Extracting Possessors in ?ayʔajuθəm (and Beyond)*

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Abstract: In this paper, we first examine possessor extraction strategies in ?ayʔajuθəm (Comox-Sliammon; ISO 639-3: coo), the northernmost Central Salish language, before comparing the ?ayʔajuθəm system to its five closest Salishan neighbours in the North Georgia region. We begin by showing that possessor extraction in ?ayʔajuθəm is highly restricted, occurring only with inalienably possessed body parts. In all other cases, in order to extract a possessor, the predicate snaʔ ‘be the owner of’, which takes the possessor as its direct (absolutive) argument, must be used. Curiously, snaʔ does not appear except in cases of possessor extraction. For all other cases of predicative possession (including extraction of the possessum), the nominal predicate naʔ ‘(one’s) own’ is used, which has an inverse argument structure: its direct (absolutive) argument is the possessum, while its possessor argument is realized in the form of a possessive affix, with or without an associated DP. While snaʔ and naʔ do not appear to be derivationally related, in other languages of the area, the counterpart of snaʔ is transparently derived from a denominal prefix with approximately the meaning of ‘have’ plus a possessive nominal predicate closely parallel to naʔ: this suggests a diachronic source for the naʔ ~ snaʔ alternation.

Keywords: ?ayʔajuθəm (Comox-Sliammon), extraction, possessor, syntax, Salish, North Georgia area

1 Introduction

In all the Salish languages where it has been investigated so far, Ā-extraction of the possess argument of a DP seems to be either severely restricted or completely unavailable (see Kroeber 1999:282–283, 303), leading to alternative strategies for questioning, focusing, or relativizing a possessor. In this paper, we first examine possessor extraction in ?ayʔajuθəm (Comox-Sliammon; ISO 639-3: coo), the northernmost Central Salish language, before turning to a comparison of the ?ayʔajuθəm system with its Salishan neighbours in the North Georgia Strait region of British Columbia.

Watanabe (2003:134), the major grammatical reference for ?ayʔajuθəm, provides a single example of a relativized possessor:1

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* Our deepest gratitude goes to our generous and patient ?ayʔajuθəm consultants who make this work possible and so enjoyable, especially Elsie Paul, Betty Wilson, Freddie Louie, Joanne Francis, and the late Karen Galligos. Additional St’át’imctc (Lillooet) data came from Carl Alexander, to whom we are greatly indebted. We would also like to thank the other members of the ?ayʔajuθəm lab for comments and questions, and in particular Daniel Reisinger for first suggesting the comparison with Sechelt. We are also grateful to the Jacobs Research Funds for a group grant that supported this project, as well as SSHRC Insight grant #435-2015-1694 to Henry Davis. Authors’ e-mail addresses: Henry.Davis@ubc.ca, laurasegriffin@gmail.com, marianne.huijsmans@ubc.ca, gloria.mellesmoen@ubc.ca.

As Watanabe (2003) points out, the morphosyntax of this example corresponds to a pattern also found in Squamish and Halkomelem, where the possessed noun retains its possessive affix, but otherwise the relative clause is identical in form to one involving extraction of the entire possessed argument.

(2) swiʔqa [hiʔ ta=maqsaʔ-s]  
man [big DET=nose-3POSS]  
‘(a) man whose nose is big’  
(Squamish: Kuipers 1967:177)

(3) kʷθə=swə́y̓qə  
DET=man [AUX get.hurt DET=horse-3POSS]  
‘the man whose horse got hurt’  
(Downriver Halkomelem: Suttles 2004:78)

(4) nə́wə [niʔá:tʔe:n̓ əʔaʔn̓-stáʔlas]  
2SG.INDP [AUX call-CTR-1SG.ERG DET=2SG.POSS-wife]  
‘You are the one whose wife I called.’  
(Island Halkomelem: Gerdt 1988:76)

Similar examples are attested in Sechelt:

(5) t̕iʔ=št kʷənam-t-at tə=s-tam-tumiš  
AUX=1PL.SBJ help-CTR-1PL.ERG DET=NMLZ-PL~man [AUX sink  
tə=snəxʷ-il-št].  
DET=boat-3PL.POSS]  
‘We helped the men whose boat sank.’  
(Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:528)

However, even when possible, the pattern illustrated in (1–5) is severely restricted. In Squamish (and Sechelt, as far as we can tell) relativization of a possessor is only possible from the subject of an intransitive predicate. In Island Halkomelem, it is also apparently possible from the object of a
transitive verb, as in (4), but no Central Salish language permits possessor extraction from the subject of a transitive verb.\(^4\)

Our findings for ?ayʔajuθəm are similar. For our consultants, possessor extraction of the type illustrated in (1–5) is generally disallowed, except with some inalienably possessed elements, namely body parts, as in (1). However, even here, our consultants prefer forms with somatic lexical suffixes: that is, instead of producing the equivalent of ‘the man whose nose is big’, as in (1), they will employ a construction closer to ‘the big-nosed man’.

In order to relativize, question, or focus a possessor in all other contexts, a different strategy is used: consultants employ the intransitive predicate snaʔ, (roughly translated as ‘be the owner (of)’) which takes a possessor argument as its subject, allowing direct extraction, with its possessum argument realized as a non-agreeing object. Curiously, however, snaʔ is only used in extraction contexts; when no extraction takes place, or when a possessum argument is extracted, possession is instead expressed with the nominal predicate naʔ ‘(one’s) own’. The two predicates show inverse argument structures: while snaʔ takes the possessor as its subject, naʔ takes the possessum, with its possessor argument realized by possessive affixes and associated DPs.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we present evidence demonstrating that ?ayʔajuθəm largely lacks possessor extraction of the type illustrated in (1–5) above, except for marginal cases with body parts. In Section 3, we examine the syntax of snaʔ, showing that it is used uniquely in possessor extraction contexts, and in Section 4 we turn to naʔ, which is used in other possessive contexts. In Section 5, we examine the ?ayʔajuθəm system in a comparative context. Section 6 concludes.

