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Vestigial possessive morphology in Na-Dene and Yeniseian¹

Edward Vajda
Western Washington University

1 Introduction

External comparison with possessive constructions in the Yeniseian languages of Siberia suggests a diachronic explanation for morphological idiosyncrasies associated with Na-Dene possessed nouns, a`da`dZ`_dLUVTeZ`_Rj`dR`_UUV`^`_dReZ`Vac`vei` V`Z`dVTeZ`_#UZIf`dV`deV`_R`Rj`Tj`R`d`ac`vei` eYRe` appears before certain inalienably possessed nouns in Athabaskan (Dene) languages. Section 3 introduces comparative Yeniseian morphology to propose that this element is a remnant of a generic possessive dZ`VR`_i`_`TV`c`V`j`R`c`j`_`ac`v`V`_e`S`V`h`W`_`a`_`d`V`d`_`c`R`_`U`a`_`d`V`d`_`^`_`Z`_`S`_`e`Y`V`_`Z`Z`d`S`f`e`d`_`g`Z`_`X`e`_`U`j` in Athabaskan mostly before high frequency nouns. Section 4 considers Eyak, where, as is known, the j`b`f`R`j`Z`v`c`z`i`d`^`_`V`e`Z`_`V`d`T`_`X`_`R`e`v`h`Z`Y`e`Y`V`2`e`Y`S`R`d`R`_`_`R`R`j`Tj`R`d`ac`vei`_`i`<`c`R`_`d`L`Z`_`ac`v`a`Z`Z`E`Y`V`T`^`_`a`R`c`Z`_`d`_`h`Z`Y`J`V`_`Z`M`R`_`d`_`X`V`d`e`Y`R`e`d`^`_`V`Z`_`d`R`_`T`V`d`_`V`e`Y`V`G`_`R`_`U`R`_`U`j`b`f`R`j`Z`v`c`^`_`R`j`_`U`v`Z`V`W`^`_`W`d`Z`_`Z`k`U`a`_`d`V`d`Z`VR`_`i`_`V`e`Y`_`f`_`X`Y`^`_`d`e`_`e`Y`v`c`b`f`R`j`Z`v`c`U`v`Z`V`W`^`_`R`_`R`e`^`_`Z`I`R`j`_`_`f`_`d`Z`d`V`TeZ`_`&T`^`_`a`R`c`v`d` postpositional constructions in both families, which also show evidence of once having contained possessive dZ`VR`_`_`V`i`e`_`c`d`Z`d`V`TeZ`_`_`T`_`d`L`V`c`d`U`Z`V`TeZ`_`_`R`j`d`L`U`e`_`_`V`U`S`j`_`_`=`W`c`i`"`)`_`*`+`&(`_/`R`d`Y`h`_`d`U`e`Y`R`e`d`a`V`I`Z`V` direction with regard to a frame of reference, such as a body of water". Directionals in the two families have striking semantic and morphological parallels, including vestiges of possessive connectors. Section 4 (`M`R`_`Z`_`V`d`V`g`Z`V`_`T`V`d`Y`_`h`Z`_`X`e`Y`R`e`J`V`_`Z`M`R`_`R`_`U`?`_`R`_`S`V`_`V`U`M`^`_`_`d`e`R`e`Z`_`V`a`c`_`v`e`i`_`V`d`h`_`V`c`V`_`_`c`Z`Z`_`R`j`j`_`T`_`_`V`i`e`_`U`e`_`e`Y`V`W`j`_`h`Z`_`X`e`V`_`_`S`j`_`_`R`a`_`_`d`V`d`Z`VR`_`_`i`_`Z`Z`_`R`j`j`_`_`d`V`TeZ`_`)`_`T`_`_`d`L`V`c`d`_`_`_`T`R`_`_`_`Z`I`R`j`_`_`_`d`e` correspondences between Tlingit and Athabaskan-Eyak body-part nouns that may have arisen when eYV`_`f`_`Z`_`_`A`c`M`E`j`Z`_`_`X`e`R`S`d`_`_`c`S`U`R`a`c`_`v`e`i`_`_`T`_`_`X`_`_`R`e`V`e`_`_`e`Y`V`_`_`R`R`j`j`_`_`R`e`v`c`j`_`_`V`j`V`^`_`_`V`_`_`e`d`_`R`e`v`c`e`_`_`U`Z`_`_`2`e`Y`S`R`d`R`_`_`j`_`_`G`_`_`R`_`_`U`J`V`_`_`Z`M`R`_`_`a`_`_`d`V`d`Z`VR`_`_`d`e`f`_`_`T`e`Z`_`_`d`Z`d`V`TeZ`_`_`*`_`d`_`^`_`_`R`e`Z`v`d`e`V`d`e`_`_`U`Z`_`_`X`i`R`_`_`U`T`_`_`_`d`L`V`c`d`R`W`h` unanswerd questions brought to light by the discussion.

