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## NISGHA POSSESSIVES

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As a grammatical category, possession typically refers to a relation of dependency between two nouns, one of which is considered to belong to or with the other, which controls it. Nisgha<sup>1</sup> makes precise distinctions between different kinds of possession through morphological and syntactic means. Nisgha, like many other languages, distinguishes between the point of view of the possessor of an object, and that of the observer concentrating on a feature of the possessor. Within the point of view of the possessor, it differentiates between singular and collective 'possessions'.

1. IDENTIFYING THE POSSESSOR: Any possessed noun must end in a morpheme identifying its possessor. This morpheme is either a personal suffix pronoun, or a connective suffix which links the possessed noun to its possessor. (Both types of suffixes are used under a much greater variety of conditions, see Tarpent 1981, 1982). In addition, if the possessed noun refers to a single type of object possessed in equal measure by a number of possessors (as in 'our faces'), the possessed noun must obligatorily begin with the distributive prefix *qa-*.

## 1.1. Suffixes identifying the possessor:

## 1.1.1. Connective suffixes.

1.1.1.1. The connectives (Boas' term, which he uses also for other morphemes, 1911:) are *-s* (D) in front of determinates (mostly proper names), and *-t* (N) in front of non-determinates (most nouns). Thus<sup>2</sup>

<i>?à:t-s BÍl<sup>3</sup></i>	'Bill's net'
net-D	
<i>?à:t-t k'át</i>	'the man's net'
-N man	
<i>wìlp-s Máry</i>	'Mary's house'
house-D	
<i>wìlp-t hanáq</i>	'the woman's house'
-N woman	

1.1.1.2. Both connectives merge phonetically with a preceding identical consonant, as in

*sqàns* (= *sqàns-s*) *Máry* 'Mary's elbow'  
elbow-D

*tàqt* (= *tàqt-t*) *kʷát* 'the man's hammer'  
hammer-N man

or with the [s] or [t] release of an affricate:

*kutàc̣* (= *kutàc̣-s*) *Máry* 'Mary's coat'  
coat-D

*cạʎ* (= *cạʎ-t*) *hanaq̣* 'the woman's record'  
(music) record-N woman

### 1.1.2. Personal pronoun suffixes.

#### 1.1.2.1. Morphemes.

	SG	PL
1	-ỵ	-ṃ
2	-n	-siṃ
3	-t	-(ti:)t
Indef		-ti:

For the 3rd person plural, the bimorphemic ending *-ti:t* is used for human possessors. Otherwise, *-t* alone is used. Contrast these uses of *cạq̣* 'nose, bill':

*qa-cạq-t kupa-tkʷítkʷ* 'the children's noses'  
DIST-nose-N little.PL-child

*qa-cạq-ti:t* 'their noses'  
3P

*qa-cạq-t nạxnạ:ʃ* 'the ducks' bills'  
duck

*qa-cạq-t* 'their bills'  
3

#### 1.1.2.2. Morphophonemic rules associated with the personal suffixes.

These rules are stated briefly and informally here in order to assist the reader with the forms that follow.

1.1.2.2.1. Vowel epenthesis inserts a vowel between a word-final consonant and a suffix consisting of a resonant (sonorant), such as *-ỵ* '1S', *-n* '2S', *-ṃ* '1P'.

a. This vowel is *i* in most cases, as in

<i>wíp</i>	'house'	<i>wípiỵ</i>	'my house'
		<i>wípin</i>	'your house'
		<i>wípiṁ</i> <sup>4</sup>	'our house'

(contrasting with no vowel before a true consonant as in

*wípt* 'his/her house')

b. It is *a* after a uvular, as in

<i>cạq̣</i>	'nose'	<i>cạqaỵ</i>	'my nose'
		<i>cạqan</i>	'your nose'

c. After a glottal stop, a vowel copying the pre-glottal-stop vowel is inserted in all cases:

<i>tóʔ</i>	'cheek'	<i>tóʔoỵ</i>	'my cheek'
		<i>tóʔon</i>	'your cheek'
		<i>tóʔot</i>	'his/her cheek'

d. If the word ends in *ỵ*, and the ending added is *-ỵ*, the word-final *ỵ* is replaced by *ʔ*, followed by a copy vowel as in c. above:

<i>ʔasáỵ</i>	'foot, leg'	<i>ʔasaʔaỵ</i>	'my foot'
		(but <i>ʔasáỵin</i>	'your foot', etc.).

