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Nominal tense in Tundra Nenets and Northern Samoyedic

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I address the meaning and basic syntax of the Predestinative forms of nouns in Northern Samoyedic (Uralic), with the focus on Tundra Nenets.¹ I will argue that these forms indicate future possession and therefore serve to express nominal tense with the NP-bound scope.

2. PREDESTINATIVE AND THE CASE SYSTEM OF TUNDRA NENETS

Nenets has 7 grammatical cases (Nominative, Accusative, Genitive, Dative, Locative, Ablative and Prolative) and three numbers (SG, DU, PL).² In possessive constructions the possessed head noun hosts agreement in person and number with the pronominal possessor. The expression of case and possession is often cumulative. For instance, the 2SG Accusative form of the word ‘boat’ is *ηəno-mt^o* and the Genitive is *ηəno-nt^o*, while for the 1SG the respective forms are *ηəno-w^o/ηəno-m’i* and *ηəno-n^o*.

In addition, Nenets has the so-called Predestinative forms of nouns, whose meaning can be roughly described as ‘X (meant/destined) for Y’. I will refer to X as ‘Predestinative’ *per se* and to Y as ‘Beneficiary’. The Beneficiary may be overtly expressed within the same NP, but is usually absent if it corresponds to a pronoun. The Predestinative hosts the Predestinative marker *-d^o-/-də-* and may additionally contain an agreement morpheme indicating the person/number of the Beneficiary, for example: *s’ay^o-də-m’i* ‘tea for me (1SG)’ and *wada-də-da* ‘a word for him (3SG)’. In some cases there is no agreement affix after the Predestinative morpheme, e.g. *mal’^oc’a-d^o* ‘coat for Y’; this will be discussed later in Section 4.

It should be noted that forms with a similar structure and function exist in a number of Tungusic languages, e.g. Udihe, Nanai, and Evenki. In these languages Predestinative is not compatible with case affixes and is usually analyzed as case. The structure of the nominal form is ‘root-(case)-(possessive)’. For example, in Udihe the following oblique case forms of the word *ugda-i* ‘your

¹ Tundra Nenets is spoken by about 25,000 people in Western Siberia and the Arctic part of European Russia. Unless indicated otherwise, the data comes from my own fieldwork supported by an ELDP grant and a grant from the Academy of Finland, project number 125225. The transcription is based on Salminen (1997), but is slightly modified.

² The abbreviations used in this paper are: ABL = ablative, ACC = accusative, AN = Action Nominal, DAT = dative, EMPH = emphatic, ESS = essive, GEN = genitive, IMP = imperative, NARR = narrative, NEG = negation, OBJ = object, PART = participle, PASS = passive, PL = plural, PRED = predestinative, PRES = present, PROL = prolative, SG = singular.

boat' (boat-2SG) exist (Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001): Accusative *ugda-wa-i*, Dative *ugda-du-i*, Locative *ugda-la-i*, Ablative, *ugda-digi-i*, Lative *ugda-tigi-i*, Prolative *ugda-li-i*, Instrumental *ugda-zi-i*, and Predestinative *ugda-na-i*.

However, in Tundra Nenets the syntactic function of (agreeing) Predestinatives is expressed by three different cases. These are illustrated below for 1SG, 2SG and 3SG Beneficiary. Like for simple possessives, case and agreement often cumulate.

Table 1
Case forms of (agreeing) Predestinatives in Tundra Nenets

	1SG	2SG	3SG
NOM	<i>ŋəno-də-w^o/ŋəno-də-m'i</i>	<i>ŋəno-də-r^o</i>	<i>ŋəno-də-da</i>
ACC	<i>ŋəno-də-w^o/ŋəno-də-m'i</i>	<i>ŋəno-də-mt^o</i>	<i>ŋəno-də-mta</i>
GEN	<i>ŋəno-də-n^o</i>	<i>ŋəno-də-nt^o</i>	<i>ŋəno-də-nta</i>

This suggests that the Predestinative morpheme itself does not indicate case and raises the question of its categorial status. This question will be addressed in Section 5, but first, in session 4, I will describe the syntactic functions of Predestinatives.

3. SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS OF PREDESTINATIVE FORMS

I will start with agreeing Predestinatives. The Nominative is used in two functions: it either indicates the subject (1a) or the imperative object (1b). These are the usual functions of the Nominative case in Nenets.

- (1) (a) *xasawa n'u-da-m'i soya^o*
 man child-PRED-1SG be.born.3SG
 'A son was born for me.'

- (b) *r'es^oka-də-w^o yabc^o-q*
 cake-PRED-1SG bake-IMP.2SG
 'Bake a cake for me.' (T 513)

Like regular Accusatives, Accusative Predestinatives serve as direct objects of non-imperative verbs.

- (2) (a) *pedara-xəd^o tərpi-tə-waq xos'^o yaqmə^o-waq*
 forest-ABL exit-PRED-ACC.1PL find.AN cannot-OBJ.SG.1PL
 'We cannot find the exit from the forest (for ourselves).' (T 637)

Genitive Predestinatives function as predicates in combination with some verbs (3a), or adjuncts meaning roughly 'as, for, instead' (3b).

- (3) (a) *t'uku wen'ako mən'aq wen'ako-d°-naq xəya*
 this dog we dog-PRED-GEN.1PL become.3SG
 'This dog became our dog.'
- (b) *t'uku° ti-m ηəmcodə-d°-naq*
 this reindeer-ACC food-PRED-GEN.1PL
- temta-we-waq*
 buy-NARR-OBJ.SG.1PL
 'We bought this reindeer as food for ourselves.' (T 380).

Non-agreeing Predestinatives have only one case form functioning as the object.

- (4) *pane-n'i n'i-d° temtaə-d°m*
 trousers-GEN.1SG belt-PRED buy-1SG
 'I bought a belt for my trousers.'

In other relevant syntactic roles a different form is used: the Essive in *-ηæ*. The Essive is required if the Beneficiary is a lexical noun (more on this in the following section) and fulfils the same functions as the Predestinative Nominative and Genitive. That is, can be an adjunct (5a), a predicate (5b), or a subject (5c).

- (5) (a) *Wata-h ηəno-ηæ s'erta-w°*
 Wata-GEN boat-PRED-ACC.2SG make-OBJ.SG.1SG
 'I made this as a boat for Wata.'
- (b) *xada-nta ye°nəbc'°-ηæ taraə-s'°*
 Grandmother-GEN.3SG Support-ESS Be-PAST.3SG
 'He was a support for his grandmother.' (T 95)
- (c) *shkola-h lyekarə-ηæ to°*
 school-GEN doctor-ESS arrive.3SG
 'A doctor arrived for the school.'

Unlike Predestinatives, the Essive is not compatible with possessive affixes.

4. PREDESTINATIVE AS POSSESSIVE

Siegl (2008a, b) argues that in closely related Forest Enets Predestinative affixes are actually applicative markers hosted by nouns instead of the verb. This analysis implies that the Beneficiary functions as the verbal argument and assumes a clause - level status, as is normally the case in applicative constructions.

However, in Tundra Nenets the Beneficiary is clearly NP-internal: it cannot be separated from the Predestinative and has no affect on clausal syntax. It is not an

argument of the verb, which is especially clear in the predicative use of the Predestinative in (3a) above and in ditransitives. As example (6) shows, in some cases the Beneficiary expressed by agreement on the object Predestinative is coreferential with the unexpressed goal argument. Presumably such examples led Siegl opt for the applicative analysis.

- (6) *ηəmkekəwa* *pad^or-tə-m'i* *ta^o-daq*
 some paper-PRED-1SG give-IMP.2PL
 ‘Give me some paper / Give some paper for me.’ (T 377)

However, as argued above, the Predestinative does not have to be the object, see example (7a) where it functions as an adjunct so that the Beneficiary can hardly be interpreted as the goal argument of the verb. Moreover, even if it does function as the object, the goal argument does not have to be coreferential with the Beneficiary (7b).