2 Direct possessor extraction

In this section, we show that at least some ?ayʔajuθəm speakers do permit direct extraction of the possessor argument of a DP, but only in one very restricted context. Note that though we refer to ‘direct extraction’ of the possessor, extraction here does not refer to Α-movement of the relativized, focused, or questioned constituent itself; rather, following much previous work in Salish syntax, we assume that all Α-dependencies involve operator movement within a relative clause which bears a predication relation to the questioned, focused, or relativized constituent.\(^5\) See Kroeber (1997,...

\(^4\) Possessor extraction is even more restricted in the Northern Interior: it is impossible in Lillooet (Matthewson & Davis 1995) and Shuswap (Gardiner 1996), and allowed only with (a subset of) intransitive subjects in Thompson (Davis, Gardiner, & Matthewson 1993).

\(^5\) While this view of Α-dependencies is broadly accepted and has considerable empirical support across the Salish family, it does gloss over potential differences between types of Α-movement. With respect to possessor extraction, for example, it predicts that questioning a possessor will be exactly as hard as relativizing a possessor, since the latter forms a component of the former. This is not entirely true, however: many Salish languages (including ?ayʔajuθəm) have strategies for questioning possessors that are not available for relative clauses. One of the most common is to use the WH-word for ‘where’ or ‘which’, as in the example in (iii) below:

(ii) nālh tə=mána-s ḥáʔa sláns [tə kʷánm-t-ci].
   COP DET=child-3POSS DEM woman [AUX help-CTR-2SG.OBJ]
   ‘That’s the woman whose son helped you.’
   (Literally: ‘It is the son of that woman who helped you.’)
As shown in (6–7), direct possessor extraction is permitted for inalienably possessed body parts, at least by some speakers.\(^7\)

\[(6)\] yɛ:\chátčxʷʔot
\[=\text{remember-CTR}\text{STAT}=2\text{SG.SBJ}=\text{EXCL}\]
\[\text{hel} \ \text{še} \ \text{laqt} \ \text{maqens}.\text{COP} \ \text{DET}=\text{long hair-3POSS}\]
\['You remember the one that has long hair.'\](vf)

\[(7)\] yɛ:\chátačxʷ
\[=\text{remember-CTR}\text{STAT}=Q=2\text{SG.SBJ}\]
\[\text{hel} \ \text{še} \ \text{tih} \ \text{maqšəns}.\text{COP} \ \text{DET}=\text{big nose-3POSS}\]
\['Do you remember the one with a big nose?\] (vf)

However, even in these contexts, speakers tend to prefer using a lexical suffix, as in (8), rendering possessor extraction unnecessary: cf. (6).

\[(8)\] yɛ:\chátačxʷʔot
\[=\text{remember-CTR}\text{STAT}=2\text{SG.SBJ}=\text{EXCL}\]
\[\text{hel} \ \text{še} \ \text{laqt} \ \text{eqʷən} \ \text{tumɩš}.\text{COP} \ \text{DET}=\text{long-hair man}\]
\['You remember the long-haired man.'\] (vf)

For anything other than inalienably possessed body parts, possessor extraction is disallowed, as shown in (9–12).

\[(9)\] *
\[\text{gɛt} \ \text{kʷ če̓nos} \ \text{kʷ niʔunšun}\]
\[\text{gət} \ \text{kʷ=ča} \ \text{n̓u-} \ \text{su-} \ \text{kʷ ni<ʔi>nš-əm}\]
\[\text{who} \ \text{DET=dog-3POSS} \ \text{DET=swim<PL>-MD}\]
\['Whose dog is swimming?'\] (sf)

\[(i)\]
\[\text{hɛkʷčɛ} \ \text{k̓w astas}\]
\[\text{hi+} \ \text{kʷ+ča} \ \text{kʷasta-s} \ \text{tihayə}\]
\[\text{COP+DET+where} \ \text{cup-3POSS} \ \text{tea}\]
\['Whose cup of tea did you spill?'\] (Literally: ‘Where/which cup of tea is it that you spilt?’)

While it is unclear how exactly to obtain a possessor interpretation for cases like these, it is clear that they do not involve \(\Lambda\)-movement of the possessor argument: the bracketed relative clause component in (i) has a gap in object position corresponding to the entire possessed DP, not the possessor. We set aside these cases for the purposes of this paper, though they would obviously make an interesting study in their own right.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Davis (2010) argues that operator movement inside relative clauses is in fact determiner movement, with a pro-NP pied-piped along with the \(\Lambda\)-moved D. Nothing here hinges on whether or not we adopt this hypothesis.

\(^7\) For the ?ayʔająθəm examples, the first line is in the community orthography, the second line is a phonemic representation with morpheme breaks in the standard version of the NAPA used by Salishanists, the third line provides a gloss, and the fourth line is the translation; in addition, ‘vf’ marks forms volunteered by consultants, while ‘sf’ marks forms suggested by the researchers. For examples from other languages, we employ a standard three-line format, without the community orthography line.
Given that direct possessor extraction is largely ungrammatical in ʔayʔaǰuθəm, the question immediately arises as to how the language does question, focus, or relativize a possessor. This is where the possessive predicate snaʔ (roughly, ‘be the owner (of)’) comes in. The crucial property of snaʔ that allows extraction is that it is a (formally) intransitive predicate whose absolutive subject is a semantic possessor; since absolutive subjects may always be directly extracted, extraction of the possessor is permitted.8,9

8 We have also recorded an additional form snaha. From what we have recorded, there is no clear semantic difference between snaha and snaʔ. Speakers who use snaha also accept snaʔ in the same contexts with no discernable difference in interpretation. We leave this variant aside for future investigation.