2 Nasal-class nouns in Athabaskan

A`d`V`d`Z`VR`_`_`V`i`S`W`c`V`T`V`c`e`R`Z`_`_`Z`_`R`j`Z`_`_`R`S`j`_`_`a`_`_`d`V`d`M`U`_`_`_`f`_`_`d`Z`_`_`5`V`_`_`V`i`2`e`Y`S`R`d`R`_`_`/`_`R`_`_`X`_`_`R`X`d`Z`_`_`g`_`_`l`g`V`_`_`R`_`_`R`R`j`_`_`V`j`V`^`_`_`V`_`_`e`_`_`_`e`a`c`_`v`_`e`_`z`_`_`T`_`_`_`f`_`_`_`T`e`Z`_`_`_`h`Z`Y`_`_`e`Y`v`c`_`_`_`f`_`_`_`d`Z`C`Z`I`V`i`"`)`_`_`*`_`+`_`_`#`_`_`_`"/`_`_`ac`_`_`_`g`_`_`Z`_`_`M`_`_`d`e`_`_`Y`V`W`j`_`_`h`Z`_`_`X`

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forms, where the inalienably possessed noun *-lá* ‘hand’ requires nasal-class forms of possessive pre-
 èi Vh:

1" / D R V _ ` f _ h Z Y _ R R I T R d a c V è i

d]®

- *n-dalah* ‘antler, horn’, - *n-ch’it* ‘forehead’, - *l - a n* *l̥a-qah* ‘head’, - *l - quh* ‘cheek’, - *la- u* ‘facial hair’, - *la-wahsq* forms - *n- ~ -la-* an anatomical noun. The next section introduces Yeniseian comparanda to argue that the Athabaskan

3 Yeniseian possessive morphology

Yeniseian is a family of several languages once spoken across much of central and southern Siberia, but at least two primary branches – Ket and Kott – and has been hypothesized to be genealogically related

<VeYX_UZgVd_f i VdP_Wf_dR_Uac_^_f_dTR_SVfdMU_^_lj UZVTej SWCVRW]] hZ_Xa_^dMdf_^ ·
 noun or postposition: *ob-da qu's* 'father's tent', *bu-da qu's* 'his tent'.

Three oblique case forms in Ket are built on a possessive base. The dative, adessive, and ablative forms of nouns and pronouns require the same pronominal possessive morphemes shown in (3), followed by *l R* in dative case forms, *l Rj* in ablative, and - *eV_ol eRo_l* in adessive:

<i>i&edU_Z eV_o</i>	<i>edU_Z Rj</i>	<i>edU_Z R</i>
stone-3INAN.POSS-ADESS	stone-3INAN.POSS-ABL	stone-3INAN.POSS-DAT
'at the stone'	'from the stone'	'to the stone'

:_i&eYVgV]Rc_^Rc] ZidX_^V_eVUR_UX_^dMURdaRce_^VeYVTRdV_UZ_XZ_^hVgV_eYZid_f_UZi
 otherwise found only in codas, so that its presence in the onset of these three case endings is enigmatic. EYVAcVd_veRceZ]VhZ]RcX_^VeYReZ_UCZgVdW_^RXV_^VZTa_^dMdzVR i eYRe_fcgZVdZ_^>_^Uc_^<Ve_^
 ^_lj Z_UReZVRS]ReZVR_URUvdZgVW_^dR_UeYRe_eYVRIe_fR]TRVd_f i VdRcVURZgV-a, ablative -al,
 and adessive -ten ~ -ta ~ -tZ_{eh}Z]WceYVcSVRcX_^VUeYRe_eV_^Rc]V]V_^V_e_l - appearing in these Yeni-
 dZR_UTRdVW_^dZIT_^X_^ReVhZ_YeYVZ_eYTSRd_U_^Rc]T]Rd_{ac}Ve_iZ_^