e. The vowel *i* is also inserted between a word-final *s* and the 2P suffix *-siṃ*:

<i>qantimís</i> <sup>5</sup>	'pencil'	<i>qa-qantimísisiṃ</i>	
		DIST-	'your pencils'

1.1.2.2.2. Rules involving Velar fricatives (Palato-velars, labio-velars, uvulars):

a. A word-final palato-velar or labio-velar fricative which immediately follows stress is replaced by a corresponding glide before the epenthetic vowel:

*wá:x* 'paddle'      *wá:yi̯* 'my paddle'

(but *hó:pix* 'spoon', *hó:pixi̯* 'my spoon', where *x* does not immediately follow stress)

*múx<sup>w</sup>* 'ear(s)'      *múwin* 'your ears'

b. If a palato-velar or uvular fricative follows a syllabic resonant (*l, m, n*), which immediately follows a stressed vowel, it is deleted before a suffix consisting of a resonant (see 1.1.2.2.1.), prior to the application of the vowel-epenthesis rule (id.):

*tíix̣* 'tongue'      *tíi̯* 'my tongue'  
*qa-tíim̩* 'our tongues'

*tímlánx* 'neck'      *tímláni̯* 'my neck'  
*tímlánin* 'your neck'

*íimx* 'song'      *íimiy̯* 'my song'

(but *típiix* 'back of the neck', *típiixi̯* 'the back of my neck', where *x* does not immediately follow stress).

c. In a number of words ending in the Uvular fricative *x̣*, the sequence *íx̣* is replaced by *í:* before a resonant suffix, as in

*nóx̣* 'mother'      *nó:y̯* 'my mother'  
*no:m̩* 'our mother'

This rule is not observed by all speakers, and it appears to be losing ground.

1.2. Prefix *qa-*: This prefix, which can be added to any non-determinate noun, indicates that a number of possessors all possess the same type of object or feature. It is therefore a distributive rather than a plural prefix. It is used in addition to the suffixes described in 1.1.

1.2.1. Nouns with only one stem for singular and plural:

*nik<sup>w</sup>ó:t<sup>6</sup>* 'father'      *nik<sup>w</sup>ó:tíim̩* 'our father'  
*qa-nik<sup>w</sup>ó:tíim̩* 'our fathers'

*nó?ot* 'dishes'      *nó?otíim̩* 'our dishes'  
(one household)

*qa-nó?otíim̩* 'our dishes'  
(several households)

*lu:-?á:m-t qò:ti̯*  
In-good-N heart-IS  
'I am happy'

*lu:-?ám?á:m-t qa-qò:tíim̩*  
In-good.PL-N DIST-heart-IP  
'We are happy'

## 1.2.2. Nouns with different singular and plural stems.<sup>7</sup>

1.2.2.1. Nouns designating single objects or persons: In general, the plural stem is used with *qa-*, even if there is one possessed object per possessor:

*wíip* 'house'  
pl. *huwíip* 'houses'

*wíipsim̩* 'your house'  
(one family)  
*qa-huwíipsim̩* 'your houses'  
(each person has one house)

*pó:t* 'boat'  
pl. *pipó:t* 'boats'

*pó:t-ti:t* 'their boat'  
*qa-pipó:t-ti:t* 'their boats'  
(each has one boat)

*?ús* 'dog'  
pl. *?as?ús* 'dogs'

*?úsíim̩* 'our dog'  
*?as?úsíim̩* 'our dogs'  
(one household)  
*qa-?as?úsíim̩* 'our dogs'  
(several households,  
each with one or more dogs)

1.2.2.2. Nouns designating pairs: These are inherently plural, but most of them also have a separate plural form for more than one pair, as in

*ta:tí:sḳ* 'socks (one pair)'  
pl. *tixta:tí:sḳ* (more than one pair)

The prefix *qa-* may be added to either the singular or the plural form, with a corresponding meaning difference:

*qa-ta:tí:sḳ-ti:t*  
'their socks'  
(each has one pair)

*qa-tixta-w:skʷ-ti:t*  
 'all their socks'  
 (each has more than one pair)

although it is more common for the plural form (more than one pair) to be used with *qa-* when there is no chance of misunderstanding, as with

*náx* 'snowshoes' (one pair)  
 pl. *ná:náx* (more than one pair)

In sentences such as

*haxhó:yíy-ʔ-náxay* 'I wore my snowshoes'  
 [wear.s.-ERG-1S]-N snowshoes-1S  
 pl.