9 It is interesting to note that snaʔ cannot be used when extracting the possessor of an inalienably possessed body part:

(iii) a. # hɛɬə ta snaʔ ta ʔaqt maq̕en.  
  hil ta=snaʔ ta=ʔaqt maq̕in  
  COP DET=be.owner DET=long hair  
  ‘He’s the one with long hair.’ (sf)  
  Consultant’s comment: You own your hair, so [snaʔ is] not necessary, unless it’s a wig.

b. hɛɬə ta ʔaqt maq̕ens.  
  hil ta=ʔaqt maq̕in-s  
  COP DET=long hair-3POSS  
  ‘He’s the one with long hair.’ (vf)

It appears to give rise to an odd reading where the body part is not inalienably possessed, as indicated by the comment accompanying (iv.a).
As can be seen in all the examples in (13–16), an overt possessum argument can (and frequently does) appear following *sna*. Though this second argument is not marked as oblique, it does not behave as a direct (agreement-marked) argument either, since it cannot be extracted:

(17) * tam sna? Gail?
    tam sna? Gail
    what be.owner Gail
    ‘What is Gail’s?’  \( \text{(sf)} \)

(18) * hel to apam k=alt sna? Gail.
    hil to=apam k=alt sna? Gail
    COP DET=deep plate be.owner Gail
    ‘The bowl is Gail’s.’  \( \text{(sf)} \)

It is also important to note that the initial *s* of *sna?* is not a nominalizer. If it were, we would expect to find the subject/possessor marked with possessive morphology. Not only is this not obligatory, as shown in (13–16) above, it is in fact ungrammatical, as illustrated in (19–20) below.

(19) * get (k=) sna?s tə=ʔatʔem ?atnopel?
    get k=snad=s tə=ʔatʔim ?atnupil
    who DET=be.owner=3POSS DET=red car
    ‘Who owns the red car?’  \( \text{(sf)} \)

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10 Oblique marking is frequently elided in *ʔayʔajʊʔom*, but where it is underlyingly present, it can generally be reinserted in follow-up elicitation. The insertion of oblique marking preceding the possessum of the predicate *sna?* is judged ungrammatical, however (this judgement is stronger for some speakers than others):

\( \text{(v)} \) * get k= sna? ʔə tcəʔno?
    get k=snad=ʔə tcə=ʔən̓u
    who DET=be.owner OBL=DET=dog
    ‘Who owns the dog?’  \( \text{(cf. 13)} \)

We do not currently have an explanation for the absence of oblique marking here.
Finally, *snaʔ* cannot be used when the possessor is not extracted. As far as we know, this behaviour is unique in the language.

(21) * snaʔ  tə gaʔčiqʷən tumɩš tə č̓e̓ n̓o.
snaʔ  tə=gaʔčiqʷən tumiš tə=ča̓nu
be.owner DET=bald man DET=dog

‘The bald man owns the dog.’

(22) * snaʔ  0íʔa  saltxʷ  tə  t̓at̓ᶿem  ?atnopel.
snaʔ  0íʔa  saltxʷ  tə= t̓at̓im  ?atnupil
be.owner DEM woman DET=red car

‘This woman owns the red car.’

The restriction of *snaʔ* to possessor extraction contexts naturally raises a further question: how does *ʔayʔaǰuθəm* handle possession in non-extraction contexts, or where the possessum is extracted? This is where the nominal predicate *naʔ* comes in.

4 Possession with *naʔ*

In order to express possession without possessor extraction, or where extraction of the possessum takes place, *ʔayʔaǰuθəm* employs the nominal predicate *naʔ* ‘(one’s) own’. Its argument structure is almost inverse to that of *snaʔ*: its absolutive subject is the possessum, with its possessor argument marked by possessive affixes and optionally by associated possessor DPs.

(23) **Context: I find a coat left at the lodge. Daniel is notorious for forgetting his coat.**

* naʔs  čə  Daniel.
naʔ-s=čə  Daniel
own-3POSS=INFR Daniel

‘It must be Daniel’s.’

(24) *ʔəθ naʔa?
ʔəθ=naʔ=a
2SG.POSS=own=Q
‘Is it yours?’

(25) *ʔətʰ naʔ*  tań  nuxʷe̓l.
ʔətʰ=naʔ  tań  naxʷil
1SG.POSS=own DEM canoe

‘That canoe is mine.’
(26) naʔs  Eric  še xʷuʔumayə.
naʔ-s  Eric  ŋə=xʷuʔumaya
own-3POSS  Eric  DET=store
‘The store belongs to Eric.’ (vf)

(27) naʔs  čə  tə gaʔčeqʷən  tumiš  tə  čəño.
naʔ-s=čə  tə=gaʔčiqʷən  tumiš  tə=čənu
own-3POSS=INFR  DET=bald  man  DET=dog
‘The dog must belong to the bald man.’ (vf)

(28) naʔs  ʔiʔa  saltxʷ  tə  ʔaʔem  ʔatnopel.
naʔ-s  ʔaʔyəʔa  saltxʷ  tə=ʔaʔim  ʔatnupil
own-3POSS  DEM  woman  DET=red  car
‘The red car belongs to that woman.’ (sf)

Possessor marking is obligatory on naʔ; it must be accompanied by a possessive affix indicating the possessor.

naʔ  tə́yə  tumiš  tə=čənu
own  DEM  man  DET=dog
‘The dog belongs to that man.’ (sf)

b. naʔs  tita  tumiš  tə  čəño.
naʔ-s  tə́yə  tumiš  tə=čənu
own-3POSS  DEM  man  DET=dog
‘The dog belongs to that man.’ (sf)

(30) *naʔ  ʔiʔa  saltxʷ  tə  ʔaʔem  ʔatnopel.
naʔ  ʔaʔyəʔa  saltxʷ  tə=ʔaʔim  ʔatnupil
own  DEM  woman  DET=red  car
‘The red car belongs to that woman.’ (cf. 28) (sf)

Since the possessum is the direct argument of naʔ, it can be extracted:

(31) Context: I’m at the store looking at different tools and I know Gail is really happy with the one she has. I want to get one like it, but I’m not sure which kind it is.
tam  čə  ga  kʷ  naʔs  Gail?
tam=čə=ga  kʷ=naʔ-s  Gail
what=INFR=DPRT  DET=own-3POSS  Gail
‘I wonder what Gail has?’ (vf)
(32) Context: There was a gathering at the gym and some cooking ware got left behind. I know some of it is Gail’s, but I’m not sure which.

a. hekʷčɛ nəʔs Gail?
   hi+kʷ+ča nəʔ-s Gail
   COP+DET+where own-3POSS Gail
   ‘Which belong to Gail?’

b. hel tə ƛəpəm kʷalt kʷ nəʔs.
   hil tə=ƛəpəm kʷalt kʷ=naʔ-s
   COP DET=deep plate DET=own-3POSS
   ‘The bowl belongs to her.’