>_^cVgZU_^TveYRe_eVV_^Z_^ReZ_l - in Ket possessive augmented case endings once served as a generic marker of possession can be found by examining Kott, an extinct language that belongs to another primary branch of Yeniseian. In Ket noun paradigms, while the case forms that require a preceding *Z_Xa_^dMdzVR i cVf]Rc] T_eRZ_l* -, the bare possessive (genitive-case) form does not. In (6) the forms in the left column are the bare possessives with no nasal element, while the dative forms in the right column contain the nasal connector:

(6) a. Ket case forms made from the singular noun *a* 'father'

<i>ob-d-a</i>	<i>ob-d-a- -a</i>
father-3-MASC.POSS	father-3-MASC-POSS-DAT
'the father's'	'to the father'

b. Ket case forms made from the plural noun *SR* 'fathers'

<i>SR_lR</i>	<i>SR_lR -a</i>
father-PL-ANIM.PL.POSS	father-PL-ANIM.PL-POSS-DAT
'the fathers'	'to the fathers'

The Kott case forms, by contrast, lack the 3rd person singular consonant *d*- and animate plural *n*- *Vf_UZ_^<Ve_a_^dMdzV_{ac}Ve_iVd_{op}* 'father', *op-â* 'father's', *op-a-a* 'to father'. Possessive *l* does however show up in the Kott animate-plural forms, including the bare possessive *aR_lIR_l* 'the fathers', where it is lacking in Ket (*ob-a lna* *eYVREY_{cd}ZEYV_<e_W_^dZ_i(/RcVeR_V_W_^4Rc_l_i)* & +S/+

(7) a. Kott case forms of the singular noun *op* 'father'[&]

<i>op-â</i>	<i>op-a- -a</i>
father-3MASC.POSS	father-3MASC-POSS-DAT
'the father's'	'to the father'

5. The circumfx in the Kott examples was used by Castren (1858) in his transcription. It is unclear what it represented, though available Ket cognates suggest it transcribes either vowel half length or glottalization or both.

b. Kott case forms of the plural noun `SR 'fathers'

<i>op-an-a-</i>	<i>op-an-a- -a</i>
father-PL-ANIM.PL-POSS	father-PL-ANIM.PL-POSS-DAT
'the fathers'	'to the fathers'

EYVWTeYReXV_VZTa` dMdzV` RaaVRcdZ` eYV<` eeR_Z` ReVa]f cR] Wc^ dSf e_` eZ` eYVdZ` X]Rc` c` inanimate plural forms suggests the original nasal of the preceding animate-plural marker *-na-, later reduced to -a- in Kott, conditioned its preservation. The Ket and Kott forms from tables (6) and (7) are cVAc` UfTMRXRZ` Z` i)/Rj` _XcUveYVAc` e` lJV_ZMR` cVT` _dcfTeZ` _deYj` d'aa` ce+`

i)/Ket	Kott	Proto-Yeniseian	meaning
<i>a</i>	<i>`a</i>	<i>fi S</i>	'father'
<i>ob-da</i>	<i>op-a</i>	<i>fi SIUR</i> (> *`SIUR)	'of the father'
<i>`gR l_R</i>	<i>`aR IR</i>	<i>fi SR l_R</i>	'of the fathers'
<i>`SIUR IR</i>	<i>op-alU</i>	<i>fi SIUR R</i> (> *`SIUR R)	'to the father'
<i>`gR l_R IR</i>	<i>`aR IR IR</i>	<i>fi SR l_R IR</i>	

· ·	<i>au</i>	<i>*aw</i>	‘you (sg.)’
· · \~k	<i>au</i>	<i>*aw-</i>	ʃj̃ fciãǰŷŪ
<i>uk-</i> -a	<i>au-a</i>	<i>*aw-</i> -a	‘to you (sg.)’
∫ ·	<i>RfI` &</i>	<i>* \-n</i>	‘you (pl.)’
∫ I_R	<i>RfI` ɔRfI` lo</i>	<i>* \-n-na-</i>	ʃj̃ fciãǰŷŪ
∫ I_R	<i>RfI` IR</i>	<i>* \-n-na-</i> -a	‘to you (pl.)’

