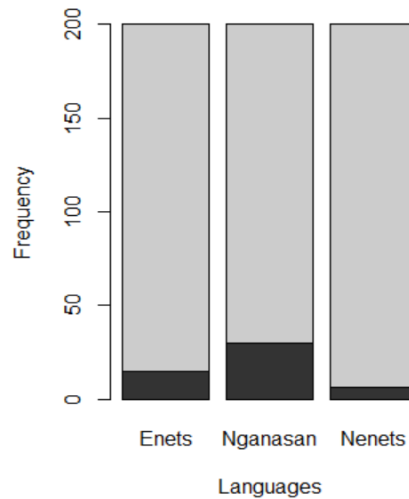


Figure 4. Distribution of (non-)subject occurrences of predestinative NPs. Darker areas represent the share of subjects in each language.

Nenets are rare overall because the nominative steadily occurs as the default case of imperative objects, as it was noted in Section 3.1. At any rate, such comparative scarcity for Nenets is also confirmed by the present dataset: as summarised in Figure 4, the number of predestinative subjects varies across languages and Nenets has the fewest. Furthermore, the correlation between language and frequency of predestinative subjects appears to be highly significant, yet very weak ($\chi^2 = 18.9$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$, Cramer's $V = 0.18$), which may be due to the relatively small size of the dataset compared to the overall cross-linguistic scarcity of predestinative subjects.

As to the rarity of predestinative subjects in Nenets, Nikolaeva's observations in her *Tundra Nenets grammar* (2014: 73) are particularly noteworthy. As she points out, predestinative-marked nouns in the nominative can only occur as subjects of a minority of verbs which mean either 'arrive' or 'appear' and serve a presentative function, as in (54) above. The same verbs outlined for Nenets can be also found with predestinative subjects of Nganasan and Enets, but other contexts appear possible in these two languages.

More specifically, Nganasan, which displays the highest number of predestinative subjects, shows a very high productivity of the passive voice in such contexts. Almost half of

Nganasan predestinative subjects in the current dataset indeed occurs with passive verbs. Ultimately, the high frequency of passives in Nganasan can be traced back to discourse pragmatic motivations: as explained by Leisiö (2006: 225-226), Nganasan very often resorts to passive voice for preserving topic continuity.

In addition, the availability of a synthetic suffixal passive may also play a role. Nganasan indeed features two passive constructions: a synthetic passive formed by a dedicated suffix and a participle-based passive (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 294-302). All passive forms encountered with predestinative subjects in Nganasan are of the first type. The passive of Enets is also built through dedicated derivational suffixes (Siegl 2013: 404-424), whereas (Tundra) Nenets features a different type of passive, which is based on participial forms and partly displays an analytic pattern (Nikolaeva 2014: 239-245).

4.4 Translative function

Like predestinative subjects, predestinative NPs with translative function also represent a small share of the dataset and account for 9.5% of total occurrences. What is remarkable for this function is the overwhelming prevalence, from a semantic perspective, of human relational nouns, especially those referring to marriage, ‘wife’ / ‘woman’ being the most frequent. Such contexts alone make up 76.3% of translative cases and refer to the establishment or negotiation of marriages and related events. This is shown in (55) to (58).

(55) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

nɛ n'e-d nɛ-zo-n'iʔ tɔzɑ-ʔ

woman child-OBL.2SG woman-PRD-OBL.1SG bring-IMP.2SG

‘Give me your daughter as a wife [...]’ (SDA_1969_TwoBrothers_flk.096)

(56) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

mənə n'akələ-ʔ ni-ðə-tə

1SG take-IMP.2SG woman-PRD-GEN.2SG

‘Take me as your wife.’ (MACH_NN_Dyurakanku_flk.042)

(57) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

ηad'b'a-n'i ma-dm čedaaw n'e-d-n'i mi-ηgu-w

therefore-GEN.1SG say-1SG now woman-PRD-GEN.1SG make-FUT-1SG>SG

‘This is why I tell you that I will marry her.’ (YaEA_1976_FourVeliRichmen_flk.058)

(58) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

Tes'ada ηačeki-m n'u-d-n'i? me-xe-m'i?

Tesyada child-ACC child-PRD-GEN.1DU take-HORT-1DU>SG

‘The boy Tesyada will be our son.’ [lit. ‘Let’s take the boy Tesyada as our son.’]

(YaOY_1993_TwoNevasyadaRichmen_nar.097)

The predestinative NP does not partake in the verb’s core argument structure and specifies the intended function of the direct object (‘as a wife’) serving a translative function. As can be seen in (57) and (58), objective conjugation is allowed with translative predestinative NPs and obeys the standard discourse-based norms of Uralic differential object marking (Klumpp & Skribnik 2022: 1026-1027).

As can be observed from Figure 5, the distribution of translative predestinative NPs across languages is not homogeneous: a highly significant, yet very weak ($\chi^2 = 18.26$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$, Cramer’s $V = 0.17$), correlation can indeed be detected between language and frequency of translative uses. Nganasan displays the fewest number of translative

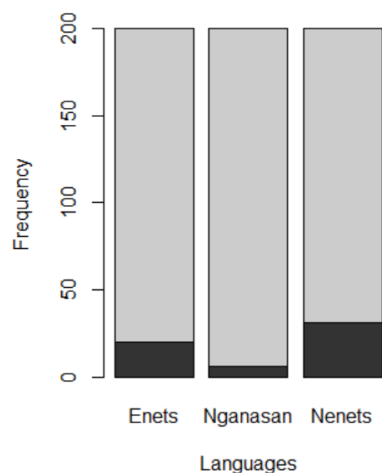


Figure 5. Distribution of (non-)translative occurrences of predestinative NPs. Darker areas represent the share of translative NPs in each language.

predestinative NPs, which matches Wagner-Nagy’s (2017: 261) observations on the rarity of such function in the language. On the other hand, Nenets, and Tundra Nenets within, features the highest number of translative predestinative NPs. The reasons behind such prevalence are not entirely clear but may well relate to the content of the Tundra Nenets texts included in the dataset, which very often depict marriages and related practices. Further research is of course needed for a better understanding of these distributional trends.

