

Gwama, a Little-known Endangered Language of Ethiopia: A Sketch of its Grammar and Lexicon

Zealealem Leyew (zelealemlayew@yahoo.com)
Department of Linguistics
Addis Ababa University

1 Introduction

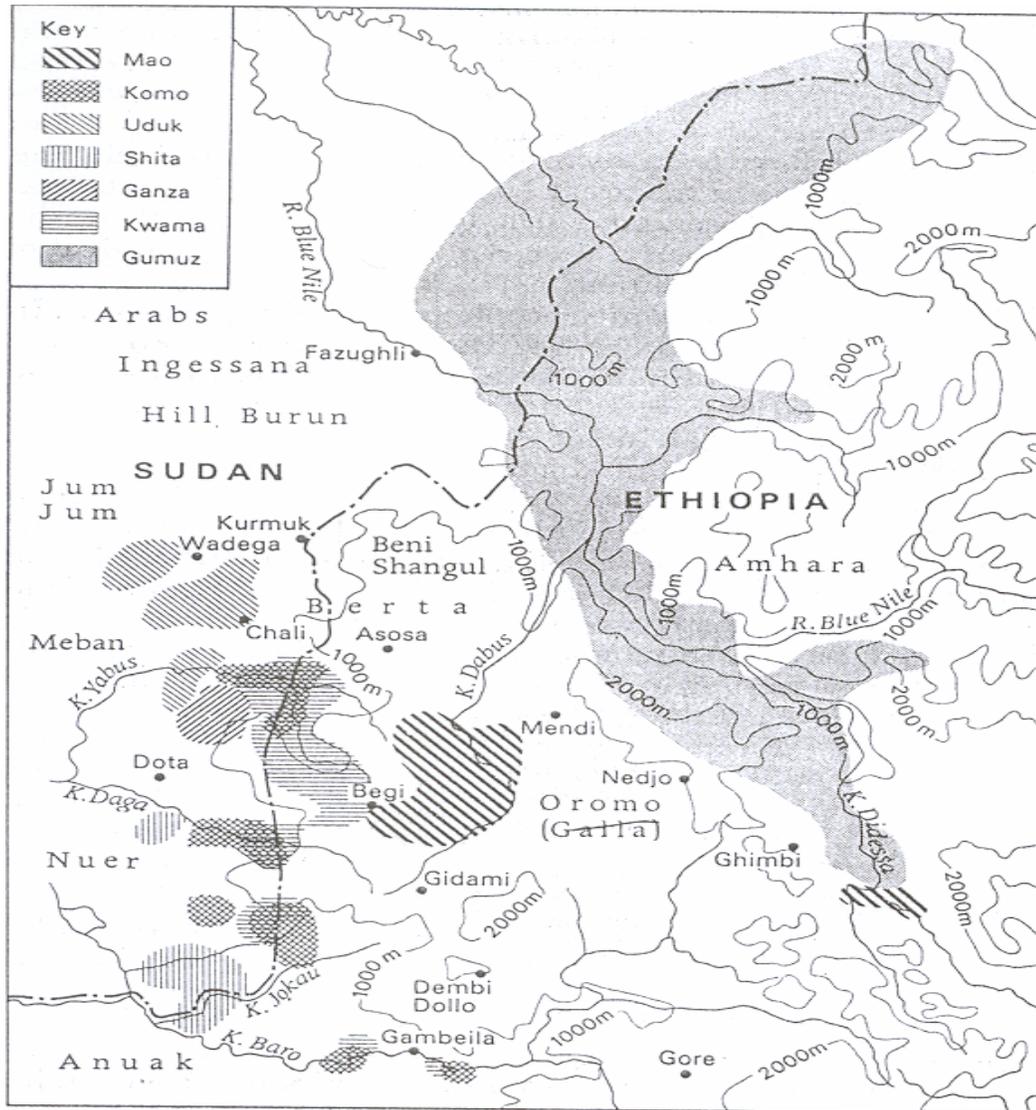
There are several least-studied languages and dialects in Ethiopia. As a result of language contact, the majority of these languages are giving way to pressures of socially dominant languages, especially Amharic and Oromo. Among the least-studied and endangered languages and dialects are those spoken in Western Wollega along the Sudan border. This includes the Mao languages and dialects. The name Mao which refers to the very dark-skinned people of the area is given to them by the neighbouring Oromo people. In some of the languages spoken in the area, Mao simply means ‘people’ (Bender, 1975).

There are two Mao groups who speak two different languages. The first group is also known by the name Anfillo which designates both the people and their language. The name Anfillo is taken from the district’s name which they inhabit today. It is located in the south-western part of Wollega, Oromiya Regional State. Among linguists, Anfillo is also known as Southern Mao so as to differentiate it from Northern Mao. According to Bender (1990), the Southern Mao people were originally speakers of a Nilo-Saharan language and were settlers of an area in Western Wollega around the Ethio-Sudan border.

