The Diachronic Asymmetry of Nasal Apocope Between Nominal and Verbal Paradigms in Nganasan

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One of the various diachronic changes that occurred between Old Nganasan (Castrén 1854, 1855) - spoken in middle of the 19th century - and Modern Nganasan (Helimski 1998; Wagner-Nagy 2018) is the apocope of nasals in polisyllabic words, including those with additional morphology (Mikola and Wagner-Nagy 2004): Old.Ng *koduŋ* » Mod.Ng *koðu* "snowstorm.NOM.SG"; Old.Ng *kinda-ŋ* » Mod.Ng *kində* "smoke.GEN.SG" (cf. Old.Ng *kinta* » Mod.Ng *kintə* "smoke.NOM.SG"). Nonetheless, a systematic exception to this generalization is the 2nd.SG subjective agreement marker -*ŋ* such as in Old.Ng *mata-ʔa-ŋ* » Mod.Ng *məta-ʔa-ŋ* "to.cut-PERF-2nd.SG":

Old.Ng		»	**Mod.Ng**		**Old.Ng**		»	**Mod.Ng**	
"smoke"	SG		"smoke"	SG	"to.cut"	SG		"to.cut"	SG
NOM	kinta		NOM	kintə	1st	mata-ʔa-m		1st	məta-ʔa-m
ACC	kinda-m		ACC	kində-(m)	2nd	mata-ʔa-ŋ		2nd	məta-ʔa-ŋ
GEN	kinda-ŋ		GEN	kində	3rd	mata-ʔa		3rd	məta-ʔa

I will argue that the reason we see this is because of three different factors that conspired together to create this apparent exception. The first one is that in Old.Ng, NOM.SG could be distinguished from GEN.SG in various words not only because of the different case morphology, but also because of Syllabic Gradation, a morphophonological process involving voicing alternations depending on whether a syllable was open or close. The context for this alternation was transparent in Old.Ng, but it is no longer transparent in these cases for Mod.Ng because of the apocope of word-final nasals: Old.Ng *kin.<u>ta</u>* "smoke.NOM.SG" | *kin.<u>da</u>ŋ* "smoke.GEN.SG" vs. Mod.Ng *kin.<u>tə</u>* "smoke.NOM.SG" | *kin.<u>də</u>* "smoke.GEN.SG". In contrast, since there is always aorist morphology such as PERF -*ʔV* intervening between the root and the agreement marker that does not participate in Syllabic Gradation, apocope of the 2nd.SG marker -*ŋ* would have rendered the 2nd.SG conjugation identical to the 3rd.SG conjugation: Mod.Ng *kona-ʔa* "go.away-PERF-3rd.SG" vs. *kona-ʔa-ŋ* "go.away-PERF-2nd.SG". Finally, since there are clitics in Nganasan such as *təʔ* (Wagner-Nagy 2018, p. 172) that can attach to the right of the verbal morphology, this is what probably allowed speakers to analogize the 2nd.SG marker -*ŋ* despite apocope in order to maintain the distinction between 2nd.SG and 3rd.SG in the subjective agreement paradigm. I will end by noting how ACC.SG -*m* seems to have followed a similar route, and how the IMPF marker -*NTU* could also reinforce this historical process in some cases.