The Proto-Yeniseian reconstruction of 1sg. pronominal *fi* (possibly alternating allophonically with *fi* or *fi*), since this nasal is retained after original labials. It would also help explain the appearance of labial *b* in the Ket 1sg. possessive forms. The coda correspondence Ket *d* – Kott *j* is found in other Yeniseian words, such as Central Ket *qa de* ‘fur, hair’, Southern Ket *qa c* ‘fur’. If Na-Dene and Yeniseian are indeed genealogically related, the original 1sg. marker was probably a velar or uvular fricative of some sort (most likely *fi*). The 2sg. marker may have been **w*, probably preserved uniquely in the onset of Tlingit 2sg. pronoun *wa* isolated in Na-Dene. The non-congruence of Na-Dene 1sg. and 2sg. pronouns with pronouns in Yeniseian (or other branches of the proposed ‘Sino-Dene’ or ‘Dene-Caucasian’ family) might be due to the morphophonemic interaction of a nasal possessive marker

cVdV V W h` dUeYReU ` ` eèeZ` e` R_j` V` V` eYV` eYV` X` f adZ` EYVRd TZeZ` ` V` V` G` R` U` R` U` j` b` f` R` -
 Z` V` d` h` Z` Y` d` ^` R_j` a` d` S` j` V` ^` V` R` _` Z` X` d` f` X` X` d` eY` R` e` Y` V` c` Z` Z` R` j` W` T` e` Z` _` ` V` eY` V` d` V` j` V` ^` V` e` d` ^` R` j` Y` R` e` V`
 S` W` _` X` R` ^` R` e` Z` R` j` d` eY` V` e` Y` R` _` j` M` Z` R` j` Z` b` f` R` j` Z` V` d` R` j` d` R` a` a` V` R` e` Z` ^` R` j` a` d` e` a` d` e` Z` _` R` j` T` _` d` e` f` T` e` Z` _` d` i` f` T` Y`
 as *tsa dla t'a d* '(sheltered) under a rock' or *tsa dla a'* 'for a rock', further suggesting that the elements in
 question originated as grammatical connectors and are not derived from lexical roots.

The discussion in section 2 proposed that Proto-Yeniseian possessive morphology involved 3rd per-
 son pronominal **d*- followed by generic possessive *fi* - *l*. The Eyak data suggest that some of the quali-
 èV` d` ^` R` j` S` V` T` X` R` e` V` h` Z` Y` e` Y` V` d` ^` ` c` a` Y` V` ^` V` Z` EY` V` G` R` U` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` ^` R` j` Y` R` e` V` U` G` V` j` a` W` _` ` e` Y` V` S` R` d` i` W`
 an earlier 3rd person pronominal marker, and some instances of the *l* b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` R` a` a` V` R` e` ` S` V` G` V` e` Z` X` d` ^` V` R`
 shared Dene-Yeniseian generic possessive marker. Such an interpretation would explain concatenations
 ` W` f` j` e` z` j` V` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` L` e` Y` V` e` V` R` e` Z` V` ^` d` U` e` ^` W` U` W` j` ^` h` V` U` S` j` j` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` R` _` U` R` j` d` e` Y` V` U` Z` T` f` j` e` j` ^` ` V` e` j` ^` `]` -
 X` Z` Z` X` ^` R` j` U` R` U` j` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` f` d` R` X` d` R` d` U` e` Z` Z` X` W` ^` R` j` a` R` e` Z` f` j` R` e` ^` f` _` Z`

On this analysis, the form *-dla* - in combinations like Eyak *tsa -dla le hZs* 'stone axe' and *tsa dla t'a d*
 '(sheltered) under a rock' represents a lexicalized remnant of ancient possessive morphology. Compare
 the homologous concatenation of morphemes in the following Ket and Eyak postpositional construc-
 tions:

(10) a. Ket postpositional construction 'to a rock' _____
 e d U Z I R
 rock-3-INAN-POSS-toward

b. Eyak postpositional construction 'for a rock' _____
 e R A U R A R U
 rock-QUALIFIER-for