- (7) (a) *t'uku^o* *pad^or* *xayobc'ən-tə-n^o* *ta-d^o*
 this book memory-PRED-GEN.1SG give-IMP.SG.OBJ.2SG
 ‘Give me this book as a memory.’ (T 722)

- (b) *Masha-n^o* (*pidər^o*) *kniga-da-mt^o* *m'ija-d^om*
 Masha-DAT you book-PRED-ACC.2SG give-1SG
 ‘I gave Masha a book for you.’

Another important point is that the Predestinative phrase shows remarkable structural parallelism with the regular possessive construction. The Beneficiary, when overtly present, stands in the same case as the possessor: Nominative on pronouns or Genitive on lexical nouns. The distribution of agreement affixes on the head is also the same: agreement is obligatory if the possessor or the Beneficiary are pronominal, but absent when they correspond to a noun. This distribution is shown below for the Nominative only, but it goes through the whole case system.

- | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|-----------------|
| (8) Possessive | | Predestinative | |
| <i>(pidər^o) ηəno-r^o</i> | ‘your boat’ | <i>(pidər^o) ηəno-də-r^o</i> | ‘boat for you’ |
| <i>Wata-h (GEN)</i> | ‘Wata’s boat’ | <i>Wata-h (GEN) ηəno-d^o</i> | ‘boat for Wata’ |
| <i>ηəno</i> | | | |

Moreover, the Beneficiary and the regular possessor are in complementary distribution, so that expressions equivalent to **my gift for you* are ungrammatical.

I therefore suggest that the Predestinative phrase is a subtype of possessive construction. Note that the semantics of the possessive construction in Nenets is extremely broad. As argued in Nikolaeva (2003), it renders a two-place relation with a very vague meaning, *X related to/associated with Y*, and has a wide variety

of ‘non-possessive’ uses. For example, in (9) the speaker has the choice to use the possessive construction to indicate some kind of loose association between ‘soldier’ and ‘me’, although obviously this relation cannot be characterized as ownership.

- (9) [Context: I entered the house. There was a soldier sitting in the house. I came to this soldier and raised my gun.]
- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------|
| <i>soldat^o-h / soldatə-nⁱ</i> | <i>s^ʼey-da</i> | <i>xəya.</i> |
| soldier-GEN / soldier-GEN.1SG | heart-3SG | went.3SG |
- ‘The/my soldier got frightened (literally: the/my soldier’s heart was gone).’

The Predestinative construction also expresses a two-place relation, *X which is meant/destined for Y* or *X for the benefit of Y*. In the next section I will argue that its meaning can be described as future possession.

5. PREDESTINATIVE AS FUTURE POSSESSIVE

According to Nordlinger & Sadler (2004), in language that exhibit ‘nominal tense with nominal scope’ nouns are marked for tense but their temporal interpretation does not depend on the tense of the clause. The tense takes the scope over the NP and is deictically interpreted in relation to the time of utterance. Nominal tense has the following properties (after Nordlinger and Sadler 2004: 778): (i) nouns show a distinction in tense; (ii) this distinction is productive across the whole word class; (iii) it is not restricted to nominals functioning as predicates, and (iv) the tense marker is a morphological category of the nominal word and cannot be treated as a syntactic clitic. In a number of languages, for instance, in some Salishan languages, nominal tense serves to temporally locate the nominal independently of the possessive relation. In other languages, for instance, in Hixkaryana, nominal tense with nominal scope is only active in possessive constructions and is not expressed in non-possessive NPs.

I suggest that Tundra Nenets exhibits a two-way system of nominal tense in possessive phrases: present and future (\emptyset and *-də-/-d^o-*). This goes against Nordlinger & Sadler’s (2004: 790) typological observation that ‘if a language has independent nominal TAM at all, it will encode minimally a distinction between past and nonpast tense’. Note, however, that closely related Nganasan has a three-way temporal distinction in possessive constructions which still does not include past: present, future and irrealis/future-in-the-past (\emptyset , *-də-* and *-dətədə:də:-*, respectively).³

³ I thank Laria Leisiö for the Nganasan data.