In contrast, since the possessor is not a direct argument, it cannot be extracted:11

(33) # get kʷ nəʔs tə čəño?
   got kʷ=naʔ-s tə=čənu
   who DET=own-3POSS DET=dog
   ‘Whose is the dog?’

(34) # get (kʷ) nəʔs tə tətʰɛm ?atnopɛl?
   got kʷ=naʔ-s tə=tətʰim ?atnupil
   who DET=own-3POSS DET=red car
   ‘Whose is the red car?’

(35) # hel təʔɛ tumɩš (kʷ) naʔs tə čəño.
   hil təʔi tumɩš kʷ=naʔ-s tə=čənu
   COP DEM man DET=own-3POSS DET=dog
   Intended interpretation: ‘It’s this man that owns the dog.’
   Actual interpretation: ‘The dog owns this man.’

A further argument that the possessor is not the subject of a nəʔ predicate comes from embedding. In a subjunctive environment, the third person subjunctive subject clitic =as may co-occur with the 3rd person possessive suffix -s on nəʔ.

(36) Context: We’re cleaning up the gym after a gathering and I ask someone to check if a kitchen utensil belongs to Gail.
   ho ga gayɛt Gail ga nəʔsas tɛʔɛ.
   hu=ga gay-at Gail ga nəʔ-s=as tɪʔi
   go=DPRT ask-CTR Gail if own-3POSS=3SBJV DEM
   ‘Go ask Gail if this belongs to her.’

11 The sentences in (33) and (34) were judged impossible, but are probably semantically anomalous rather than ungrammatical, meaning something like: ‘Who belongs to the dog?’ and ‘Who belongs to the car?’, respectively, where the extracted argument is the possessum. This is parallel to the semantically odd interpretation given for (35), for instance. The fact that such an interpretation was not offered for (33) and (34) probably reflects the fact that these odd interpretations are particularly strange in questions.
Two subject agreement markers cannot co-occur on the same predicate in ʔayʔaj̓uθəm; subject agreement can be doubled, but only in transitive third person subordinate clauses where there is a preceding auxiliary to host the subject clitic, allowing the third person ergative suffix to surface on the main predicate (see, e.g., Kroeber 2002:20–21, Watanabe 2003:105, 107, 113, 115).12 This means that the 3rd person possessive -s in (37) is not marking clausal subject agreement, but rather forms part of the nominal predicate. A similar construction is found with ʔaʔəl ‘want/desire’, which patterns in a parallel fashion in embedded contexts.

(37) qʷol̓səmt qamən ga ʔaʔəl̓səs.
    qʷəl̓=səm=ʔut qamin ga ʔaʔəl̓-s=as
    ‘She can come along if she wants.’

Before leaving this section, we note that naʔ also appears as a nominal modifier of arguments, meaning ‘one’s own’ (38–39), and in argument position (40).

(38) Context: Daniel is painting houses for a summer job. Today it’s the weekend, and you ask me what he’s up to. I tell you, ‘He’s painting his own house.’
    j̓ikʷt kʷa
    jə-ʔykʷ-ʔ=kʷa kʷ=naʔ-s
    IPFV=paint-CTR DET=own-3POSS house
    ‘He’s painting his own house.’

(39) Context: I wanted to have my own awl for weaving and I finally bought one.
    čkʷa maʔamʔit ʔət x̣ʷoχʷp.
    č=kʷa maʔ-ʔəm-ʔiyt ʔət=naʔ ʔət=naʔ=own
    1SG.SBJ=CLDEM get-NCTR-PRF 1SG.POSS=own awl
    I got my own awl.

(40) Context: We are sitting around the table and Betty finished up her basket, but we’re still getting started.
    kʷi hoynom Betty šə naʔs ʔi ʔaʔt détʔ=ʔot
    kʷi huy-nu-m Betty šə=naʔ-s ʔiy čaʔat=ʔst=ʔut
    CLDEM finish-NCTR-PASS Betty DET=own-3POSS CONJ now=1PL.SBJ=EXCL
    ĩʔəʔaʔyin. ʔaʔ ʔə-ʔayin
    IPFV=begin
    ‘Betty already finished hers and we’re just starting.’

Where naʔ is an argument modifier, the possessive clitics attach to naʔ and cannot instead attach to the following noun.

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12 Subject clitics also sometimes double ergative suffixes in main clauses where the predicate is transitivized with the noncontrol transitivizer (see Watanabe 2003:2018, fn. 186 concerning the use of ergative subject suffixes in main clauses with the noncontrol transitivizer); however, in order for this doubling to take place, the clitics must be hosted pre-predicatively by another element, usually a clausal demonstrative.
(41)  *jikʷt kʷa  kʷ naʔ ʔayes.
    jə~ykʷt=kʷa  kʷ=naʔ ʔaya-s
IPFV-paint-CTR DET=own house-3POSS
‘He’s painting his own house.’ (sf)

(42)  *čkʷa maʔamʔit naʔətᶿ oχʷp.
    č=kʷa maʔ-ʔəm-ʔiyt naʔ ʔat=xʷuχʷp
1SG.SBJ=CLDEM get-NCTR-PRF own 1SG.POSS=awl
‘I got my own awl.’ (sf)

We also predict that naʔ should be possible as a predicate modifier in the complex nominal predicate construction (see Watanabe 2003:96) but have not yet had a chance to test this.

5  The comparative syntax of possession in Salish languages of the North Georgia area

The curious division of labour between snaʔ and naʔ in ʔayʔaǰuθəm raises the issue of how the system developed, and whether it has any analogues in neighbouring languages. In this section, we compare the ʔayʔaǰuθəm system to its counterparts in Sechelt, Pentlatch, Squamish, and Halkomelem, as well as the nearest neighbouring Northern Interior language, Lilooet.

5.1  Sechelt

Sechelt is ʔayʔaǰuθəm’s closest relative: its territory borders that of the Sliammon to the south-east, on the mainland side of the Georgia Strait.