Ket 3rd person *-d*- R` U` X` V` V` e` Z` T` a` d` M` H` Z` V` I` R` a` a` V` R` e` ` S` V` Y` ^` `]` X` f` d` h` Z` Y` e` Y` V` d` - and *-l*- components
 ` V` e` Y` V` T` ^` a` f` _` U` G` j` R` a` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` -*dla* - : V` e` Y` Z` i` e` V` I` R` d` M` Y` h` V` e` V` e` Y` V` f` d` ^` V` e` Y` V` d` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` d` Z` ^` G` R` ^`
 T` ^` a` j` M` h` ^` d` U` j` R` e` V` f` _` U` V` h` V` e` R` R` j` X` Z` R` j` V` e` V` _` d` Z` _` I` d` e` Y` R` e` e` Y` V` e` f` j` e` Z` R` e` V` U` Z` e` Z` f` e` Z` _` c` V` e` V` I` e` d` ^` f` T` Y`
 Z` _` g` R` e` Z` _` I` f` _` j` Z` V` e` Y` V` _` R` j` j` T` R` d` a` c` V` e` i` Z` _` Z` e` Y` R` S` R` d` R` _` Z` EY` Z` i` Z` i` V` e` j` U` V` e` W` ^` e` Y` V` a` c` V` d` V` T` V` ^` V` e` Y` V` b` f` R` j` Z`
 èV` e` -*dla* - in the neologism *tsa -dla - e'* U` V` e` d` V` V` e` j` Z` V` e` R` j` j` U` e` T` X` e` V` R` d` U` ^` tsa U` e` T` U` f` i` e' 'grease' (Krauss
 1970, vol. 2, p. 191). This word obviously could not have been inherited from the proto-language and
 ^` f` d` e` Y` R` e` V` S` W` _` W` e` ^` V` U` S` j` ^` a` c` U` T` e` Z` V` R` _` R` j` X` j` Z` j` d` I` e` Y` V` G` R` U` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` Z` i` a` R` e` U` X` ^` R` e` Z` R` j` j` ^` a` c` V` d` e`
 R` a` V` e` e` d` e` ^` c` d` M` T` _` U` a` V` e` d` _` a` d` M` d` i` d` R` d` h` V` j` R` d` e` Y` Z` U` a` V` e` d` _` Z` W` e` Z` Z` R` j` j` R` e` Y` Z` U` a` V` e` d` _` a` d` M` H` Z` V`
 marker, its presence would be expected in Eyak *'u-dla -tsa* U` Z` i` e` V` e` Z` i` V` d` i` j` Z` V` e` R` j` j` U` Z` i` c` T` d` U` T` V` e` V` e` b` u`
U` R` e` U` i` s` h` i` s` r` o` c` k`, which cannot be used metaphorically as an anatomical noun), whereas its appearance
 Z` _` e` c` d` i` a` V` e` d` _` G` R` ^` s` i` -*dla -tsa* U` j` e` V` e` Z` i` V` d` i` < d` R` d` i` *(! E` g` j` Z` #` e` a` Z` *") / e` ^` f` d` e` Y` R` e` V` d` a` c` V` R` U` S` j` R` R` j` X` j` Z`
 EY` V` Y` j` a` e` Y` V` d` i` a` f` e` W` h` R` d` U` Y` V` e` V` e` V` R` e` U` Z` X` e` Y` V` G` R` U` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` d` e` Y` V` e` W` e` V` ^` _` j` R` I` T` f` _` e` d` W` e` e` Y` V` e` R` T` Z` V` e`
 origin, not their synchronic distribution, which seems to show much analogical extension and leveling,
 if not also semantic reanalysis.

Z` Z` R` j` j` I` e` Y` V` R` R` j` d` i` V` e` Y` V` j` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` R` d` U` e` Z` Z` X` W` ^` R` X` V` V` e` Z` T` a` d` M` H` Z` V` T` _` _` V` I` e` c` h` ^` f` j` U` V` a` j` R` Z` ^`
 h` Y` j` Z` _` V` e` V` e` S` V` Z` d` R` _` f` _` a` d` M` d` U` _` f` _` Z` ^` G` R` ^` Z` EY` V` U` b` f` R` j` Z` V` e` ^` ` c` a` Y` V` ^` L` Y` h` V` e` V` e` I` R` _` S` V` Z` R`
 _` f` _` R` d` R` e` Y` V` ^` R` e` Z` a` c` V` e` i` Z` _` ?` R` S` V` _` V` e` R` d` h` V` j` j` R` d` Z` < V` e` d` Z` T` V` Z` e` U` e` Z` V` d` W` ^` R` S` d` person pronominal
 a` c` V` e` i` Z` i` R` ^` a` j` V` d` ^` W` e` V` e` _` f` _` d` U` e` Z` V` U` f` d` Z` X` e` Y` V` ^` R` e` Z` i` d` - h` V` e` V` U` Z` i` f` d` M` U` Z` ^` G` R` j` U` R` i` #` !` %` " &` +` e` U` e` ^` d` ^` j` j` U`
 'smelling' - d` e` U` e` V` d` ^` V` j` i` ^` V` d` ^` V` e` Y` Z` X` U` e` R` j` d` ^` j` pole'

derive instead from lexical roots with anatomical meanings, while others arose within the templatic verb complex from reanalysis of incorporated noun codas (Leer 2009). Some instances of the Eyak *-lɪbɪ* are derived from the root *ɪb* 'face', as Leer (2012: 1) convincingly argued, and not from bygone possessive markers. But since the Proto-Athabaskan inalienably possessed noun **-n-n* is more convincingly explained as a vestige of ancient possessive morphology. The interaction of anatomical functional and morphological elaboration.