- (10) (a) *Koli-güä-ðä-mə* *Nindi-m* *hu''*
 fish-EMPH-PRED-1SG NEG-1SG want
 'I don't want any fish for myself.'
- (b) *sədä:-ðätəðä:d'ä:-mənu-ntə* *hediti-ndi-m* *mənə.*
 Road-PRED.IRR-PROL-2SG walk-PRES-1SG I
 'I am walking along the road which was meant to be your
 road.'

Importantly, there may be two interpretations of tense in a possessive phrase: either with respect to the nominal referent itself or with respect to the possessive relation. For instance, in Halkomelem the possessive constructions are ambiguous in the past (Burton 1997: 67-68): *tel xeltel-elh* 'my pencil-PAST' can mean 'my former pencil, the pencil that used to be mine but is no longer mine' and 'my destroyed pencil, what used to be my pencil'. In the former case, the possessive relation is relativized with respect to time, i.e. tense takes scope over possession. In the past and present this implies that the referent of the possessed noun is pragmatically presupposed to exist. I understand the pragmatic presupposition of existence as the mental representation of the relevant entity which the interlocutors can evoke in a given discourse (Lambrecht 1994: 78-79). It does not necessarily imply the actual existence of the referent in the real world. In the latter case possession takes scope over tense. The past tense indicates that the referent no longer exists at all and, consequently, no longer exists as somebody's possession. The same holds for the future. A non-possessive NP with nominal tense has one interpretation, where the reference time is future. For instance, *I met a future doctor* can only mean that the relevant person is not a doctor at the time of speech, i.e. the entity that can be referred to as 'doctor' does not (yet) exist. This situation is only observed in languages where temporal distinctions may be expressed in non-possessive NPs (i.e. every NP has to have a temporal specification). However, in *I met my future doctor* the future tense can be interpreted with respect to two different semantic predicates. In the first interpretation, the relevant person is not a doctor at the time of speech (possession takes scope over tense: 'somebody who will be a doctor and also my doctor'). In the second, he is already a doctor at the time of speech, but not 'my doctor' (tense takes scope over possession).

As mentioned above, in Tundra Nenets tense is intrinsically linked with possession. The question is then what scopal interpretation is available for it. Below I argue that in Predestinative constructions the (pragmatic) existence of the possessed entity is not presupposed at the time of utterance, but is only predicated for the future with respect to the speech time.

First, we saw that Genitive Predestinative only have a non-referential interpretation: they are available as predicates or 'as'-type adjuncts whose meaning does not presuppose referentiality. Nominatives and Accusatives function as subjects as objects, respectively, and can in principle refer, but

crucially, their availability is restricted: Predestinative subjects and objects are only compatible with verbs which tend to introduce a novel entity into the discourse and therefore the interlocutors do not have a mental representation of the respective referent at the time the utterance is produced. To put it differently, although the respective NPs are referential they are not associated with the pragmatic presupposition of existence. Predestinative subjects are only allowed on intransitive verbs of appearance.

- (11) *n'enec*[°]*n-də-waq* *m'at*[°]*h* *t'u*[°]
 man-PRED-1PL yurt-DAT enter.3SG
 'A man entered a yurt for us (while we were waiting for him).'

My consultants also accepted Predestinative subjects in the Nenets equivalents of the following sentences: *A grandson was born for me*, *A doctor arrived for us*, *A mug fell down for you (while you were waiting for it)*, and the like. However, Predestinatives are impossible with the verbs that evoke the pragmatic presupposition of existence of their subjects (unlike the regular possessive constructions).

- (12) *soldat*[°]*-waq* / **soldat*[°]*-də-waq* *yəŋkuma*
 soldier-1PL / soldier-PRED-1PL die.3SG
 'Our soldier died / The soldier died for us.'

Other impossible structures are **The boy went to the city for us*, **The bag became heavy for us*, **The girl is baking for us*, **The man is walking for us*, **The man smokes for us* and **The medicine works for you*.