4.5 Other occurrences

This section describes a miscellaneous set of occurrences with non-prototypical behaviour and problematic status, such as adverbial forms with local and purposive functions.

The use of the predestinative suffix with a local meaning is only documented in literature for Nganasan. In this language the suffix can combine with the allative¹⁹ postposition *d’a* together with a pronominal possessive suffix to express the allative forms of personal

¹⁹ In all works on the topic by Wagner-Nagy (2017, 2018), the postposition *d’a* is consistently labelled ‘allative’ and glossed as ALL to keep it separate from the lative case (LAT); the same standard is followed here as well.

pronouns, which have lost standard inflection. It should be observed, however, that this is just one of the two possible strategies employed in Nganasan to supply for a pronominal directional case, the other being the inflected lative postposition *na* without predestinative marker (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 107-110). The distributional difference between the two is attributed to the kind of transfer event in which the two postpositions occur: *na* would encode concrete transfer, while *d'a* abstract transfer (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 398-399). This does not seem to be entirely confirmed by the present dataset, in which the preposition *d'a* occurs in various contexts of directed motion lacking a proper recipient reading. This is shown in (59), where the object is thrown towards someone, and in (60), where a visit is paid to someone; to these it could be added a further function, not attested in the current dataset but quite extensively documented by Wagner-Nagy (2017, 2018: 398-399), namely that of addressee, as in (61).

(59) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

ŋon d'i-ti-ndə-ti *d'a-ðə-tu* *t'ajbə-d'əə-rə*
 go.out-NMLZ.IPFV-LAT-GEN.3SG ALL-PRD-GEN.3SG stomach-PST-NOM.2SG²⁰
d'übə-ri-ʔə-ʔ
 throw.out-PASS-PFV-3SG.REFL

‘As it went out, they threw the stomach to it.’ [lit. ‘the stomach was thrown to him’; context: in this folktale animals are feasting on the remains of a reindeer, a mouse joins in] (TAM_68_Reindeer_flkd.029)

(60) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

Avamuski ad'a-kü-t'ü *koni-ŋkə-biāhi-ʔ* *d'a-ðə-tu*
 Avam Dolgan-DIM-NOM.PL.3SG go-ITER-NARR-3PL ALL-PRD-GEN.3SG

‘The Avam Dolgans go visit him’ (KES_080726_Family_nar.020)

²⁰ On the discourse function of nonreferential second- and third-person singular possessive suffixes see Zayzon (2015).

(61) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2017: 260)

tahariabə Sidorinə-mə munu-ʔə d'a-tə-nə
now Sidorina-1SG say-PFV.3SG ALL-PRD-GEN.1SG
'Now, Sidoride said to me [...]

In Tundra Nenets, instead, a potential instance of lative predestinative was found, as shown in (62). Interestingly, a dubious lative predestinative form was also reported for Nganasan (Creissels & Daniel 2006).

(62) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

wark-ʔ wango-ta-n jada wewa
bear-GEN den-PRD-LAT walk.CVB bad.3SG
'It is a bad idea to go into a bear's den.' (LAI_1953_SmallTexts_nar.015)

It is remarkable that the context described in this sentence is abstract and hypothetical (the speaker is discussing polar bear hunt in general) and, as such, the predestinative NP could fit into the indefinite non-specific reading addressed in Sections 3.1 and 3.4.

The postposition *d'a* of Nganasan also appears combined with predestinative NPs in the genitive to express an adverbial function with causal/purposive meaning, as in (63) and (64).

(63) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

əm-i-ʔ ʎanaʔsa-ndiʔ mənə n'ilu-tə-nə d'a
this-ADJZ-GEN.PL man-LAT.PL 1SG life-PRD-GEN.1SG ALL
hujkə-la-s'ii-nə, n'üə-ʔkü-nə d'aðiʔkü
contact.with-INCH-PST-1SG.REFL child-DIM-GEN.1SG for.the.sake.of
'I began to work for them because of my child, in order to live a better life.'
(KES_080721_Disease_flkd.009)

(64) Nganasan (translated from Brykina et al. 2018)

tahariābə lakariāiʔ tuj-hüʔə-ðə-tu d'a təs'iaðə taniʔiā

now suddenly come-NMLZ.PF-PRD-GEN.3SG ALL now so

t'enti-riā-ŋəə-ʔ təndə-ʔ əndi-t'i

be.ready-PASS-IMP. 3PL that-NOM.PL sort.of-NOM.PL.3SG

‘For his arrival these things have to be ready, you know.’

(TKF_990812_EvilSpirit_flkd.153)

As can be noticed in (64), the predestinative suffix seems allowed to attach to nominalised verbal forms. A similar instance is also found in Forest Nenets, where the predestinative and personal suffixes follow deverbal nominalisation. As shown in (65), it expresses a clearly purposive function. However, since in Forest Nenets first-person singular possessive suffixes of all cases have conflated into a single form (Burkova 2022: 686), it is hard to determine the exact case to be assigned here, so the glossing is left unspecified.

(65) Forest Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

kupiʔša-sami-mʔ, t'ala-m šewa-p'e-maʔ-ta-j

spoon-DRV-1SG.MD sand-ACC dig.out-DUR-NMLZ-PRD-1SG

‘I was with a spoon to scoop up sand.’ (ILA_200411_Poet_nar.013)

Still related to the purposive adverbial function are the predestinative forms of the interrogative pronoun, which serve as interrogative adverbials with an emphatic nuance, as highlighted by Leisiö (2014: 47) for Nganasan. This is exemplified in (66) and (67) from Forest Enets and Tundra Nenets respectively, in which the interrogative pronoun occurs in the translative (i.e. genitive) case. In example (68) from Nganasan, instead, a nominal sentence is given featuring a plural predestinative interrogative.