*haxhó:yim-ʔ qa-ná:náxam* 'we wore our snowshoes'  
 [wear.s.pl.-ERG-1P]-N DIST-snowshoes.PL-1P

2. THE POSSESSOR AND THE OBSERVER: In describing his own 'possessions' or those of a fellow human, a speaker has a certain amount of emotional involvement or empathy. But when describing 'possession' by an animal, a plant, or an object, simply as a feature, without empathizing with the possessor, the human observer has a detached, scientific attitude. In European languages such as English or French, this attitude is expressed by replacing the possessive by the definite article. Notice the varied emotional responses to the three possible endings in the following:

My brother killed a moose and gave us...

- a ... the head (no emotional impact)
- b ... its head (more disturbing)
- c ... her head (gruesome)

2.1.1. In Nisgaha it is possible to indicate meaning (a) rather than (b) or (c) by using the definite particle (*ʔ*) *ʔi/ʔa/ʔə* (which is also used in other contexts,<sup>8</sup> but can be roughly translated here as 'the') before the possessed noun. As explained above (1.1.), the possessor noun or pronoun is suffixed to the possessed noun. Sentence (a) is rendered as:

*kúwʔsim-mú:s-ʔ wəkʷiy ʔi:-t kʷinim ʔa-ʔ...*  
 kill-ATTR<sup>9</sup>-moose-N M's brother-1S and-3ERG [give.food.to-1P] PREP ...

*ʔi tʔimqʷis-t*<sup>10</sup>  
 the head-3

'My brother killed a moose and gave us the head'

The same sentence without the particle would indicate meaning b. or c., with the body part considered in its relation to the animal, rather as an object which happens to come from an animal. Similarly, with a noun possessor:

*ʔa: wʔtkʷ-ʔ st:ʔniskʷ-ʔ wəkʷiy ʔi:-t kʷinim ʔa-ʔ...*  
 by.now come.back-N hunt-NM's brother-1S ...

*ʔi tʔimqʷis-ʔ mú:s*  
 the head-N moose

'When my brother came back from hunting, he gave us ...

the head of a moose'  
 (not: a moose's head)

Other examples of this construction are noun-phrases describing a part of an animal or object, such as

*ʔi yim-ʔ ʔaxʷt / ʔi yim-t* 'the quills of a porcupine/  
 the quills-N porcupine -3 'the quills'

*ʔa qə:x-ʔ cú:c / ʔa qə:x-t* 'the wing of a bird/  
 the wing-N bird 'the wing'

*ʔi mə:s-ʔ sku:sʔt / ʔi mə:s-t* 'the peel of a potato/  
 the bark-N potato 'the peel'

as well as others describing things associated with them:

*ʔi kʷip-ʔ ʔús / ʔi kʷip-t* 'dog food' (the food of a/the  
 the food<sup>11</sup>-N dog dog) / 'its food'

*ʔə ʔə:ta-ʔ má:l / ʔə ʔə:ta-t* 'canoe covers' (the covers  
 the covers-N canoe of a/the canoe) /  
 'the covers'

Terms of kinship applied to animals also take the particle:

*ʰi ʰkʷi-t smáx/ ʰi ʰkʷi-t* 'bear cubs' (the children of  
the children<sup>12</sup>-N bear a/the bear)/'the cubs'

*ʰi nóx-t kupa: smáx/ ʰi nóx-t* 'the mother of the cubs/  
the mother-N little.PL bear 'the mother'

However, the particle is not used when there is emotional empathy with the animal, as shown by:3

*yuk<sup>w</sup>-t qapqá:p<sup>12</sup>-s Kəny-t tımqís-t tú:s-t*  
AUX-3ERG scratch.s.-D K-N head-N cat-3

'Kenny is scratching his cat's head'

or: *sím ʔano:qa-t tú:s ta: ta-t qapqá:p-s Kəny-t*  
well [like.s.-ERG]-N cat when by.now-3ERG scratch.s.-D K-N

*tımqís-t*  
head-3

'The cat likes it when Kenny scratches its head'

Compare also these passages from the story of the beaver and the porcupine (Boas 1902:73-121):<sup>14</sup> the narrator does not use the particle when the focus is on the human-like interaction between the two animals, as in