The Mao people were conquered by the Busase warriors from Kefa at the beginning of the seventeenth century and passed through severe repression and slavery (Tessema, 1980). This led the former to abandon their Nilo-Saharan language and shift to an Omotic language called Gongga, which was the language of the conquerors. After the first shift from a Nilo-Saharan to an Omotic language was completed towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Southern Mao people fled their original place and resettled around Anfillo at the heartland of Wollega. This new settlement brought about frequent contact with the dominant Oromo surrounding them. As a result, the Southern Mao people once again abandoned their Omotic language and became speakers of Oromo (Cushitic). That marked the second language shift (Moges, 1995). Recent reports have proven that the Mao people around Anfillo in Oromiya Regional State are all native speakers of Oromo today.

Historical sources verify that the earlier indigenous inhabitants of Western Wollega were speakers of Omotic and Nilo-Saharan languages such as Agadi, Gebeto, Kaza, Mesengo, Shiluk, Mao, Damoto, Ganga and Sinicho (Tesemma, 1980). The first six belong to the Nilo-Saharan language family whereas the remaining three belong to the Omotic phylum. Among these languages, Agadi and Ganga are completely dead after their complete assimilation to Oromo (Bender, 1976). Historians believe that speakers of the remnant languages in Western Wollega, including the Mao, were displaced and dispersed into small enclaves after the sixteenth century Oromo migration. Since then, small languages and dialects of the area are in a precarious situation giving their way to the swamping effect of Oromo.

The second group of Mao, which is the concern of this paper, is known as Northern Mao. The people call themselves Gwama and their language T'wa Gwama 'mouth of Gwama'.¹ The overwhelming majority of the Gwama people are Moslems whereas others follow traditional religions. The Gwama promote a subsistence way of life, mainly based on hoe cultivation of maize, millet, sorghum, etc. They also supplement their life by hunting, fishing and rearing of a few domestic animals. Those who live close to the Oromo do some agriculture through ploughing by ox. Currently, the Gwama people are particularly centred in the Benishangul Regional State along the border areas between Ethiopia and Sudan (see the Map below). According to the 1994 population and housing census, the number of speakers of Northern Mao (Gwama) in Benishangul Regional State is only 2732.



The Koman-speaking peoples (Adopted from James (1979))

¹ Bender uses the name Kwama.

Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Gwama and Komo are the major ethnic groups of the region. Among the five languages spoken by the respective ethnic groups, the last two are almost unknown. The overwhelming majority of the Gwama people speak Komo. Burns and Guth wrote the following note regarding the frequent contact and interaction between Gwama and Komo speakers:

The Gwama (or Nokanoka, as they are sometimes called by the Koma, though this is actually the Koma name for the Gwama language), live cheek-by-Jowl with the Koma, often mixed up in the same village and under a common chief. They are not so numerous as the Koma in the Sudan but certainly are more numerous in Ethiopia, where they are known by the Bertas as 'Amam'. Although speaking their own language (Nokanoka), most Gwama understand Koma (n.d:1).

James (1979) writes that languages such as Arabic and Oromo have undoubtedly exerted pressure on Gwama in addition to Komo. It is through religious contact that the Gwama people speak Arabic. Those who live adjacent to the Oromo people are bilinguals in Oromo. The Gwama have marriage contact with the Komo, Berta and Oromo. As a result, some Gwama also speak Berta. Those who are educated and live in towns speak Amharic. Therefore, it is not difficult to find a Gwama person speaking one or two languages in addition to his/her mother tongue. Though my informants believe that there are still remnant Gwama monolinguals deep in rural villages, James (1979) has mentioned that none of the tiny communities around the Ethio-Sudan border is monolingual. Generally, Gwama attracts the attention of linguists not only because it is a poorly documented language, but also because it is endangered.

Greenberg (1963) was the first scholar who classified Mao as a Nilo-Saharan language. His classification was based on limited linguistic data mainly taken from Southern Mao (Anfillo) which was later proved to be an Omotic language. Relatively recently, Bender (1983) has classified Gwama as a Koman language under the Nilo-Saharan language family together with Komo, Opo and Twampa.

This piece of work only attempts to describe the grammatical sketch and basic vocabulary of Gwama. Very little is known about the language so far. Fragmented information is available in various works of Bender on Nilo-Saharan in general and Koman in particular. I gathered the data from Abosh Must'afa and Muktar S'enar whom I met briefly in Addis Ababa in April, 2003.² Whereas Abosh is a native speaker, Muktar speaks Gwama as a second language in addition to his mother tongue, Komo. Both of them speak Oromo and Amharic.³

² Whereas Abosh is a Moslem, Muktar is a Christian.

³ I am grateful to the Society for Endangered Languages (Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen e.v. - GBS) based in Cologne, Germany, for sponsoring this research. I am indebted to Prof. M. L. Bender for providing me his unpublished material on Gwama and for his valuable comments on the first draft of the paper.

2 Phonology

2.1 Vowels

Gwama has five short vowels and five corresponding long vowels (see also Bender 1983).

i	u	ii	uu
e	o	ee	oo
a		aa	

Table 1: Vowel chart.

The following examples show the position of occurrence of the vowels.