The Sechelt cognate of (s)naʔ is səná (first person singular cəná, first/second/third person plural səná(t)). Its syntactic behaviour mirrors that of naʔ, not sna: its absolutive (direct) argument denotes the possessum, with the possessor obligatorily encoded by possessive affixes, supplemented optionally in the third person by possessor DPs. The distribution of səná also resembles that of na: it can occur in predicate position (43–44), in argument position (45–46), as a predicate modifier (47), or as an argument modifier (48):

(43)  [səná-s]  [laʔaχa  tə=sčánu].
    [own-3POSS] [DEM RET=dog]
    ‘The dog is hers/her own.’ (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:212)

(44)  [səná-s]  ɬən  sqix [tə=piš].
    [own-3POSS  F.DET+1SG.POSS younger.sister] [DET=cat]
    ‘The cat belongs to my younger sister.’ (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:42)

(45)  [slánaʔ  piš]  [lo=səná-s].
    [female cat] [F.DET=own-3POSS]
    ‘She’s got a female cat. (A female cat is hers/her own.)’ (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:212)
(46) ʔút [sc:ónu] [šən cóna], xʷá=čán čásx-ám=an.
    if [dog] [DET+1SG.POSS 1SG.own] NEG=1SG.SBJ afraid-MD=1SG.SBJV
    ‘If I had a dog, I wouldn’t be afraid.’ (If a dog were my own...)
    (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:206)

(47) [səná-s s-cî ciy-im] ?ə=šə=yáw-altən.
    [own-3POSS NMLZ-work-MID] OBL=DET=′wake.up-INTR
    ‘It’s his job to wake them up.’
    (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:508)

(48) nə̀l [tə=sənán-(?)ít sná̱xʷil]
    [DET=PL.own-3PL.POSS canoe]
    ‘That’s their own canoe.’
    (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:5)

Furthermore, just like naʔ, səná is used when a possesum is relativized:

(49) ũ̱ ɬə̱m-ná̱xʷ-as [șə=səná-s-ul tə=snáxʷil].
    AUX forget-NCT-3ERG [DET=own-3POSS-PAST DET=canoe]
    ‘He forgot whose boat it was.’
    (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:538)

(50) hákʷ-át=a=čxʷ remember-CTR=Q=2SG.SBJ [DET=own-3POSS-PAST car AUX
    látsə̱m-át-axʷ]? fix-CTR-2SG.ERG
    ‘Do you remember whose car (it was that) you fixed?’
    (Sechelt: Beaumont 2011:538)

However, Beaumont (2011) gives no examples with səná involving relativization of a possessor: this is unlikely to be an accidental gap, which means that in all probability səná is exactly like naʔ in its syntax.

Furthermore, Sechelt seems to lack any functional equivalent of snaʔ: where possessor extraction is possible at all, it seems to employ the direct extraction strategy, as noted in Section 1 (see in particular footnote 3).

5.2 Pentlatch

Pentlatch, the earliest Salish language to succumb to colonization in Canada, was spoken directly opposite the Georgia Strait from Sechelt and to the south of Comox territory on Vancouver Island. It is poorly documented; the information given here comes from unpublished notes by Kinkade (1980), who re-transcribed and annotated Boas’s original field notes, hand-written in German.13

As originally transcribed by Boas, the Pentlatch equivalent to possessive naʔ and səná is tθu̱wá ~ cuwá ~ cuwá ~ suwá, with the alternate forms depending on the person of the possessive affix which attaches to the possessive root: tθ- ~ c- in the first person, c- in the second, and s- in the

13 Our interpretation of Boas’s transcription differs from that of Kinkade, however, and is closer to the original.
These forms show a remarkable resemblance to the possessive predicate *cúwaʔ* in Lillooet: see Section 5.5 below.

(51)  
\[
\text{cúwá} \quad \text{c-}kʷiš \quad \text{na} \quad \text{Tim.}  \\
1SG.POSS+own \quad 1SG.POSS-name \quad \text{be} \quad \text{Tim}  \\
\]

‘My name is Tim.’  

(Pentlatch: Kinkade 1980)

(52)  
\[
\text{(ʔa)cúwá} \quad \text{c-}čínu?  \\
2SG.POSS+own \quad 2SG.POSS-dog  \\
\]

‘Is this your dog?’  

(Pentlatch: Kinkade 1980)

(53)  
\[
\text{suwá} \quad \text{čínu}  \\
3POSS+own \quad \text{dog}  \\
\]

‘his dog’  

(Pentlatch: Kinkade 1980)

Note in (451) and (52) that the possessive person marking on the possessive predicate is doubled in first and second person on the possessed noun. This doubling is also found in Squamish and Halkomelem: see Sections 5.3 and 5.4 below.

### 5.3 Squamish

Squamish territory lies adjacent to that of the Sechelt along Howe Sound. Kuipers (1967), the major source for the language, gives some information on possessive *swaʔ*, the equivalent of *naʔ* and *səná*. Like its *ʔayʔaǰuθəm* and Sechelt equivalents, *swaʔ* takes two arguments: its direct (absolutive) argument denotes the possessum, while obligatory possessive affixes mark the possessor. Kuipers gives data showing that *swaʔ* may be used as a predicate (54), an argument (55), a predicate modifier (56), and an argument modifier (57):

(54)  
\[
[\text{swáʔ-s} \quad \text{kʷa=n-mán}] \quad [\text{[ta=lám].} \quad \text{DET=1SG.POSS-father}] \quad \text{[DET=house]}  \\
\text{own-3POSS} \quad \text{DET=1SG.POSS-father} \quad \text{DET=house}  \\
\]

‘The house is my father’s.’  

(Squamish: Kuipers 1967:145)

(55)  
\[
[\text{ʔa(s)-sóq}] \quad [\text{kʷi=ʔa-swáʔ}].  \\
[\text{STAT-split}] \quad [\text{DET=2SG.POSS-own}]  \\
\]

‘Half is yours.’  

(Squamish: Kuipers 1967:145)

---

14 The special first person form of the possessive predicate in Sechelt (*səná* versus *səná*) likely represents a relic form of the same stem alternation.