*min-yé.-t ʔax<sup>w</sup>t ʔa-t lax hak<sup>w</sup>oʔ-t cimílx* (74.6-7)  
up-go-N porcupine PREP-N on back-N beaver

'The porcupine climbed on the beaver's back'

*sımkyit tám-t tımłáníy-ist* (74.7-8)  
firmly hug.s.-N neck-1S-INTERACTIVE<sup>15</sup>

'Hold on tight to my neck' [said the beaver]

but he does use it when describing typical beaver behavior:

*ni:-yácit-t lax-ʔaks ʔa-t ti wáqt-t* (75.15-76.1)  
down.on-[strike.s.-ERG-3S]-N on-water PREP-N the beavertail-3

'He struck the surface of the water with his tail'

2.1.1.2. If there are several possessors, the distributive prefix *qa-* (1.2.) is used before the noun:

*ta qa-çaq-t naxná:x / ta qa-çaq-t* 'the bills of (the) ducks/  
the DIST-bill-N duck -3 'the bills'

*ta qa-ʔaná:s-t cimílx / ta qa-ʔaná:s-t* 'the pelts of (the)  
the DIST-skin-N beaver beavers/'the pelts'

2.1.2. With most human 'possessions', the particle is not used (cf. examples in 1. above). In particular, the particle is not used with permanently observable features of the human body, as in

*sí:pk<sup>w</sup>-t tımqísíy* 'I have a headache'  
hurt-N head-1S (lit. my head hurts)

even if there is no empathy, as in

*sa:-qúc-ti:t-t qa-tımqís-t kyitwítk<sup>w</sup>*  
off-[cut.s.pl.-ERG]<sup>16</sup>]-3P-N DIST-head-N warrior

'They cut off the warriors' heads'

But the detached attitude indicated by the particle [ʔ] does apply in some cases, to what can perhaps be called 'emanations' of the human body or personality: the particle seems to always be used in talking about substances excreted by the body, as in

*kyímk<sup>w</sup>-t ti núçin* 'Wipe your nose!' (lit. ...snot)  
wipe.s.-N the snot-2S

*pux<sup>w</sup>-t ti ʰkʷiik<sup>w</sup>iy* 'I am sweating'  
blow.around-N the sweat-1S (lit. my sweat blows around)

and to other 'undesirables' associated with it:

*qúi-t ti çisk<sup>w</sup>-t ku-tk<sup>w</sup>ítk<sup>w</sup> tkus*  
run.PL-N the louse-N little-child that

'That child has lice' (lit. that child's lice are running)

It is also used for less concrete possessions, such as

*ʔi ʔápiy* 'my people, my village'

Including more elusive things such as

*ʔə ʔó:ciniy* 'my soul'  
the soul-1S

*ʔi haíáxk<sup>w</sup>iy* 'my sin'  
the sin-1S

although this use seems less general, and for abstractions such as

*ʔə qantaíxk<sup>y</sup>at<sup>17</sup> -ʔ nísqáʔ* 'the traditions of the Nisgha'  
the strength-N Nisgha (person) (lit. the strength of...)

3. DIFFERENT POSSESSIONS: The examples of possession quoted above include semantic categories such as body parts, appurtenances and personal belongings (including money), and terms of kinship and of social relationships. Whether or not the particle [ʔə] is used, the suffix identifying the possessor is added directly to the noun. But there are also cases when another suffix, *-tk<sup>w</sup>*, must be added to the noun before the suffix identifying the possessor.

3.1. Morphological characteristics of the suffix *-tk<sup>w</sup>*: This suffix is the most common derivative suffix in the Nisgha language, with a great variety of meanings (Passive, Reflexive, 'like...', 'provided with...' and even Transitive). It appears as *-tk<sup>w</sup>* after vowels and resonants, and as *-k<sup>w</sup>* after consonants. In some cases where the word ends in a Velar, the alternant *-s* is used instead; if the Velar is a fricative, stop-formation occurs before *-s*, thus

...x-s → ...ks  
...x̣-s → ...qs  
...x<sup>w</sup>-s → ...k<sup>w</sup>s

3.2. Uses of the suffix in possessive contexts: Words taking this suffix in a possessive context fall into three distinct categories: (a) kinship terms with collective meaning, (b) accumulated stores and supplies, and less consistently, (c) a mixed bag of various possessions, which may include vehicles and sometimes animals. It is likely that the meaning common to

(a) and (b) is 'collective', or at least 'indefinite' (which would agree more with the other meanings of the suffix), while the less consistent use with (c) derives from a secondary interpretation of the semantic range of (b).