(1)	i		e		a		u		o	
	ili	full	eye	yes!	ani	that	uwuŋu	tail	oolo	cloth
	bit'	hand	k'ef	hear	tat	belly	kuru	donkey	hobol	lie
	si	bone	seere	white	kaala	sun	uugu	gourd	toto	liver

The high and mid- central vowels ə and ä appear rarely in medial position as epenthetic vowels to avoid impermissible consonant clusters.

(2)	s'əwanzo	louse	bäk	hair
	s'əwas'u	rub	s'äwan	moon/month
	wəss	sky	k'äšš	red
	wəsin	body	wärr	child

These vowels are, therefore, simple phonetic realizations, not phonemes.

The long vowels occur in all environments: initially, medially, and finally.

(3)	taaŋa	bamboo	anooko	good
	iimi	cow	k'uup	head
	seere	white	gaa	me

In addition to their position of occurrence, the phonemic status of long vowels can be proven in the subject and object pronouns (see section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2).

Vowels which precede or follow, especially the palatal and velar nasal consonants, are pronounced with clear nasalization. Some examples are *wãŋã* 'hen', *ŋã* 'goat', *u~wu~ŋ~u* 'tail', etc. There are also few examples where nasalized vowels occur preceding or following oral consonants. These are *ëyë* 'yes!', *sitkë* 'shepherd' and *hãhã* 'sexual intercourse'. Though further data and analysis is needed, the existence of nasalized vowel phonemes in the language seems to be unequivocal.

Generally, vowel sequences are not allowed. As a result, the sequence *ua* results in labializing the consonant which appears immediately preceding it.

(4)	k'uass	→	k'wass	back	t'ua	→	t'wa	mouth
	kuata	→	kwata	frog	kuala	→	kwala	ploughing
	buaša	→	bwaša	snake	tuasan	→	twasan	three

kual	→	kwal	elephant	suala	→	swala	tree
kuaka	→	kwaka	fear	guama	→	gwama	(language)

2.2 Consonants

There are 24 consonant phonemes. Bender (1983) has identified 22 of them.

p		t		k		ʔ
b		d		g		
pʔ		tʔ		kʔ		
	f	s	š			h
		z				
		sʔ				
m		n	ɲ	ŋ		
		l				
		r				
w			y			

Table 2: Consonant phonemes.

The following list of words is suggestive of the phonemic status of the above consonants.

(6)	/p/	puušu ----- sitʔup	sand enemy	/b/	bakʔ yabsi kab	hair when bring
	/t/	toto kʷata sit	liver frog man	/d/	dor teyendi -----	cry fat/thick
	/k/	kumtam workwam -----	bee brother	/g/	gendel dugull -----	hive knee
	/ʔ/	ʔala maʔis -----	know became ripe	/pʔ/	pʔikin mapʔiš sʔupʔ	ashes found breast
	/tʔ/	tʔotʔo sitʔup kuumutʔ	body waste enemy ‘five’	/sʔ/	sʔisʔin sʔisʔin wasʔsʔ	charcoal charcoal fish
	/kʔ/	kʔʷass akʔošš sonkʔ	back bad foot	/f/	fatafat mafī bak	touch fall hair
	/s/	swal twasan wəss	house three sky	/z/	ziinzi saanza -----	thin property/cattle
	/š/	šii puušu tʔašš	tooth sand salt	/h/	hawa maho -----	yawn went

/m/	munkišš k'ump' s'am	wet claw (nail) blood	/n/	naata unani s'awann	year those moon
/ŋ/	kaŋa ----- -----	thorn	/ɲ/	ɲa ----- -----	'goat'
/l/	----- buulu mafall	worm flew	/r/	----- kuru gašer	donkey big
/w/	warr s'owanzo -----	child louse	/y/	yeess s'eye -----	earth ear

The only other word where the palatal nasal *ɲ* occurs is *ɲiru* 'uncle (mother's brother)'.

Gemination of consonants occurs word medially and finally, but not extensively. Below are given some examples recorded in the data.

(7)	šš	k'ašš	red	rr	warr	child
	gg	aggut	short	yy	mayyi	exited
	ss	k'wass	back	s's'	was's'	fish
	ll	kull	chief	nn	unnii	that

It is possible to ascertain the phonemic status of geminated consonants by taking a few examples like *iya* 'where' vs. *iyya* 'water', *k'úššš* 'kill' vs. *k'úšš* 'neck', *kwall* 'elephant' vs. *kwaal* 'he did.', and so on.

2.3 Consonant sequences

Consonant sequences occur medially and finally though the latter is not so frequent.

(8)	Sonorant + Obstruent		Sonorant + Sonorant			
	rk	sirko	true	nw	manwaŋa	chicken
	mt	kumtam	bee	ny	munyi	seed
	nz	saanza	property/cattle	nz	s'əwanzo	louse
	mp'	k'ump'	claw (nail)	nt'	ant'	fire
	ng	gongo	skin	lm	almumun	dream
	nš	šunš	nose			
	lš	zelšer	lion			
	nk'	sink'	smoke			
	nk	munkišš	wet			
	nd	haanda	many			

As we can see from the data, all the first members of the clusters show sonorants whereas the second are either obstruents or sonorants.