15 In both Boas’s original and Kinkade’s re-transcription, the *c*-possessive prefix at the beginning of the possessed noun is split into an unexplained -*t* suffix on *cúwá* and a nominalizing prefix on the noun, i.e. *cúwá*-t s-kwiš rather than *cúwá* c-kwiš. However, Boas gives a complete paradigm for the possessive predicate without a -*t*, which is also missing in the example in (53) with a third person possessor, supporting the re-analysis proposed here.
(56) [ʔən-swáʔ ʔən-sqʷəmáʔ] tí. DEM
    [1SG.POSS-own 1SG.POSS-dog] ‘This is my (own) dog.’ (Squamish: Kuipers 1967:145)

(57) haʔɬ [ta=ʔə-swáʔ ʔ(ə)-lán].
    good [DET=2SG.POSS-own 2SG.POSS-house] ‘Your (own) house is good.’ (Squamish: Kuipers 1967:145)

A quirk of the Squamish possessive system (shared by Pentlatch and Halkomelem) is that in cases where swaʔ acts as a modifier, as in (56) and (57), the possessor is marked both on swaʔ and on the head noun.

5.4 Halkomelem

Halkomelem was historically spoken throughout the Fraser Valley in the Lower Mainland, bordering Squamish to the north, and on the southeast coast of Vancouver Island, bordering Pentlatch to the north. The Halkomelem possessive predicate sweʔ, glossed by Suttles (2004:336) as ‘one’s own’, seems to behave very similarly to its Squamish cognate. In the examples below, it appears as a predicate (58), a predicate modifier (59), an argument (60), and an argument modifier (61):

(58) sweʔ-s ʔéltən.
    own-3POSS 3PL ‘It’s theirs.’ (Downriver Halkomelem: Suttles 2004:336)

(59) [na-swéʔ na-sqʷəmáʔ].
    [1SG.POSS-own 1SG.POSS-dog] ‘It’s my (own) dog.’ (Downriver Halkomelem: Suttles 2004:336)

(60) ʔi c-telə ?a=[kʷθə=sweʔ-s].
    AUX have-money OBL=[DET=own-3POSS] ‘She has her own money’. (Island Halkomelem: Gerds and Hukari 2008:499)

(61) xʷəm kʷə=s=tál-laxʷ=s wə=stém=əs [kʷθə=sweʔ-s]
    fast DET=NMLZ=get.understood-NCT=3POSS COMP=what=3SJBV [DET=own-3POSS sʔélyə] kʷθəʔ məstəyəxʷ.
    vision DEM person ‘They immediately knew what kind of vision that person had.’ (Downriver Halkomelem: Suttles 2004:400)

Note the doubling of the first person singular possessive prefix on sweʔ and the head noun in (59), as in the Squamish examples in (56) and (57).

Suttles also gives one case of a relativized possessum with sweʔ:

(62) ta=ƛ̓ƛ̓ɬqəł [sweʔ-s ʔə=sáʔsəqʷt máʔə]
    DET=child [own-3POSS DET=junior child] ‘the boy who was the son of the younger sister’ (Downriver Halkomelem: Suttles 2004:81)
As expected, there are no attested cases of possessor extraction with *sweʔ*. However, Halkomelem also uses its productive denominal prefix *c*- ‘have, get, make’ with *sweʔ* to derive a stative verb *c-weʔ* meaning ‘be the owner (of)’ (the *s* in *sweʔ* deletes). This denominal verb resembles *ʔayʔaǰuθəm* *snaʔ* rather than *na*: its direct (absolutive) argument denotes the possessor, with the possessum optionally present as an oblique-marked object. Interestingly, all the cases we have been able to find involve possessor extraction, just as with *ʔayʔaǰuθəm* *sna*: we do not currently know if *th* is an accidental or systematic gap.

\[(63)\]  
\[\text{c̓əxʷléʔ= c̓əʔʔəy̓ne} \text{m̓hə́yeʔ=} \text{[c-} \text{weʔ} \text{(ʔə)=tə=léʔam]}\]  
‘Sometimes the owner of the house went away.’  
\text{(Downriver Halkomelem: Suttles 2004:420)}

\[(64)\]  
\[\text{nil tə=slənleni} \text{ [c-weʔ} \text{ c-yays kʷ=s nem=s ʔəlxɛ:m}\]  
\[\text{DET=women} \text{ have-work DET=NMLZ=go=3POSS collect}\]  
\[\text{?ə=tə=spɛ:nxʷ, OBL=DET=camas}\]  
‘It’s the ladies who have the job of collecting the camas.’  
\text{(Island Halkomelem: Gerdts and Hukari 2008:499)}

### 5.5 Lillooet

Though it is a member of the Northern Interior branch, Lillooet borders on four out of the five other languages considered here (from north to south: *ʔayʔaǰuθəm*, Sechelt, Squamish, and Halkomelem). It has also been heavily influenced lexically and morphologically by Squamish and to a lesser extent by Halkomelem and Sechelt, so its inclusion is justified as a member of the ‘North Georgia Salish subgroup’ under discussion here.

Like *ʔayʔaǰuθəm* and Halkomelem, Lillooet has two related possessive predicates. The more basic one is *cúwaʔ*, which shows the typical properties of the *naʔ*/*cən*~*sən*~*cwá*~*cwua*~*swua*~*sweʔ* group; note in particular the strong phonological resemblance to the Pentlatch forms, which is surprising but unlikely to be coincidental.