3.2.1. Collective plural of kinship terms: The suffix is used when referring to groups of relatives taken collectively. For instance

*k<sup>w</sup>islís* 'nephew/niece'    *k<sup>w</sup>islísk<sup>w</sup>iy* '(all of) my nephews and nieces'  
(esp. children of a man's sister)

*hux<sup>w</sup>tá:k<sup>y</sup>in* 'grandchild'    *hux<sup>w</sup>tá:k<sup>y</sup>intk<sup>w</sup>iy* '(all of) my grandchildren'

If a kinship term has a separate plural form, it is used together with the suffix:

*nóx̣* 'mother'    *nó:náxk<sup>w</sup>iy* '(all of) my "mothers" (the biological mother and her sisters)

*ʔixk<sup>w</sup>í:k<sup>w</sup>* '(woman's) sister'    *ʔixk<sup>w</sup>í:k<sup>w</sup>st* '(all of) her sisters'

*k<sup>y</sup>imxtí* 'cross-sex sibling'    *k<sup>y</sup>ixk<sup>y</sup>imxtítk<sup>w</sup>iy* '(all of) my brothers and sisters'

(although the collective of *wáky* '(man's) brother' sometimes appears as *huwákyk<sup>w</sup>* and sometimes as simply *wákyk<sup>w</sup>*).

Like any other possessed noun, these collective plurals can take the distributive prefix *qa-*, for instance

*niyéʔ* 'grandfather'    *qa-niyéʔetk<sup>w</sup>im* 'our ancestors'

*náks* 'spouse'    *qa-ní:níksk<sup>w</sup>im* 'our spouses'

3.2.2. Possessions considered collectively: The suffix is always used when referring to accumulated stores of supplies, particularly of food, taken collectively.<sup>18</sup>

<i>hó:n</i>	'fish'	<i>hó:ntk<sup>w</sup>iy</i>	'my (stores of) fish'
<i>tík<sup>y</sup>it</i>	'smoked oolichans'	<i>tík<sup>y</sup>itk<sup>w</sup>iy</i>	'my (stores of) smoked oolichans'
<i>súk<sup>w</sup>a</i>	'sugar'	<i>súk<sup>w</sup>atk<sup>w</sup>iy</i>	'my (stores of) sugar'
<i>winé:x</i>	'food'	<i>winé:ksim</i>	'our (stores of) food'
<i>?antikshó:n</i>	'jar of fish'	<i>?antikshó:ntk<sup>w</sup>-s</i>	<i>Máry</i> 'Mary's jars of fish'

In sentences such as

*ta: húk<sup>y</sup>áx-t qap):-t hó:ntk<sup>w</sup>im* 'We have enough fish'  
by.now right-N amount-N [fish-COLL-1P]

*?aq-t má:ytk<sup>w</sup>iy* 'I don't have any berries'  
non-existent-N [berries-COLL-1S]

An example of the use of this suffix which applies to stores of wisdom rather than food is

*ta qanhawátk<sup>w</sup>s<sup>19</sup>-t qa-niyé?etk<sup>w</sup>im* 'the taboos of our  
the cause.of.taboo-COLL-N DIST-[grandfather-COLL-1P] ancestors'

### 3.2.3. Other uses:

3.2.3.1. Some uses of the suffix with other semantic categories seem to confirm the meaning 'collective', as in

*hux<sup>w</sup> tk<sup>y</sup>i-t wi: tú:sim* 'Our cat had kittens again,  
again have.young-N big<sup>20</sup> cat-1P

*?i: qal híit-t tú:sk<sup>w</sup>im* and we have too many cats'  
and too many-N cat-COLL-1P

But the suffix is also found, though not consistently,<sup>21</sup> in cases where the meaning is unmistakably singular, as in

<i>ká:</i>	'car'	<i>ká:y /</i> <i>ká:tk<sup>w</sup>iy</i>	'my car'
<i>k<sup>y</sup>uwatán</i>	'horse'	<i>k<sup>y</sup>uwatán<sup>y</sup> /</i> <i>k<sup>y</sup>uwatántk<sup>w</sup>iy</i>	'my horse'

3.2.3.2. It seems that the shift from a collective plural to a singular meaning in some instances is due to a combination of factors:

- **morphologically**, we have seen that the suffix applies mostly to kinship terms which have a separate plural form, and to stored items considered as a mass. In either case, the suffix, which has many meanings besides 'collective', is used only in a possessive context. With words that do not have a plural form, and items that are not thought of as plural, the collective meaning of the suffix may be forgotten and only the possessive meaning retained.