2.4 Tone

Gwama is a tonal language with rising and falling tone levels. The following examples prove the phonemic status of this feature in the language.

(9)	t'òtò	liver	àṅà	road	ší	tooth
	t'ót'ó	body waste	àṅá	spread out	šì	see
	sàanzà	property/cattle	šá	eat	tùl	be angry
	sáanzà	bed	šà	dig	tùl	call
	ní	antelope	f'all	fly		
	nì	hide	f'all	wide		

There are a few indications for the existence of a glide tone. However, this needs further investigation.

2.5 Syllable Structure

There are both open and closed syllable structures in Gwama.

(10)	Open		Closed	
	si	bone	s'am	blood
	zi	eye	šul	beer
	ga	I	bit	bird

Generally, the following syllable types are identified.

(11)	V	u-bu	gourd	i-li	fool	a-?e	this
	CV	kaa-ma	wound	ka-ra	who	bi	what
	VC	ak'-ošš	bad	wut-up'	husband	al-mumun	dream (v)
	VC ₁ C ₂	ant'	fire				
	VC ₁ C ₁	uss	sew				
	CVC	bur-but	dust	mun-kišš	wet	bit'	hand
	CVC ₁ C ₁	warr	child	bas's'	milk	kull	chief
	CVC ₁ C ₂	hins'	rain	šunš	nose	sonk'	foot

In Gwama syllable structure, the nucleus can be either a long or short vowel. All consonants can appear in onset position. All but *d*, *h*, *ʒ*, *w* and *y* occur in coda position.

3 Morphology

3.1 Pronouns

3.1.1 Subject Pronouns

The following table shows the Gwama personal pronouns.

	Sg.	Pl.	
1	ga	ma (exc.)	miini (inc.)
2	ik	um	
3 m.	hall	hun	
f.	hap'p'		

The typical feature of Nilo-Saharan *a/i/e* for the 1SG, 2SG and 3SG is partly maintained in Gwama. As Bender (2000) has mentioned, *e* is lacking in some of the languages of this phylum. Gwama is one of them where *a* occurs instead of *e* in the 3SG. The 2PL *um* and 3PL *hun* can be used as polite forms. Some sentential examples are given below.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| (1) | ga manša | ‘I ate.’ | ma/mini manša | ‘We ate.’ |
| | ik makša | ‘You ate.’ | um mamša | ‘You ate.’ |
| | hall maša | ‘He ate.’ | hun manša | ‘They ate.’ |
| | hap’p’ mabša | ‘She ate.’ | | |

3.1.2 Object Pronouns

There is a formal similarity between the subject and the object pronouns. It is the lengthening of the vowels that makes the distinction between the two personal pronouns. Whereas in the former, the vowels are short, in the latter, they are long.

	Sg.	Pl.	
1	gaa	maa (exc.)	miini (inc.)
2	iik	uum	
3 m.	haall	huun	
f.	haap’p’		

Compare the following sentential examples:

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| (2) | ik šiggi gaa | ‘You saw me.’ | ik šiggi maa | ‘You saw us.’ |
| | ik šiggi haall | ‘You saw him.’ | ik šiggi huun | ‘You saw them.’ |
| | ik šiggi haap’p’ | ‘You saw her.’ | | |

3.1.3 Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are derived from subject personal pronouns (note the exception in the 1SG).

	Sg.	Pl.	
1	a-na	a-ma (exc.)	a-mini (inc.)
2	a-ke	a-kum	
3 m.	a-dal	a-kun	
f.	a-dab	a-bun	

The *g* of the 1SG subject pronoun changes to *n* in the possessive pronoun. In a similar vein, *h* changes to *d* in the 3SG. Due to the impermissibility of vowel sequencing, the expected forms *a-ik* and *a-um* in the 2SG and 2PL went through modifications. As a result, in the 2SG possessive pronoun, the vowel *i* of the subject pronoun is deleted and *e* inserted since no word ends in *k*. In the 2PL, *k* is inserted to avoid the impermissible sequences of vowels. Unlike the subject and object pronouns, the 3PL possessive pronouns exhibit different plural forms for masculine and feminine. Illustrative examples are given below.

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|------------|----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|------------|
| (3) | swal-a-na | house-POSS-1SG | ‘my house’ | zi-a-na | eye-POSS-1SG | ‘my eye’ |
| | swal-a-ke | house-POSS-2SG | ‘your house’ | zi-a-ke | eye-POSS-2SG | ‘your eye’ |
| | swal-a-dal | house-POSS-3MS | ‘his house’ | zi-a-dal | eye-POSS-3MS | ‘his eye’ |
| | swal-a-dab | house-POSS-3FS | ‘her house’ | zi-a-dab | eye-POSS-3FS | ‘her eye’ |
| | swal-a-ma | house-POSS-1PL | ‘our house’ | zi-a-ma | eye-POSS-1PL | ‘our eye’ |

swal-a-kum	house-POSS-2PL	‘your house’	zi-a-kum	eye-POSS-2PL	‘your eye’
swal-a-kun	house-POSS-3MPL	‘their (m.) house’	zi-a-kun	eye-POSS-3MPL	‘their eye’
swal-a-bun	house-POSS-3FPL	‘their (f.) house’	zi-a-bun	eye-POSS-3FPL	‘their eye’

The order is possessed + possessor. The morpheme *-a-* which appears between the two nouns is a possessive marker. Since vowel sequencing is not allowed in Gwama, *y* is inserted between the two vowels in the second paradigm resulting in *zi-ya-na*, *zi-ya-ke*, etc.