Like other members of this group, *cúwaʔ* is a nominal predicate which takes two arguments, an absolutive-marked possessum and a possessive-marked possessor. Its distribution also mirrors that of its counterparts: it occurs as a predicate (65), an argument (66), and as either a predicate (67) or an argument (68) modifier. (All examples are from Alexander et. al in prep.)

\[(65)\]  
\[\text{[lan waʔ cúwaʔ=lkəλ] l=cʔa ta=tmixʷ=a,} \]  
\[\text{[already IPFV own-1PL.POSS] at=here DET=land=EXIS}\]  
‘This land here is already ours.’  
\text{(Lillooet)}

---

\[16\] Gerds and Hukari (2008) provide evidence from Island Halkomelem that *c*- is in fact a proclitic (*c*=: it attaches to prenominal adjectival modifiers in NP, for example:

\[(vi)\]  
\[\text{ʔi=ʔə=c ʔəw c=plst ʔəq swəʔ} \]  
\[\text{AUX=Q=2SG.SBJ LINK have=thick white sweater}\]  
‘Do you have a thick white sweater?’  
\text{(Island Halkomelem: Gerds and Hukari 2008:496)}

Since it takes scope over the entire NP, it should perhaps preferably be classified as a “phrasal affix”.  

101
(66) pq-am ta=n=kapúh=a ḟəl=[ta=cúwaʔ-sw=a].
white-er DET=1SG.POSS-coat=EXIS from=[DET=own-2SG.POSS=EXIS]
‘My coat is whiter than yours.’ (Lillooet)

(67) xʷʔəz kʷásu xʷʔəz-áʔ-a(m)-min
NEG D/C+NMLZ+IPFV+2SG.POSS NEG-pretend-MD-RLT
ʔi=kaʔ-ú-n-aʔ-ú-qʷ-axʷ tu=káh=a, [cúwaʔ-su szánytən].
PST=bump-FRED-log-RLT-2SG.ERG DET=car=EXIS [own-2SG.POSS business]
‘Don’t pretend to forget about the time you crashed the car, it was your own fault.’ (Lillooet)

Note that unlike in Pentlatch, Squamish, and Halkomelem, there is no doubling of possessive morphology on the head noun when cúwaʔ acts as a modifier: cúwaʔ alone is always marked with possessive affixes.

The second Lillooet possessive predicate is ṝəs-cúwaʔ, ‘be the owner (of)’. It is derived via prefixation of denominal ṝəs-, ‘have’ to cúwaʔ. Though originally ṝəs- may have been identical to the stative prefix (ʔəs-) (as assumed by Burton & Davis 1996), it is now partially phonologically distinct and, like Halkomelem c- (see footnote 17), behaves like a proclitic rather than a prefix in attaching to the first prenominal modifier rather than the head noun of a complex NP:

(68) nskázaʔ (ta)=n-sqáxʔ=a, ṝəz kʷas čáqʷ-aṈ-as
stuck.up DET=1SG.POSS-dog=EXIS NEG D/C+NMLZ+IPFV+3POSS eat-DIR-3ERG
[ʔi=cúwaʔ-s=a sʔílan].
[PL.DET=own-3POSS=EXIS food]
‘My dog is stuck-up, he won’t eat his own food.’ (Lillooet)

Like ṝəyʔajúʔom snáʔ and Halkomelem c-weʔ, the absolutive argument of ṝəs-cúwaʔ is the possessor, with the possessum generated as an optional non-agreeing object:17

(69) wa? [ʔəs-xzníʔ-qʷ qiʷxʷíx-qʷ čqáxʔaʔ] kʷ=snáʔílaʔa.
IPFV [have-big-head black-head horse DET=NMLZ-Pikaʔa]
‘Pikaîla has a big black horse.’ (Lillooet)

(70) nił ṝəyʔa ṝəs-cúwaʔ láʔíʔ ḟəl= [ta=waʔ ṝəs-cúwaʔ láʔíʔ ḟəl=]
COP then NMLZ-Alexander COP then NMLZ-Alexander
[DET=IPFV have-own there PL.DET=wagon=EXIS]
‘Well, it was Alexander who was the owner of the wagons there.’ (Lillooet)

(71) a. ṝəs-cúwaʔ=λkáxʷ=ha kʷu=sqáxʔaʔ?
have-own=2SG.SBJ=Q DET=dog
‘Do you own a dog?’

b. iy, ṝəs-cúwaʔ=λkán.
yes have-own=1SG.SBJ
‘Yes, I do.’ (Literally: Yes, I own.’) (Lillooet)

17 Lillooet has lost oblique marking on non-agreeing objects.
While ʔəs-cúwaʔ permits extraction of the possessor, as shown in (70), crucially, it does not enforce it, as shown by (71). This means that A-extraction is not a necessary property of possessive predicates with the argument structure of snaʔ / c-weʔ / ʔəs-cúwaʔ, but a parochial property of snaʔ (and possibly c-weʔ).

5.6 Summary

The table in (70) summarizes our comparison of possessive predicates in the six languages we have examined:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Possessive predicates in six Salish languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSS 1</strong> (noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSS 2</strong> (verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can draw several conclusions from this survey, which helps to throw cross-Salishan light on the ʔayʔaǰuθəm system.

First, the basic possessive predicate in every one of these languages is a dyadic noun, whose subject (absolutive) argument denotes the possessum, while its possessor argument is obligatorily represented by possessive pronominals (with or without associated DPs).

Second, in half of the six languages under discussion, a process of denominal verb-formation takes the basic possessive noun and yields a predicate with an inverse argument structure: the possessor is realized by its subject (absolutive) argument, while the possessum is (optionally) generated as an unregistered object, marked oblique in Halkomelem, but unmarked in ʔayʔaǰuθəm and Lillooet (at least in the latter case, for independent reasons). In Halkomelem and Lillooet, the prefix/proclitic which derives the possessive verb is found on a wide range of nouns, and the process is compositional and productive; but in ʔayʔaǰuθəm, which completely lacks prefixes, the derivation is fossilized and limited to the naʔ ~ snaʔ alternation.

In each case, extraction is only possible from the absolutive (subject) argument of the possessive predicate: this means that only extraction of the possessum is possible from the nominal predicate, while only extraction of the possessor is possible from the denominal verb.