- **semantically**, the collective meaning of the suffix means that the concept carried by the noun applies to an indifferentiated group or mass, rather than to an individual. Especially in talking about stored items, or animals, there is less likelihood of a personal attachment of the speaker: in the example about cats above, *tú:sim* 'our cat' is considered part of the family, but the many kittens are not. The collective meaning of the suffix, then, may be tinged with a secondary connotation 'lack of emotional attachment' which explains the possibility of its use with such things as horses and cars, which are relatively peripheral to the river-oriented life of the Nisghas.<sup>22</sup>

4. REMARKS. Nisgha is very precise in elaborating various concepts associated with the category of possession. It distinguishes single from distributed possessors, singular from collective possessions, and the attitude of the possessor from that of the observer. It would be worthwhile to consider these facts in the larger perspective of whether and how these concepts are handled in various languages. To take one example, it is interesting to notice that English, French, and other European languages in which possessives and articles are morphemes distinct from the noun, express the point of view of the observer by replacing the possessive morpheme with the definite article, which is less marked semantically, while Nisgha, where the possessive morpheme is bound to the noun as a suffix, does not replace this morpheme, but adds an extra particle. Such phenomena do not now play much of a role in linguistic theory, yet they might have more to say than we realize.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Nisg̃ha is one of the Tsimshianic languages, spoken in the Nass valley of British Columbia. The data presented here were collected during the course of my employment with the Bilingual/Bicultural Centre of B.C. School District #92, in 1977-80, in the summer of 1982, and in 1983-86. Analytical work on the language was supported by SSHRC doctoral fellowships held at the University of Victoria in 1981-82 and 1982-83. I have had the privilege to learn what Nisg̃ha I know in its natural environment, from excellent speakers. I especially wish to thank, in alphabetical order, Mrs. Audrey A. Gosnell, Mrs. Nita Morven, Mrs. Rosie Robinson, Mrs. Verna Williams, and Mr. Harold Wright, who is an elder and a hereditary chief in the Eagle tribe.

<sup>2</sup> Data are given in phonemic transcription. Non-glottalized <sup>stops</sup> consonants are voiced before vowels. Morphemes relevant to the discussion and not involving morphophonemic changes have been separated by hyphens. (A sketch of Nisg̃ha phonology is in Tarpent 1983).

<sup>3</sup> a. Note primary stress on the possessor, secondary stress on the possessed noun (as in English).

b. The description of this phrase should include a covert morpheme, the singular determinate marker (DM)  $\_l$  which does not occur on the surface because of a phonological rule  $l \rightarrow 0 / \_s \_C$  which is attested elsewhere. The singular determinate marker contrasts with the plural determinate marker (DM.P)  $\_l\beta$  which is present in possessive phrases as in others where the contrast is overt: compare

$w\beta ip-s \beta\beta\beta$  ( $\leftarrow *w\beta ip-s \_l \beta \_.$ ) Bill's house  
 $w\beta ip-s \_l \beta\beta\beta$  Bill "and them"'s house

and in different contexts:

$\_l\beta m x \_l \beta\beta\beta$  Bill sang  
 $\_l\beta m x \_l \beta \beta\beta$  Bill "and them" sang

$ksa\check{x} \_l \beta\beta\beta$  only Bill  
 $ksa\check{x} \_l \beta \beta\beta$  only Bill "and them"

Similarly with demonstratives:  $\_l kun$  'this' and  $\_l \beta kun$  'these',  $\_l kus$  'that' and  $\_l \beta kus$  'those'. In sentence-initial position, younger speakers do not use  $\_l$  before a name, older speakers do, as in

$(\_l) \beta\beta\beta\beta - \_t huw\beta\beta\beta$  Bill did it (emphatic)  
 $\_l \beta \beta\beta\beta - \_t huw\beta\beta\beta$  Bill "and them" did it (')

<sup>4</sup> Some people have a much lower, more central vowel before  $-m$ .