3.1.4 Demonstratives

Gwama demonstratives are complex. They are sensitive to gender distinction and relative distance of the object to the speaker. The following are the list of these demonstratives.

(4)	Singular			
	Proximal		Distal	
	uwe	‘this’ (masculine, living)	ute	‘that’ (masculine, not far)
	aʔe	‘this’ (masculine, living)	uttee	‘that’ (masculine, far)
	muney	‘this’ (masculine, non-living)	ani	‘that’ (masculine, not far)
	muno	‘this’ (feminine, non-living)	annii	‘that’ (masculine, far)
	munto	‘this’ (feminine, non-living)	uni	‘that’ (masculine, not far)
	aʔo	‘this’ (feminine, living)	unnii	‘that’ (masculine, far)
	abaʔo	‘this’ (feminine, living)	halani	‘that’ (masculine, not far)
			halannii	‘that’ (masculine, far)
			abanu	‘that’ (feminine, not far)
			abannuu	‘that’ (feminine, far)
			abato	‘that’ (feminine, not far)
			abattoo	‘that’ (feminine, far)
			munani	‘that’ (non-living-not far)
			munannii	‘that’ (non-living, far)
	Plural			
	Proximal		Distal	
	hunaʔe	‘these’	hunatun	‘those’ (not far)
			hunattuun	‘those’ (far)
			hunani	‘those’ (not far)
			hunannii	‘those’ (not far)

In the above demonstratives, the masculine gender is indicated by the morphemes *u-*, *a-* and *hal-* (cf. with the 3MS pronoun), and the feminine by *o-* and *ab-*. Non-living objects are identified by the morpheme *mun-* which means ‘thing’. Remoteness is indicated by the geminated consonants and long vowels. In the plural demonstratives, the pronoun *hun-* is attached to the singular demonstratives.

Demonstratives appear following their noun head.

(5)	uko munani	‘that mountain’	uko munannii	‘that mountain’
	uwarr ani	‘that boy’	uwarr annii	‘that boy’
	kikiyat abanu	‘that woman’	kikiyat abannuu	‘that woman’
	makikiyat hunaʔe	‘these women’	makikiyat hunatun	‘those women’

There are rare instances where demonstratives are recorded preceding head nouns. Examples are *uwe usit* ‘this man’ and *a ʔe zelšer* ‘this lion’, etc.

The proximal and distal markers of place deixis are: *ine* ‘here’ and *idono* ‘there’.

3.2 The Verb

Gwama verb stems appear to be mostly monosyllabic. Verbs inflect for person, number, gender and tense/aspect markers. These grammatical elements tend to appear as prefixes and suffixes.

3.2.1 Person, number and gender

Gwama verbs are inflected for subject markers. The person, number and gender features of the subject are expressed by the same morpheme.

(6)	gan-a-šiša	1SG-IMP-eat	‘I (will) eat.’ ⁴
	ag-a-šiša	2SG-IMP-eat	‘You (will) eat.’
	hal-a-šiša	3MS-IMP-eat	‘He (will) eat(s).’
	ab-a-šiša	3FS-IMP-eat	‘She (will) eat(s).’
	man-a-šiša	1PL-IMP-eat	‘We (will) eat.’
	am-a-šiša	2PL-IMP-eat	‘You (will) eat.’
	an-a-šiša	3PL-IMP-eat	‘They (will) eat.’

As we can see in the above conjugation, the subject suffixes are the exact replica of the subject personal pronouns mentioned in section (3.1.1) above. As the example illustrates, Gwama present and future behave alike and are indicated by the imperfective prefix *a-*.

In another imperfect conjugation, the morphemes which stand for person, number and gender change in form and position.

(7)	a-n-ʔiʔiš	IMP-1SG-sleep	‘I (will) sleep.’
	a-k-ʔiʔiš	IMP-2SG-sleep	‘You (will) sleep.’
	a-∅-ʔiʔiš	IMP-3MS-sleep	‘He (will) sleep.’
	a-b-ʔiʔiš	IMP-3FS-sleep	‘She (will) sleep.’
	a-n-ʔiʔiš	IMP-1PL-sleep	‘We (will) sleep.’
	a-m-ʔiʔiš	IMP-2PL-sleep	‘You (will) sleep.’
	a-n-ʔiʔiš	IMP-3PL-sleep	‘They (will) sleep.’