---

18 We have not yet addressed the important question of how denominal verb formation operates. While a full treatment is beyond the scope of this paper, the proposal in Burton and Davis (1996) provides a useful starting point. The basic idea behind their analysis is that nouns in general come with two arguments, a referential external one and a possessive internal one — in other words, exactly the argument structure we have been assuming for na-type predicates. Denominal verb-formation then suppresses the external argument (perhaps by existential closure) and promotes the internal (possessive) argument to the subject position of the derived verb, deriving a sna-type predicate.
Puzzles remain, however. One is the identity of the initial s (c in Lillooet and partially in Sechelt and Pentlatch) on the possessive nominal predicate. It is tempting to take it as the nominalizer (as Suttles 2004 and Kinkade 1980 do), in which case its absence on naʔ in ʔayʔaǰuθəm is explained by the systematic absence of prefixal nominalization in that language. However, if possessive predicates are nominalized, the question then arises as to what exactly they are nominalizations of. The most obvious answer is that the input to nominalization is the existential predicate ‘be (there)’, which has two forms in the languages under discussion: ni(ʔ) in ʔayʔaǰuθəm, Sechelt, Pentlatch, Halkomelem, and Squamish, and waʔ in Lillooet, as shown in (71).  

Table 2: Possessive and (locative) existential predicates in six languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ʔayʔaǰuθəm</th>
<th>Sechelt</th>
<th>Pentlatch</th>
<th>Squamish</th>
<th>Halkomelem</th>
<th>Lillooet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>existential</strong></td>
<td>niʔ</td>
<td>ni</td>
<td>nə</td>
<td>naʔ</td>
<td>niʔ</td>
<td>waʔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>possessive</strong></td>
<td>naʔ</td>
<td>cená~səná</td>
<td>cuwa<del>cuwa</del>s</td>
<td>swaʔ</td>
<td>sweʔ</td>
<td>cuwaʔ uwa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the input to the possessive predicate in Pentlatch, Halkomelem, and Squamish does not resemble the form which these languages employ as an existential predicate: this means that they either borrowed their possessive nominal predicates from Lillooet, or originally employed a version of waʔ as an existential predicate, before it was replaced by ni(ʔ) – naʔ.20

A couple of puzzles from ʔayʔaǰuθəm also remain unresolved. First, though we have explained why the possessive verb snaʔ only permits its possessor to be extracted (since the possessor is its only direct argument), we have not explained why it must be extracted. The fact that the equivalent Lillooet verb ʔəs-cúwaʔ does not force extraction (the Halkomelem facts are unclear) indicates that

19 It is worth mentioning here that nominalization does not straightforwardly derive a possessive predicate from an existential one. In fact, in Lillooet, regular nominalization of waʔ yields a nominal predicate s-waʔ meaning ‘x’s being (there)’, as shown in (vii):

(vii) x̣áƛ̓=kʷuʔ=tuʔ s-waʔ-s ?i=ʔuxʷalmíx=a pináʔi.

hard=QUOT=REM NMLZ-be.there-3POSS PL.DET=indigenous.person=EXIS around.then

‘The people had a hard time back then.’

Nominalization of existential ‘be’ to yield a possessive nominal predicate must involve an extra step, where the locative argument of ‘be’ (the ‘there’) is first reanalyzed as a possessor (as it is in languages such as Russian where ‘x is at y’ means ‘y has x’), and then mapped onto the possessor argument of the derived noun. It is unclear whether this is a plausible derivation, either synchronically or diachronically. It is also worth mentioning that in both ʔayʔaǰuθəm and Lillooet, transitivization of the existential predicate yields a stage-level predicate meaning ‘have’, as shown in (viii) and (ix), respectively:

(viii) nam-usʔamin niʔ-st-əm Marianne.

be.like-face-INSTR be.there-CAUS-PASS Marianne

‘Marianne has a picture.’ (?ʔayʔaǰuθəm)

(ix) wáʔ=lkaxʷ=ha waʔ-án ?i=naklih=s=a ta=kâh=aʔ?

IPFV=2SG.SBJ=Q be.there-DIR PL.DET=key-3POSS=EXIS DET=car=EXIS

‘Do you have the car keys?’ (Lillooet)

20 In both Squamish and Pentlatch, waʔ(ʔ) is present as an imperfective auxiliary (a role which it also employs in Lillooet). This gives some support to the idea that waʔ(ʔ) was originally also an existential predicate in those languages, more recently supplanted (at least in Squamish) by naʔ.
this cannot be a general property of denominal possessive verbs but must be local to ?ayʔajuθəm; we currently have no non-stipulative solution to this problem.

Second, the shape of snaʔ remains problematic. As a general rule, ?ayʔajuθəm does not allow syllables with complex onsets: snaʔ is an exception. On the other hand, our analysis treats the initial s on snaʔ as a fossilized denominal prefix, rather than as the nominalizing prefix, which has been uniformly lost in the language; as pointed out by Kroeber and Watanabe (2004), there are a number of other s-initial words which violate the ban on initial consonant clusters, including skʷaq ‘the rest (of something)’, snaq ‘dear’, skʷičiy ‘bothersome’, and st̕uθkʷ ‘day’. So snaʔ is not that exceptional in its exceptionality.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined possessor extraction in ?ayʔajuθəm, expanding on the limited documentation available in Watanabe (2003:134). We showed that ‘direct’ possessor extraction is highly restricted in the language, occurring only with inalienably possessed body parts. In all other cases, in order to extract a possessor, the predicate snaʔ ‘be the owner (of)’ must be used. Since snaʔ takes the possessor as its direct (absolutive) argument, extraction is permitted, as for other absolutive arguments in the language. Curiously, snaʔ does not appear except in cases of possessor extraction. For all other cases involving possession expressed predicatively, the nominal predicate naʔ ‘(one’s) own’ is used.

In order to further explore the relation between naʔ and snaʔ and their possible diachronic sources, we conducted a cross-linguistic survey of five other Salish languages spoken in the same North Georgia region. We found that the basic possessive predicate in each of these languages is a dyadic noun like naʔ, which takes the possessum as its absolutive argument, with the possessor obligatorily expressed by possessive pronominals, optionally supplemented in the third person by possessor DPs. Several of the surveyed languages additionally allow a process of denominal verb-formation to apply to this predicate, yielding a snaʔ-like predicate with inverse argument structure, having the possessor as its absolutive argument and the possessum optionally expressed by a non-agreeing DP. We speculate that the naʔ ~ snaʔ alternation represents a fossilized form of this derivational operation.

References