<sup>5</sup> from  $qan-$  'cause, means of' and  $\_l im\beta s$  'writing'. The prefix  $qan-$  is phonologically identical (except for stress) to the noun  $q\beta n$  'tree, wood, stick', but its use in a large number of derivatives, many of them abstract, rules out identifying the two (similarly the suffix  $-ship$  in English *friendship*). See notes 17, 19 for other examples.

<sup>6</sup> This word belongs to a series of kinship terms all beginning with  $ni-$ , which also includes  $n\beta\beta\beta$  'maternal uncle',  $n\beta y\acute{e}?$  'grandfather',  $n\beta\check{c}\acute{c}$  'grandmother',  $n\beta\check{c}\acute{c}$  '(paternal) aunt'. The prefix is frozen on these words in Nisg̃ha, but it appears to be identical with the CT prefix  $na-$ , which according to Dunn (1979:57), indicates alienable possession.

<sup>7</sup> For an overall picture of plural formation, and morphological details, see Tarpent 1983. (In the formulation of the vowel-epenthesis rule in partial reduplication, the term 'syllabic' should be used instead of 'resonant').

<sup>8</sup> See for instance Tarpent 1982:67-71.

<sup>9</sup> ATTR: attributive. Among other functions, this suffix occurs between an intransitive verb, such as  $k\acute{u}w\beta s$ , and a noun such as  $m\acute{u}s$ , to form an object-incorporating compound verb.

<sup>10</sup> Note that the possessor of  $\_l im\beta s$  'head' is  $m\acute{u}s$  'moose', which is the incorporated object of the compound verb  $k\acute{u}w\beta sim-m\acute{u}s$ , not a clause constituent.

<sup>11</sup> Usually the word  $k\acute{y}\acute{y}\beta$  is used as a transitive verb meaning 'to eat s.', but it is used as a noun in this expression. The normal word for 'food' is  $w\beta n\acute{e}:x$  (see 3.2.2).

<sup>12</sup>  $k\acute{y}\acute{y}$  'children' = 'offspring'; otherwise 'children' is  $k\acute{u}pa:-\_l k\acute{y}\acute{y} k\acute{w}$ , pl. of  $\_l ku-\_l k\acute{y}\acute{y} k\acute{w}$ , cf. examples in 1.1.2.1., 2.1.2.

<sup>13</sup> The form  $q\beta p q\beta p$  is formed by full reduplication on the stem  $q\acute{a}:\beta$  'to scratch s.'. Fully reduplicated forms are normally plural, i.e. they express a plurality of actions, either because similar actions are performed on different objects (and the verb appears to agree with its object), or because the same action is repeated on a singular object, as in this case.

<sup>14</sup> Sentences from Boas 1902 are quoted by page and line number. They have been retranscribed and retranslated, as the texts contain numerous errors.



15 This is an evidential postclitic, see Tarpent 1984.

16 ERG: The vowel suffix labeled 'ergative' occurs in independent clauses between a transitive verb stem and a personal ending or a connective, except before the 3P ending - *li:l*.

17 Prefix *qan-*, cf. note 5. *taxk'at* 'to be strong'.

18 Foodstuffs are hardly ever treated as simple possessions. Where European languages would have possessive constructions, Nisgaha nouns referring to food are often embedded in object-incorporating verbs (in some of which the verb is reduced to a prefix). For instance, 'my fish' can never be *hó:niy* (which would imply a pet fish). Depending on the circumstances, a Nisgaha speaker will refer to

<i>sihó:niy</i>	'the fish that I ... caught or processed'
<i>xihó:niy</i>	'... ate/am eating/am about to eat'
<i>kYim-hó:niy</i>	'... bought', etc.

These are verbal, not nominal constructions, which is why they are not included here under the topic of possession.

19 *qan-*, cf. notes 5, 17; *hawákw* 'something forbidden.'

20 *wi:* 'big' is often used in a slightly pejorative sense (somewhat like *gros* in French).

21 It seems to be used more by older speakers.

22 Horses and cows were introduced by missionaries and some were raised until the 1960's. Horses were more useful than cows, as they could pull sleighs on the frozen river in the winter. When I came to the valley in 1977, a number of horses were wandering freely around the streets of Greenville. The last one died in 1985. Cars were not common possessions until a logging road linked Greenville and Alyansh with Terrace in the mid-60's.

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