(66) Forest Enets (Shluinsky et al. 2024)

ɔbuš, ɔbu-zi-n`i? d`ɔzi-tu-d-e-n?

what-PRD.PL-PL.1PL hit-IPFV-FUT-OBJ.PL-1SG>NSG

‘Why, why should I shoot them?’ (BLD_2010_NicknameGoose_nar.016)

(67) Tundra Nenets (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024)

amge-da-nt s`aŋa-r

what-PRD-GEN.2SG regret-2SG>SG

‘Why are you regretting?’ (YaVD_1977_Marincha_flk.011)

(68) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

maa-ði-t`ə satəɾə-ʔ

what-PRD.PL-NOM.PL.2SG polar.fox-NOM.PL

‘What do you need polar foxes for?’ (MVL_080304_TwoMeryde_flk.024)

Of course, many of the forms introduced in this Section are debatable and susceptible to represent temporary formations. Further research would be crucial as only a language-specific study, based on a larger dataset, can ultimately assess their status. In addition, an intensive targeted study would allow to detect morphological and functional peculiarities at a lower magnitude level.

Interim summary

The corpus-based analysis resorted to three corpora related to the Hamburg-based INEL project: the INEL Enets Corpus (Shluinsky et al. 2024), the INEL Nenets Corpus (Budzisch & Wagner-Nagy 2024), and the pioneering Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus (Brykina et al. 2018). 200 occurrences of predestinative NPs were randomly selected from each corpus (cf. Table 3 for further details) and tagged according to their function and lexical context. As shown

in Table 4, predestinative objects represent the biggest share of the dataset and are further split into autobenefactive and other-benefactive contexts. Autobenefactive contexts, i.e. occurrences where the possessor of the predestinative NP is co-referential with the subject, are the more frequent; semantically, the most common events depicted are the creation of artifacts and food items, matchmaking practices, and reindeer husbandry. Other-benefactive contexts, instead, in which subject and predestinative possessor do not co-refer, are further divided into instances of recipients proper and recipient-beneficiaries, which distinction is rooted in the semantic valency of the governing verb. Proper recipients are the more frequent, despite being encoded only by a pair of transfer verbs. In both cases, the most common objects being given, created or fetched are food items and artifacts. Additionally, a common set of abstract nouns was found in both auto- and other-benefactive contexts where a figurative kind of prospective possession is predicated. While all the aforementioned instances may uphold the nominal TAM reading, some other are found in which the possessive relation already holds at the moment of utterance, thus countering the nominal TAM theory and possibly favouring the interpretation of the predestinative suffix as a benefactive marker. Subsequently, the cross-linguistic distribution of predestinative subjects and translative predestinative forms was addressed. While Nenets displays a significantly lower number of predestinative subjects (confirming Salminen's 2014 account) and a significantly higher number of translative predestinative forms, Nganasan features the opposite pattern; Enets is always located in the middle of each figure (cf. Figure 4 and Figure 5 for reference). The reason for the prevalence of predestinative subjects in Nganasan has been tentatively found in the reportedly high frequency of the passive voice in the language combined with a productive way of forming synthetic passive forms. Less clear is the high frequency of translative predestinative forms in Nenets, which may be due to the content of the texts included in the INEL Nenets Corpus: it was indeed shown that translative

predestinative forms are strongly lexically dependent, as the absolute majority of lexemes occurring in such construction refers to spouses, particularly wives being taken by their future husband. Eventually, less prototypical occurrences were addressed. The predestinative suffix was shown to attach to the Nganasan postposition *d'a* to encode trajectories and addressees, while an additional purposive function was highlighted for all languages, which emerges when the suffix is combined with the inanimate interrogative pronoun.

5. DISCUSSIONS: THE ORIGIN OF THE SUFFIX

This Chapter addresses the debate on the origin of the predestinative suffix of Northern Samoyedic, trying to conciliate the areal and the genealogical sides of the issue also in the light of the corpus-based analysis outlined above. Section 5.1 takes into account the contribution of contact and areal factors in a possible case of pattern borrowing. Section 5.2, instead, examines the diachronic evidence speaking in favour of the Proto-Uralic origin of the suffix.

5.1 Contact factors: Tungusic and beyond

As highlighted in Siegl (2013: 402-403) and Khanina & Shluinsky (2014: 1421-1422), suffixes similar in function to the Northern Samoyedic predestinative have been reported for other, genetically unrelated languages of the Enisej language area. This fact, together with the general cross-linguistic rarity of similar suffixes, may well point to a contact phenomenon resulting in some areally shared features.

Cases very similar in function to the predestinative suffix are found in most Tungusic languages. The status of such markers, however, is easier to determine for Tungusic than for Northern Samoyedic: they can be easily classified as cases because they do alternate with other case markers in the paradigm, while the Northern Samoyedic predestinative occurs together with core cases (Khanina & Shluinsky 2014: 1422).

Due to its geographical location, Evenki is the most likely language in the Tungusic family to have played a role in a contact scenario. Following the traditional taxonomy repropounded by Oskolskaya (2024), it can be ascribed to the Ewenic branch, together with the other Northern Tungusic languages Even, Negidal, Oroqen and Solon. It is spoken in Eastern Siberia and in the Russian Far East by a few thousand speakers living in scattered settlements,

which correlates with conspicuous dialectal variation (Janhunen 2023a: 139-143). Notably, some Northern dialects are now spoken in the Enisej basin, and (not necessarily peaceful) contacts have been reported in history between Evenkis and Northern Samoyedic peoples (cf. Nikolaeva 2014: 3 for Tundra Nenets, Siegl 2014: 36-57 for Forest Enets, and Wagner-Nagy 2018: 4-6 for Nganasan). Furthermore, ancient contacts have also been proved between Proto-Tungusic and Proto-Samoyedic through lexical evidence (Xelimskij 2000, Anikin & Xelimskij 2007).