Whereas the person/number/gender markers in (6) precede the aspect marker, in (7), they follow. Unlike (6) above, the 1SG, 1PL and 3PL are represented by a similar prefix in (7). On the bases of the above two conjugations, we can deduce the following subject markers in the imperfective.

	SG	PL
1	gan-/n	man-/n
2	ag-/k	am-/m

⁴ In Gwama, there are three forms to express an act of eating. The eating of Chat (*Catha edulis*) and toasted cereals is expressed by the verb *k'i-* and that of boiled cereal by *s'um-*. The act of eating all other things is expressed by the verb *šā-*.

3 MS	hal/-∅	an/-n
FS	ab/-b	

The subject markers in the past conjugation below are derived from the consonant segments of personal pronouns and hence are similar with the conjugation given in (7).

(8)	ma-n-ṣ̌a	PS-1SG-eat	‘I ate.’	ma-n-t’op’	PS-1SG-drink	‘I drank.’
	ma-k-ṣ̌a	PS-2SG-eat	‘You ate.’	ma-k-t’op’	PS-2SG-drink	‘You drank.’
	ma-∅-ṣ̌a	PS-3MS-eat	‘He ate.’	ma-∅-t’op’	PS-3MS-drink	‘He drank.’
	ma-b-ṣ̌a	PS-3FS-eat	‘She ate.’	ma-b-t’op’	PS-3FS-drink	‘She drank.’
	ma-n-ṣ̌a	PS-1PL-eat	‘We ate (inc.).’	ma-n-t’op’	PS-1PL-drink	‘We drank.’
	ma-m-ṣ̌a	PS-2PL-eat	‘You ate.’	ma-m-t’op’	PS-2PL-drink	‘You drank.’
	ma-n-ṣ̌a	PS-3PL-eat	‘They ate.’	ma-n-t’op’	PS-3PL-drink	‘They drank.’

In (7) and (8), the 3MS is marked by a zero morpheme and the 1SG is derived from the possessive pronoun. The past marker in the above conjugation is *ma-*.

The subject markers in the remote past are identical with the examples given in (7) and (8) above.

(9)	ga ma-n-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	I PS-1SG-eat-PS-eat	‘I had eaten.’
	ik ma-k-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	you PS-2PL-eat-PS-eat	‘You had eaten.’
	hall ma-∅-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	he PS-3MS-eat-PS-eat	‘He had eaten.’
	hap’p’ ma-b-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	she PS-3FS-eat-PS-eat	‘She had eaten.’
	ma ma-n-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	we PS-1PL-eat-PS-eat	‘We had eaten.’
	um ma-m-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	you PS-2PL-eat-PS-eat	‘You had eaten.’
	hun ma-n-ṣ̌a-gi-ṣ̌a	they PS-2SG-eat-PS-eat	‘They had eaten.’
	ga ma-n-t’op’-gi-t’op’	I PS-1SG-drink-PS-drink	‘I had drank.’
	ik ma-k-t’op’-gi-t’op’	you PS-2PL-drink-PS-drink	‘You had drank.’
	hall ma-∅-t’op’-gi-t’op’	he PS-3MS-drink-PS-drink	‘He had drank.’
	hap’p’ ma-b-t’op’-gi-t’op’	she PS-3FS-drink-PS-drink	‘She had drank.’
	ma ma-n-t’op’-gi-t’op’	we PS-1PL-drink-PS-drink	‘We had drank.’
	um ma-m-t’op’-gi-t’op’	you PS-2PL-drink-PS-drink	‘You had drank.’
	hun ma-n-t’op’-gi-t’op’	they PS-2SG-drink-PS-drink	‘They had drank.’

As shown in the conjugation, the remote past is expressed by prefixing the past marker *ma-*, by reduplicating the verb stem and by suffixing *-gi*. As we shall see in the sections that follow, *-gi* is a highly multifaceted particle in Gwama and other related languages (cf. Koma (Hilke and Burns (n.d) and Uduk (Tucker and Bryan, 1966).

The subject markers in the present continuous are similar to those in the above conjugations. The only difference exhibited in a continuous action is that the 2SG is marked by *-g* instead of *-k*.

(10)	ga zala-ṣ̌a-n-a-ṣ̌a	I CONT-eat-1SG-IMP-eat	‘I am eating.’
	ik zala-ṣ̌a-g-a-ṣ̌a	you CONT-drink-2SG-IMP-eat	‘You are eating.’
	hall zala-ṣ̌a-∅-a-ṣ̌a	he CONT-drink-3MS-IMP-eat	‘He is eating.’
	hap’p’ zala-ṣ̌a-b-a-ṣ̌a	she CONT-drink-3FS-IMP-eat	‘She is eating.’