5 Postpositional constructions

Both Na-Dene and Yeniseian make extensive use of postpositions. Many Yeniseian postpositions are etymologically connected with anatomical nouns, so it is unsurprising that pronominal possessive connectors are used to link them to their preceding noun or pronoun object:

- (10) Ket postpositional construction '(motion) under a rock'____
edU IR
 rock-3INAN.POSS-bottom-DAT

Ket postpositional constructions regularly contain generic 3rd person pronominal *d-*, but they lack the

Athabaskan postpositional constructions do not regularly contain either 3rd person *d-* or the nasal-
 tion - *ɪ* *ee* *ʔ* *i* *!* */* *ɪ* *han* *in hana*

(11) Ket directional stems

d-igd-a-bes

3MASC.POSS-downland-passing

· · $\text{áRtH}_Z \text{XU h}_R \text{UW}^\wedge \text{ZÉ} \text{áRtH}_Z \text{XSj} \text{ZU h}_R \text{Y} \text{Rj} \text{XeVcZVSR} \backslash \hat{\text{U}}$ *d-aged-bes*

3MASC.POSS-upland-passing

· · $\text{áRtH}_Z \text{XSVYZ} \text{UZÉ} \text{áRtH}_Z \text{Xf a} \text{R}_R \text{UW}^\wedge \text{ZÉ}$ (12) $\text{<Veè}_Z \text{VgVcSdhZYZ}_T \text{ca} \text{`cReUUZVTeZ}_R \text{Id}$ *d-igd-on-d-daq*

1SIB-downland-PST-1SG.SBJ-walk

'I went down to the river (to spend the summer)'

d- e-on-d-daq 1 e- *aged)

1SIB-upland-PST-1SG.SBJ-walk

'I left the riverside and went up into the forest (to spend the winter)'

The Ket antonyms *-igd-* 'downhill', 'downland', 'down from forest to river' and *-aged-* ~ *-a a- ~ I d* 'up-

The Ket 2<0030 -1845.5<0030 1 Tf0 1 T5 Td802180054A004400D>Tj 11 Tf tualText<FEFF0009>>> BDC

90 "Xguvikci" rquuguukxg" o qtr jnqi {" ykvj" fg o qpvt cvkxg" rtglzgu

Demonstratives in Yeniseian and Na-Dene are preposed relational morphemes denoting relative proximity or distance in relation to the speaker or other point of reference. Both families show evidence of a connector *ki* 'this', *ki-n* 'these' and *tu-d* 'that', *tu-n* 'these' retain traces of this connector when appearing as the object of certain postpositions, such as *-tan* 'in the direction of', which derives from a noun mean-

of the languages involved. The proposed homologies in Yeniseian and Na-Dene possessive morphology are shared retentions that have survived within a larger, more ancient family. The same patterns may turn out to be present in members of a broader family that might include Sino-Tibetan and other Old World families. My suspicion is that the nasal possessive marker, at least, is more widely distributed and not an innovation characteristic of Na-Dene and Yeniseian alone.¹⁴ While external morphological comparisons between Na-Dene and Yeniseian are obviously useful for understanding the historical development of each family and also add more evidence that the two families are somehow related, the kind of internal reconstruction in Navajo, for example, is not possible. The kind of internal reconstruction in Navajo, for example, is not possible. The kind of internal reconstruction in Navajo, for example, is not possible.

In any event, achieving a clearer understanding of the internal morphological development of Na-Dene and Yeniseian — which has been the primary goal of the present article — is valuable in its own right and can only prove of use to purposes of linguistic taxonomy in the future. Language relatedness, after all, is only one of many interesting facts in the history of languages.

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¹⁴ For example, the Proto-Tibeto-Burman m-prefix reconstructed before some body part nouns, such as **m-sin* 'liver', could conceivably be cognate with the Na-Dene and Yeniseian possessive nasal connector (see Benedict 1972: 117-121; Matisoff 2003: 117-119).

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