Evenki has two case markers for direct objects, usually referred to as (definite) accusative and indefinite accusative (cf. e.g. Nedjalkov 1997, Pakendorf & Aralova 2020, while in Vovin et al. 2023 the latter is called “partitive”). As labelling suggests, the alternation between the two case markers is determined by the discourse status of the object, but the indefinite accusative displays further peculiar uses. If a noun is marked by the indefinite accusative followed by a possessive suffix, it is interpreted as a prospective possession, as shown in (69); a special possessive reflexive suffix is used in autobenefactive cases (Nedjalkov 1997: 147-148), as in (70). The indefinite accusative case can also absolve a translative function, serving as secondary object predicate, as in (71).

(69) Evenki (Nedjalkov 1997: 147)

d'av-ja-v o:-kal
 boat-ACCIN-1SG make-IMP.2SG
 ‘Make a boat for me.’

(70) Evenki (Nedjalkov 1997: 148)

d'eptyle-je-ver ga-kaim suru-che-tyn
 food-ACCIN-REFL.PL take-CVB go.away-PST-3PL
 ‘Taking food for themselves, they went away.’

(71) Evenki (Kolesnikova 1966: 161 in Malchukov & Nedjalkov 2010: 330)

bi sin-du buu-d'e-m hute-i asi-ja-s

1SG.NOM 2SG-DAT give-FUT-1SG child-REFL wife-ACCIN-2SG

‘I shall give you my daughter as your wife.’

The analogy with the Northern Samoyedic predestinative is patent: in (69) and (70) the recipient-beneficiary is encoded inside the theme’s NP, while (71) displays a translative NP in the same context as those encountered in Section 4.4. Unlike the predestinative suffix, however, the Evenki indefinite accusative seems specialised for recipient-benefactives, whereas for proper recipient arguments a standard dative-based construction is used (Nedjalkov 1997: 148). It is anyway remarkable that, of the two available accusatives, it is the indefinite one that takes part in a recipient-benefactive reading, which matches the indefinite discourse status outlined for Northern Samoyedic predestinative NPs (cf. Sections 3.1 and 3.4 above).

The indefinite accusative is shared within a subset of Ewenic languages comprising Evenki, Negidal, Solon and Oroqen (Oskolskaya 2024: 143). In Even, instead, as well as in several languages from other Tungusic branches, another case is found, known as “destinative” (Pakendorf & Aralova 2020, Oskolskaya 2024) or “designative” (Gruntov & Mazo 2020, Vovin et al. 2023). It can only occur in combination with possessive suffixes (Gruntov & Mazo 2020: 545) and encodes the prospective possession of a noun in the context of both recipient-benefactive and ditransitive events with transfer verbs, in a similar fashion to the Evenki indefinite accusative and the Northern Samoyedic predestinative (Malchukov 2018: 16). Remarkably, translative uses and subject uses with appearance or existential verbs are also documented (Malchukov 2023: 270, 283).

Diachronically, it is debated whether the indefinite accusative and designative should be regarded as the outcome of a single Proto-Tungusic case: while Janhunen (2023b: 53) clusters them together despite acknowledging difficulties in the reconstruction, Gruntov &

Mazo (2020: 545) are more cautious and keep them apart. In this respect, it should be noted that a tentative grammaticalization process for the Even designative marker *-ga* has also been proposed, which relates it to the supine form of the verb *ga-* ‘take’ (Malchukov 2010: 148).

Therefore, it is observed that the predestinative suffix shares close functional similarities with two case markers reported for the Tungusic family. However, two crucial differences can still be found: as illustrated above, the Tungusic indefinite accusative and designative are doubtlessly cases, while the case status is much more debatable for the Northern Samoyedic predestinative; secondly, predestinative marking is the default strategy for recipient-benefaction and ditransitivity in Northern Samoyedic, while dative-like constructions are more common in Tungusic (Malchukov 2018: 15-17). Therefore, while a case of matter borrowing may be ruled out due to the lack of phonetic similarity between the suffixes, an instance of pattern borrowing whereby the function of a Tungusic case is taken over and further adapted by Northern Samoyedic languages seems likely. This is made even more plausible by considering the numerous and complex areal contacts between the languages of the Enisej zone, which scenario is known for catalysing phenomena of pattern borrowing (Sakel 2007). The matter side of the issue, however, i.e. which Northern Samoyedic linguistic item took over the functions of the Tungusic case, can be best addressed through internal reconstruction as shown in Section 5.2 below.

Extending the view to other languages in the area, fainter resemblances are found. A benefactive case is reported for Ket, the last living representative of the small Yeniseian family, precariously spoken in a dozen non-monolingual settlements along the course of the Enisej in contact with Selkup and Enets (Georg 2007: 16-26). However, despite some general semantic and formal similarities (the suffix contains an alveodental stop followed by an open illabial vowel), its function appears rather different from that of the predestinative suffix as it univocally marks the beneficiary and bears no relation with the theme, as shown in (72).

(72) Ket (Georg 2007: 109)

qīm də⁸-b³-bed ileŋ īs dīlked-nata
woman 3F-3N-make food fish children-BEN.PL
‘The woman prepares food for the children.’

The benefactive case in question appears closer to a nuanced dative-like case restricted to recipient-benefactive contexts. When it attaches to an inanimate noun, instead, it serves a purposive function, as in (73), or signals the topic of tales, songs etc. (Georg 2007: 109-110), as in (74). Both functions are unknown to the predestinative suffix.

(73) Ket (Georg 2007: 109)

kide eʔl ul-dita
this pitcher water-BEN.N
‘This pitcher is for water.’