In a similar manner, Predestinative objects are only possible with the so-called transitive 'definiteness effect verbs'. According to Szabolcsi (1986), these verbs have the component EXIST in their semantic interpretation and, under normal discourse conditions, are not compatible with definite objects. This is because a definite noun is usually analyzed as falling under the scope of the existential operator, so the application of the logical predicate of existence to definites would lead to tautology. These are verbs of creation or change of location (ditransitives), which typically introduce a new participant into the discourse,

- (13) (a) *yimpitə-d*[°]*-m'i* *sædə*[°]
 dress-PRED-ACC.1SG sew.3SG
 'She has sewn a dress for me.'
- (b) *ŋəno-də-mt*[°] *temtə-d*[°]*m*
 boat-PRED-ACC.2SG buy-1SG
 'I bought a boat for you.'

Other transitive verbs such as, for instance, verbs of destruction do not allow Predestinative Accusatives.

- (14) $\eta\acute{a}c'eki^{\circ}$ $x'id'a-mt^{\circ}$ / $*x'id'a-d\acute{a}-mt^{\circ}$ $taxabta^{\circ}$
 child cup-ACC.2SG / cup-PRED-ACC.2SG break.3SG
 ‘The child broke your cup / *the cup for you.’

Cf. other impossible structures: **I sold a house for you*, **I read a story for you*, **I took off my hat for you*, and the like.

Second, Predestinatives are totally excluded from the constructions which, by their nature, require pragmatically presupposed NPs. For instance, object agreement in Nenets is triggered by topical objects and topicality involves the pragmatic presupposition of existence (Lambrecht 1994). Predestinative Accusative objects never control agreement on the verb (15a). But a close meaning can be rendered by the construction where the object is null, the Predestinative stands in the Genitive and functions as an adjunct (15b). Agreement is obligatory with null objects.

- (15) (a) $\eta\acute{a}no-d\acute{a}-mt^{\circ}$ $s'erta-d^{\circ}m$ / $*s'erta-w^{\circ}$
 boat-PRED-ACC.2SG make-1SG / make-SG.OBJ.1SG
 ‘I made a boat for you.’
- (b) $\eta\acute{a}no-d\acute{a}-nt^{\circ}$ $s'erta-w^{\circ}$ / $*s'erta-d^{\circ}m$
 boat-PRED-GEN.2SG make-SG.OBJ.1SG / make-1SG
 ‘I made a boat for you (literally: I made this as a boat for you).’

Similarly, Predestinatives cannot be relativized. Briefly speaking, Nenets uses prenominal gapped relatives headed by non-finite verbal forms. Non-Predestinative possessed nouns are easily relativizable.

- (16) [$m\acute{a}ny^{\circ}$ $s'erta-we-m'i$] ($pid\acute{a}r^{\circ}$) $\eta\acute{a}no-r^{\circ}$
 I make-PART-1SG you boat-2SG
 ‘your boat which I made’

However, Predestinative nouns cannot be relativized with this strategy, cf. (16) and (17a). To render the closest possible meaning, a ‘null-headed’ relative clause may be used, where the Predestinative phrase does not function as semantically modified (relativized) noun, but must be expressed as a Genitive adjunct within the relative clause (17b).

- (17) (a) $*[m\acute{a}n^{\circ}$ $s'erta-we-m'i$] ($pid\acute{a}r^{\circ}$) $\eta\acute{a}no-d\acute{a}-r^{\circ}$
 I make-PART-1SG you boat-PRED-2SG
 ‘the boat for you which I made’
- (b) [$\eta\acute{a}no-d\acute{a}-nt^{\circ}$ / $*\eta\acute{a}no-d-mt^{\circ}$ $s'erta-we-m'i$]
 boat-PRED-GEN.2SG / boat-PRED-ACC.2SG make-PART-1SG
 ‘the boat for you which I made (literally: the thing which I made as a boat for you, what I made as a boat for you)’

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