ma zala-ša-n-a-ša	we CONT-drink-1PL-IMP-eat	‘We are eating.’
um zala-ša-m-a-ša	you CONT-drink-2PL-IMP-eat	‘You are eating.’
hun zala-ša-n-a-ša	they CONT-drink-3PL-IMP-eat	‘They are eating.’
ga zala-t’om-n-a-t’op’	I CONT-drink-1SG-IMP-drink	‘I am drinking.’
ik zala-t’op’-g-a-t’op’	you CONT-drink-2SG-IMP-drink	‘You are drinking.’
hall zala-t’ob-Ø-a-t’op’	he CONT-drink-3MS-IMP-drink	‘He is drinking.’
hap’p’ zala-t’op’-p’-a-t’op’	she CONT-drink-3FS-IMP-drink	‘She is drinking.’
ma zala-t’om-n-a-t’op’	we CONT-drink-1PL-IMP-drink	‘We are drinking.’
um zala-t’om-m-a-t’op’	you CONT-drink-2PL-IMP-drink	‘You are drinking.’
hun zala-t’om-n-a-t’op’	they CONT-drink-3PL-IMP-drink	‘They are drinking.’

As can be seen, a present continuous is shown by the prefix *zala-*, the imperfect marker *-a* plus reduplication of the verb stem.

Below is given a past continuous verb conjugation. Both continuous verbs show similar subject markers. However, whereas the prefix *zala-* and reduplication of the verb are maintained, the past action is shown by *-ga/-gi*.

(11) ga zala-ša-n-ga-ša	I CONT-eat-1SG-PS-eat	‘I was eating.’
ik zala-ša-gi-ga-ša	you CONT-eat-2SG-PS-eat	‘You were eating.’
hall zala-ša-a-ga-ša	he CONT-eat-3MS-PS-eat	‘He was eating.’
hap’p’ zala-ša-b-ga-ša	she CONT-eat-3FS-PS-eat	‘She was eating.’
ma zala-ša-n-ga-ša	we CONT-eat-1PL-PS-eat	‘We were eating.’
um zala-ša-m-ga-ša	you CONT-eat-2PL-PS-eat	‘You were eating.’
hun zala-ša-n-ga-ša	they CONT-eat-3PL-PS-eat	‘They were eating.’
ga t’om-ni-gi-t’op’	I CONT-drink-1SG-PS-drink	‘I was drinking.’
ik zala-t’op’-gi-gi-t’op’	you CONT-drink-2SG-PS-drink	‘You were drinking.’
hall zala-t’ob-a-gi-t’op’	he CONT-drink-3MS-PS-drink	‘He was drinking.’
hap’p’ zala-t’op’-p’i-gi-t’op’	she CONT-drink-3FS-PS-drink	‘She was drinking.’
maa zala-t’om-ni-gi-t’op’	we CONT-drink-1PL-PS-drink	‘We were drinking.’
um zala-t’om-mi-gi-t’op’	you CONT-drink-2PL-PS-drink	‘You were drinking.’
hun zala-t’om-ni-gi-t’op’	they CONT-drink-3PL-PS-drink	‘They were drinking.’

Generally, since verbs carry inflected subject markers, an overt subject in Gwama sentences is optional. This property makes the language a pro-drop one.

In only one conjugation, a verb is recorded being inflected for object marker suffixes.

(12) ga u-sit ši-n-a-l-ši	I SING-man see-1SG-IMP-3MS(OBJ)-see	‘I see the man.’
ga kikyata ši-n-a-p’-ši	I woman see-1SG-IMP-3FS(OBJ)-see	‘I see the woman.’
ga u-p’idill ši-n-a-l-ši	I SING-stone see-1SG-IMP-3MS(OBJ)-see	‘I see the stone.’
ga ma-sit ši-n-u-n-ši	I PL-man see-1SG-IMP-3PL(OBJ)-see	‘I see the men.’
ga ma-kikiyat ši-n-u-n-ši	I PL-man see-1SG-IMP-3PL(OBJ)-see	‘I see the women.’
ga ma- p’idill ši-n-u-n-ši	I PL-man see-1SG-IMP-3PL(OBJ)-see	‘I see the stones.’

As can be observed, the direct object markers are all derived from the personal pronouns. The above paradigm is exceptional not only in object marking but also in its word order. As will be seen in section (4), whereas the usual word order is SVO, in (12) above, the order is

SOV. On the other hand, my informants have proved (13) to be original on the basis of the usual word order.

(13)	ga š-i-n usit	‘I see the man.’	ga š-i-n ma-sit	‘I see the men.’
	ga š-i-n kikiyata	‘I see the woman.’	ga š-i-n ma-kikiyata	‘I see the women.’
	ga š-i-n up'idill	‘I see the stone.’	ga š-i-n ma-p'idill	‘I see the stones.’

The data provided in (12) is most likely triggered by the influence of Oromo which has an SOV word order. This needs more data and texts in order to reach to generalizations.

3.2.2 The Copula

In Gwama, object pronouns (see section 3.1.2) can function as copula. Hence, *gaa*, *iik*, *hall*, etc. can have the meaning ‘I am’, ‘you are’, ‘he is’ and so forth.

The present copula can be derived from the respective pronouns.