(74) Ket (Georg 2007: 109)

āt di⁸-bil-in át-na éŋqoŋ-dita
1PL 1-sing-PL 1PL-GEN.PL village-BEN.N
‘We are singing about our village.’

In conclusion, it may be worth considering that Selkup (Southern Samoyedic) displays an own translative case (Klumpp & Budzisch 2023: 909). It attaches to the genitive form of the noun and serves three main functions. Besides working as translative proper, as in (75), it occurs to mark objects that are needed or requested by the subject, thus resembling a subset of autobenefactive contexts covered by the Northern Samoyedic predestinative suffix, as illustrated in (76), which is compared with (77) from Nganasan for reference. At last, it can encode a general topic like the Ket benefactive case, as shown in (78).

(75) Selkup (Bekker et al. 1995: 279 in Klumpp & Budzisch 2023: 909)

mat kibʌa neŋa-p ima-tko i-sa-m
1SG young sister-ACC wife-TRSL take-PST-1SG>SG
'I took the younger sister as a wife.'

(76) Selkup (Klumpp & Budzisch 2023: 909)

po-ŋgo tʃa:tʃa-s
wood-TRSL go-PST.3SG
'He went for firewood.'

(77) Nganasan (Brykina et al. 2018)

təti tahariāa ləði-s'ia-mi? bi-tə-mi? huurə-?
that now in.vain-PST-1PL water-PRD-ACC.1PL look.for-CVB
'We looked for water in vain.' [ChNS_080214_Wandering_nar.019]

(78) Selkup (Klumpp & Budzisch 2023: 909)

kundə man as:ə yndə-di-sa-v tav ɛdi-la-ŋgo
long 1SG NEG hear-IPFV-PST-1SG>OBJ this village-PL-TRSL
'For a long time I did not hear about these villages.'

In addition, Bekker's (1978: 161) grammatical account briefly reports that, like the predestinative suffix in Nganasan, the Selkup translative case can attach to postpositions.

5.2 The Proto-Uralic hypothesis: form and function

The hypothesis that the predestinative suffix may have a Proto-Uralic origin has been proposed in literature since the 19th century, as summarised in Siegl (2013: 402-403). Nowadays, Castrén's (1854: 220) theory on the derivation of the predestinative suffix from the third-person

singular possessive suffix has been rejected. The most reliable and successful hypothesis was brought forth by Janhunen (1989), who compared Proto-Samoyedic predestinative **-tə* with the reconstructed Proto-Uralic suffix **-ksi*, surfacing in the Finnish, Estonian and Mordvin translative cases (Finnish *-ksi*, Estonian and Mordvin *-ks*). Despite the ostensible phonetic difference, the derivation is explained by regular sound changes (Ylikoski 2017: 401): as part of an obstruent consonant cluster, the velar stop is always deleted in the shift from Proto-Uralic to Proto-Samoyedic while the sibilant regularly turns into a dentoalveolar stop, so that changes like PU **miksa* > PS **mitə* > Tundra Nenets *mid^o* vs. Finnish *maksa* ‘liver’ are totally predictable.

Salminen (2014, 2024) produces further evidence in favour of Janhunen’s hypothesis with data from Tundra Nenets. According to his reconstruction, the Proto-Uralic suffix **-ksi* would have resulted in what is synchronically described as the translative or genitive form of the predestinative suffix. Based on his synchronic analysis of Tundra Nenets case morphology (Salminen 1997), he further equates such form to local cases in their possessive declension, so that e.g. *ŋəno-də-ŋta* : boat-PRD-GEN.3SG = *ŋəno-xənan-ta* : boat-LOC-3SG (examples adapted from Nikolaeva 2014: 67, 72). According to Salminen’s reconstruction, the nasal consonant that synchronically follows the local case as a co-affix would have followed Proto-Uralic **-ksi* as well. In the case of PU **-ksi*, however, Proto-Samoyedic increasingly came to interpret the nasal co-affix as a proper genitive marker, leading to the back-formation of an accusative and a nominative form accordingly. Therefore, the origin of the predestinative paradigm is explained as a divergent Samoyedic development of a reconstructed Proto-Uralic suffix with a morphological behaviour similar to that of local cases.

As to the function of Proto-Uralic **-ksi*, Salminen proposes a fully-fledged translative case in his last contribution (Salminen 2024: 224), while in his earlier article (Salminen 2014) he also compares Proto-Uralic **-ksi* with two derivational suffixes found in Finnish and Tundra

Nenets. He draws a functional and formal comparison between the Finnish derivational suffix *-s / -kse-*, as in *sormus* : ring.NOM / *sormukse-n* : ring-GEN < *sormi* ‘finger’ (Ylikoski 2017: 401), and the Tundra Nenets purposive derivational suffix *-d°*, as in *pyirye-* ‘to boil’ > *pyiryebco* ‘something boiled’ > *pyiryebcd°* ‘something intended for boiling’ (Salminen 2014: 295). In so doing, he connects the Tundra Nenets derivational suffix *-d°* to the Proto-Samoyedic predestinative suffix **-tə* and, by extension, to Proto-Uralic **-ksi*.

In a similar vein, Ylikoski (2017) expands Salminen’s reconstruction in favour of Janhunen’s (1989) hypothesis against the older lative theory, which envisages a development of the suffix from a merger of Proto-Uralic lative allomorphs (Ajanki 2014: 257). In his view, traces of the Proto-Uralic translative **-ksi* can be also found in the Mari lative, which displays unusual translative functions along with a very problematic reconstruction. Regarding the role of the suffix in the protolanguage, he supports the reconstruction of Proto-Uralic **-ksi* as a derivational suffix with a futurate purposive meaning. To substantiate his claim, he also extends the cognateness of the purposive derivational suffixes of Finnish (*-s / -kse-*) and Tundra Nenets (*-d°*) to analogous purposive suffixes found in Saamic, Mordvin, Mari, and Permic. This finds a further parallel in Nganasan, for which Leisiö (2014: 48) reports a very similar derivational suffix (first documented by Tereščenko 1979: 107-108) featuring both a purposive function and a close formal resemblance to the predestinative marker PS **-tə*.

Moreover, he addresses the shortcomings of such reconstructive attempts, exposing the broad and generic semantic links that uphold some of the comparisons while also highlighting the lack of further evidence from Nganasan and Enets. In this respect, indeed, postulating the translative predestinative as a primer for the accusative and nominative forms might be at odds with the conservative nature ascribed to Nganasan (Janhunen 1998: 460), in which translative forms are remarkably rare (cf. Section 4.4). On the other hand, such phenomenon may be also attributed to a subsequent divergent development at a language-specific level.

At any rate, Janhunen’s hypothesis combined with Salminen’s and Ylikoski’s expansions now enjoys wide consideration and has appeared in the recent reference handbooks on Uralic languages (cf. Sámmol Ánte in Bakró-Nagy et al. 2022: 15 and Zhivlov in Abondolo & Valijärvi 2023: 153-154), where attention is paid to the close etymological and functional relatedness between the Northern Samoyedic predestinative in its translative function and the translative case of Finnish, as in (79).

(79) Sámmol Ánte 2022: 15 (bold in the original)

a. Tundra Nenets (Tereščenko 1965: 291)

nʲe *nʲu:m* ***njedʰnta*** *meʰda*
 woman child woman.PRD.GEN.3SG take.3SG>SG

b. Finnish

otti *tytön* ***vaimoksensa***
 take.PST.3SG girl.ACC wife.TRSL.3SG

‘He took the girl **as a wife for him.**’

In conclusion, it is worth noting that both Salminen (2014: 292) and Ylikoski (2017: 378) acknowledge the plausible role of Tungusic languages in shaping the function of the Northern Samoyedic predestinative. Therefore, while the functional peculiarities of the predestinative suffix can be attributed to pattern borrowing, the pre-existing linguistic material to which the pattern applies is traced back to Proto-Uralic.

5.3 Grammaticalization

Based on the evidence provided in the Sections above and in Chapter 4, it is possible to provide a tentative grammaticalization path for the predestinative suffix in accordance with the different

grammaticalization patterns of beneficiaries, recipients and related roles analysed by Luraghi (2014, 2016).

More specifically, the case of the predestinative suffix bears a relatively close resemblance to the etymology proposed for the benefactive case of Basque (Trask 1997 in Luraghi 2016: 361). Marked by the suffix *-entzat*, the structure of the Basque benefactive marker can be broken down into the genitive morpheme *-(r)en* and the morpheme *-tzat*, expressing an essive/translative function that will be henceforth labelled “functive”²¹ (as in Creissels 2014). One should not be misled by the presence of a genitive marker in the etymology of the Basque benefactive, as it bears a merely ostensible similarity to the genitive marker attested in translative predestinative forms. As explained by Salminen’s (2014) diachronic account (Section 5.2), the so-called genitive indeed consists in a reanalysed co-affix. Therefore, what is relevant in such a comparison is the existence, at a more general level, of a cross-linguistic parallel for a functive marker developing into a benefactive one.

The context is, however, more complex: as highlighted by Luraghi (2016: 360-365), the grammaticalization path of the Basque benefactive case belongs to a subset of patterns that always appear to exclude the co-expression of a recipient function. The predestinative suffix, instead, is consistently found in recipient-beneficiary and proper recipient contexts, as shown in Section 4.2. I propose here two concomitant factors that may have led to the development of a recipient-benefactive function. First, the original functive meaning of the predestinative suffix is always attested (and reconstructed) in possessive contexts with human possessors, so that the reconstructed function of the suffix can be paraphrased in a more restrictive way than the generic expressions ‘as x’, ‘in the capacity of x’ in use for functive markers, that is, ‘as *someone’s* x’, ‘in the capacity of *someone’s* x’ (cf. Section 3.1). In other words, the beneficiary

²¹ Note, however, that Creissels (2014: 641) proposes an opposite etymology, according to which the functive meaning is derived from the benefactive one.

is always encoded as a possessor inside the NP expressing the functive function, and may thus favour a recipient-benefactive reading, according to which not only does the beneficiary benefit of something done on their behalf but is also expected to own something new. The same explanation can be extended to autobenefactive cases, whereby agents create artifacts, fetch food or catch reindeer in order for these to be at their own disposal. Second, as shown in Section 5.1 above, the Evenki language displays a very similar strategy to mark recipient-beneficiaries, which is based on the indefinite accusative case. Unlike the Northern Samoyedic predestinative, it is well-fitted in the language's case system and shows very similar cognates in several languages from the Tungusic family. Therefore, the role of pattern borrowing from Tungusic to Northern Samoyedic should not be underestimated in providing Northern Samoyedic languages with a basis or a reinforcement towards the grammaticalization of a marker that is surprisingly close in function to the Evenki indefinite accusative.

The function of recipient proper is also a case in point. It was outlined in Section 4.2 (cf. n.18) that a recipient reading in a predestinative NP stems from the semantic valency of a pair of polysemous verbs encompassing the meanings of both 'give' and 'bring'. As noted in Luraghi (2014: 115-116), recipients can derive from beneficiaries, but such a development seems bound to markers that originally had a lative meaning. This cannot be the case of the predestinative marker if a functive origin is postulated. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the predestinative encoding of recipients is not the only one available to Northern Samoyedic languages, which also show a less remarkable lative encoding. What is more, the two encodings seem to follow a complementary distribution, as outlined in Section 3.4 drawing from Nikolaeva (2015) and Khanina & Shluinsky (2020). Remarkably, the predestinative suffix is only found attached to themes that are indefinite and, most often, non-specific, which appears to be totally in line with its postulated origin as a functive marker. Functive markers are, indeed, non-referential as they generally occur to specify the capacity of

a given event participant without introducing new discourse referents (Creissels 2014: 606). Therefore, the predestinative encoding of beneficiaries may have extended to recipients only in those contexts that suited the semantic and pragmatic parameters implied by its etymology, i.e. in contexts where themes have very weak referentiality.

Related to the encoding of recipients, the addressee function also deserves attention: as shown in Section 4.2, the addressee can be encoded in the predestinative NP, which seems to outline a possible development from recipient to addressee. Such pattern, however, would definitely benefit from a comparative study on the encoding of addressees in Northern Samoyedic languages since only limited, language-specific information is available for now. Siegl (2013: 160, 188), for example, provides evidence for a lative encoding of (pronominal) addressees in Forest Enets. More interesting from a cross-linguistic perspective could be the case of the postpositional encoding of addressees described for Nganasan in Section 4.5 based on Wagner-Nagy's work (2017, 2018). She observed that pronominal addressees are coded separately from recipients by a means of the allative postposition *d'a* (vs. lative *na*) combined with the predestinative suffix. This seems to confirm Luraghi's (2016: 350-351) observations on the independent encoding of recipients and addressees: cross-linguistic evidence indeed suggests that addressees can develop from the spatial domain bypassing the encoding of recipients whenever suitable alternative markers are available, as exemplified by Daniel's (2014) study on East Caucasian languages.

On these grounds, a grammaticalization path is proposed for the Northern Samoyedic predestinative suffix in Figure 6.

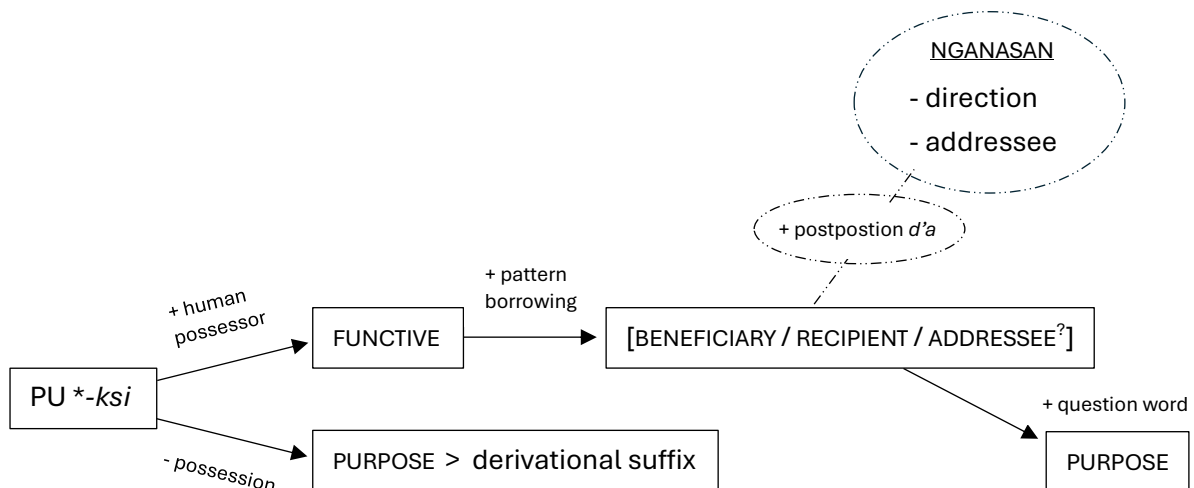


Figure 6. Proposed grammaticalization path of the predestinative suffix from PU **-ksi*. Dotted circles enclose the further independent development documented in Nganasan.

As can be seen, the purposive function encountered with question words (cf. Section 4.5) was also added to the picture as a further conditioned development of the predestinative suffix. Furthermore, I tried to include the cognate derivational suffix with purposive value documented in Section 5.2. The reason for such alternative development into a purposive marker in Northern Samoyedic is found in the absence of a co-occurring possessive construction. As a matter of fact, all the cognate purposive derivational suffixes analysed by Ylikoski (2017:401) in Tundra Nenets (cf. also Leisiö 2014: 48 on Nganasan), Finnic, Saamic, Mordvin, Mari, and Permian show clear signs of etymological relatedness and no signs of being bound to possessive contexts.

As to the original role of Proto-Uralic **-ksi*, it might be worth pursuing the analogy, albeit partial, with the Basque benefactive case. As illustrated above, it contains the functive suffix *-tzat*, which is in turn related to some local marker by both Aritzimuño (p.c. in Luraghi 2016: 361) and Lacarra (p.c. in Creissels 2014: 641). On the one hand, this may reinforce the old latve theory on the origin of Proto-Uralic **-ksi*, which is anyway countered by several

methodological issues, as reviewed in Ylikoski (2017). On the other hand, it is tempting to assume that PU **-ksi* may have functioned as a prolative marker, either as a case or as a postposition, which may be confirmed by its alternative development into a purposive marker in several Uralic branches, thus following a grammaticalization path already documented for e.g. the Ancient Greek prolative preposition *diá* (Luraghi 2016: 363-365, 373). Subsequently, such prolative value would have been supplied by Northern Samoyedic languages through the grammaticalization of a new prolative case marker from a postposition (Wagner-Nagy & Szeverényi 2022: 665). All these deeper reconstructions, however, cannot be considered exhaustive and must be addressed by further research.

Interim summary

In the linguistic area of the Enisej river, Evenki (Tungusic) features a case suffix, labelled indefinite accusative, which can be used to encode recipient-beneficiaries in a very similar way to the Northern Samoyedic predestinative suffix. Unlike in Northern Samoyedic, however, the Evenki indefinite accusative does fit in the language's case system and has very close functional cognates across many other Tungusic languages. Therefore, a case of pattern borrowing from Tungusic to Northern Samoyedic seems plausible in such areal context. As to the native Samoyedic item that was influenced by pattern borrowing, Janhunen's (1989) internal reconstruction points at the reconstructed Proto-Uralic suffix **-ksi*, whose evolution into Proto-Samoyedic **-tə* is entirely predictable. This reconstructed suffix also surfaces nowadays in the Finnish, Estonian and Mordvin translative markers and the same function is also reconstructed by Salminen (2014) for Northern Samoyedic based on Tundra Nenets data. What is now regarded as a genitive or translative predestinative form would consist in a regular case suffix that was reanalysed as containing a genitive marker, which ultimately led to the

back-formation of accusative and nominative forms. In addition, Ylikoski (2017) expanded the reconstructive attempt including the Mari lative suffix as a further possible cognate of PU **-ksi* and highlighting an additional parallel development into a purposive derivational suffix to be found in Northern Samoyedic, Finnic, Saamic, Mordvin, Mari, and Permic.

In conclusion, a grammaticalization path is proposed, as summarised in Figure 6, according to which Northern Samoyedic languages may have first developed the reconstructed Proto-Uralic suffix **-ksi* into a functive marker bound to possessive contexts, which corresponds to the synchronic genitive / translative predestinative suffix. Due to pattern borrowing, it would have subsequently undergone reanalysis and developed into a non-prototypical suffix marking a recipient-beneficiary inside a theme's phrase, thus giving rise to the accusative and nominative forms of predestinative NPs.

6. CONCLUSION

In the present work, I have proposed a comprehensive corpus-based analysis of the predestinative suffix, trying to make sense of the evidence presented by all Northern Samoyedic languages. After introducing an up-to-date picture of the languages from a genealogical and sociolinguistic perspective, I addressed the formal and functional characteristics of the predestinative suffix, highlighting its problematic status within the system of nominal inflection along with its cross-linguistically rare role in the marking of recipient-beneficiaries and proper recipients. In the corpus-based analysis, I followed a functional and semantic approach, outlining the prevalence of predestinative NPs serving as object complements in autobenefactive contexts, followed by other-benefactive uses. Additionally, I discussed the cross-linguistic differences in the distribution of subject and translative predestinative NPs. In the final chapter, I eventually addressed the areal and diachronic factors allowing to reconstruct the possible origin of the predestinative suffix, suggesting that the reconstructed Proto-Uralic marker **-ksi* may have developed eccentric features owing to the influence of Tungusic languages. In conclusion, I proposed a grammaticalization path that reconstructs the extension of the predestinative suffix from an initial functive role, still preserved in translative (genitive) predestinative NPs, towards a new use as a marker encoding recipient-beneficiaries within the theme's NP.

Regarding the categorisation of the suffix at a synchronic level, I showed that its interpretation as a benefactive marker may appear more tenable due to the existence of contexts in which the possessive relation already holds at the moment of utterance. However, such approach would still relegate the predestinative suffix to the condition of lacking any cross-linguistic parallel. On the other hand, the nominal TAM interpretation may provide promising insights into the distributional and functional properties of this suffix and seems cross-

linguistically more reliable as it may connect the predestinative suffix to an understudied phenomenon found in other languages that are both genealogically and areally unrelated. In order to do this, however, it would be necessary to adjust the current definition of nominal TAM, together with its formalisation, so as to accommodate all the occurrences of the predestinative suffix. One possible solution would be to shift the centre of the definition from the establishment of possession to a focus on the existence of such relation at a given reference time, regardless of whether said relation already held before or will be holding afterwards.

As an alternative, I would cautiously extend Malchukov's (2010) reading of the Tungusic designative to the Northern Samoyedic predestinative. This implies considering the predestinative suffix synchronically as a non-prototypical case marker resulting from the convergence of cross-linguistically rare conditions from different domains, like specific areal factors impacting on the syntactic and semantic features of the reconstructed Proto-Uralic suffix **-ksi*. The result would be an incompletely grammaticalized case, whose function lies at the border between syntax and pragmatics, as underscored by the indefinite non-specific reading always implied by predestinative NPs.

Naturally, further research is needed to shed due light on this phenomenon. On the one hand, analyses on co-expression patterns of beneficiaries and related roles across Northern Samoyedic languages may result in corrections or in further support to the grammaticalization model proposed here. In addition, adopting a short-diachrony approach may also help detect some diachronic evidence on such grammaticalization path, albeit on a minute scale. On the opposite side, fully semantics-driven enquiries would offer solid ground for comparison between the Northern Samoyedic predestinative and the Tungusic designative and indefinite accusative cases, thus providing more details on how language contact may have influenced the development of the predestinative suffix.

ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	F	feminine	OBL	oblique
2	second person	FUT	future	PASS	passive
3	third person	GEN	genitive	PFV	perfective
ABL	ablative	HAB	habitual	PL	plural
ACC	accusative	HORT	hortative	PRD	predestinative
ACCIN	indefinite accusative	IMM	immediate	PRS	present
ADJZ	adjectiviser	IMP	imperative	PROP	proprietary
ADV	adverbial	INCH	inchoative	PST	past
AGN	agentive	INF	infinitive	REFL	reflexive
ALL	allative	INFER	inferential	SBJV	subjunctive
BEN	benefactive	INTER	interrogative	SG	singular
CONTR	contrastive	IPFV	imperfective	SOC	sociative
CTRF	counterfactual	IRR	irrealis	TRSL	translative
CVB	converb	ITER	iterative		
DAT	dative	LAT	lative		
DES	designative	LOC	locative		
DIM	diminutive	MD	middle		
DRV	derivational	N	neuter		
DU	dual	NARR	narrative		
DUR	durative	NEG	negation		
EMPH	emphatic	NMLZ	nominaliser		
ESS	essive	NOM	nominative		
EXCL	exclamative	OBJ	object		

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