(14)	ga ga-p'i	I COP-strong	‘I am strong.’
	ik i-p'i	you COP-strong	‘You (SG) are strong.’
	hall al-p'i	he COP-strong	‘He is strong.’
	hap'p' ap'-p'i	she COP-strong	‘She is strong.’
	ma ma-p'i	we COP-strong	‘We are strong.’
	um um-p'i	you COP-strong	‘You are strong.’
	hun un-p'i	they COP-strong	‘They are strong.’
	ga ga-noko	I COP-good	‘I am good’
	ik i-noko	you COP-good	‘You (SG) are good.’
	hall al-noko	he COP-good	‘He is good.’
	hap'p' ap'-noko	she COP-good	‘She is good.’
	ma ma-noko	we COP-good	‘We are good.’
	um um-noko	you COP-good	‘You are good.’
	hun un-noko	they COP-good	‘They are good.’

As shown in the conjugation, *a-* is derived from *ga* (1SG), *i-* from *ki* (2SG), *al-* from *hall* (3MS), *ap'-* from *hap'p'* (3FS) and *un-* from *hun* (3PL) by eliding the first segments of the pronoun forms. This structure, however, would lead us to assume that the above constructions could also mean ‘I become strong.’, ‘You become strong.’, ‘He becomes strong.’, etc.; ‘I become good.’, ‘You become good.’, ‘He becomes good.’, etc.

The copula *kono*, which is used when answering a question ‘who?’, was also recorded.

(15)	ga kono	‘I am.’	ma kono	‘We are.’
	ik kono	‘You are.’	um kono	‘You are.’
	hall kono	‘He is.’	hun kono	‘They are.’
	hap'p' kono	‘She is.’		

Bender (unpublished material) has recorded the following data where the copulas appear as optional constituents.

(16)	wər (ɛl) gɛʃɛr	‘The boy is big.’	u-sit (al) nɔkɔ	‘The man is good.’
	ma-man (un) gəʃɛr	‘The boys are big.’	ma-sit-e (un) nɔkɔ	‘The men are good.’
	wərr kikiyata (ab) gɛʃɛr	‘The girl is big.’	kikiyato (ab) nɔkɔ	‘The woman is good.’
	ma-wərr kikiyata (un) gaʃər	‘The girls are big.’	ma-kikiyata (un) nɔkɔ	‘The women are good.’
	p’Idll (ɛl) gɛʃɛr	‘The stone is big.’		
	ma-p’Idll (un) gɛʃɛr	‘The stones are big.’		

The above data also reveal that the copulas are derivatives of pronouns. Hence, *ɛl* is derived form *hall* (3MS), *ab* from *hap’p’* (3FS) and *un* from *hun* (3PL).

As the following example illustrates, it seems that there is no clear evidence of an independent past copula in Gwama.

(17)	ga p’i-n-gi-p’i	I strong-1SG-COP-strong	‘I was strong.’
	ik p’i-g-gi-p’i	you strong-2SG-COP-strong	‘You were strong.’
	hall p’i-ya-gi-p’i	he strong-3MS-COP-strong	‘He was strong.’
	hap’p’ p’i-p’-gi-p’i	she strong-3FS-COP-strong	‘She was strong.’
	ma p’i-n-gi-p’i	we strong-1PL-COP-strong	‘We were strong.’
	um p’i-m-gi-p’i	you strong-2PL-COP-strong	‘You were strong.’
	hun p’i-n-gi-p’i	they strong-3PL-COP-strong	‘They were strong.’

As we saw in examples (9) and (11), the appearance of the particle *gi-* and the reduplication of the adjective is the property of past verbs. Hence, the adjective in (17) above can be taken as a verbal adjective with the meaning ‘I became strong.’, ‘You became strong.’, etc.

The form *weyit*, as a past copula, was recorded from one of my informants.

(18)	ga weyit-ni-gi sitšin	I was-1SG-PS soldier	‘I was a soldier.’
	ik weyit-gi-gi sitšin	you was-1SG-PS soldier	‘You was a soldier.’
	hall weyit-a-gi sitšin	he was-1SG-PS soldier	‘He was a soldier.’
	hap’p’ weyit-bi-gi sitšin	she was-1SG-PS soldier	‘She was a soldier.’
	ma weyit-ni-gi sitšin	we was-1SG-PS soldier	‘We were soldiers.’
	um weyit-mi-gi sitšin	you was-1SG-PS soldier	‘You were soldiers.’
	hun weyit-ni-gi sitšin	they was-1SG-PS soldier	‘They were soldiers.’

3.2.3 The verb ‘to have’

The stem for the verb ‘to have’ is *s’it-*.

(19)	ga s’it-ni swal	I have-1SG house	‘I have a house.’
	ik s’it-ki swal	you have-2SG house	‘You have a house.’
	hall s’it-a swal	he has-3MS house	‘He has a house.’
	hap’p’ s’it-bi swal	she has-3FS house	‘She has a house.’
	ma s’it-ni swal	we have-1PL house	‘We have a house.’
	um s’it-mi swal	you have-2PL house	‘You have a house.’
	hun s’it-ni swal	they have-3PL house	‘They have a house.’

The verb ‘to have’ is inflected only for the subject marker morphemes. The same pattern operates in inalienable possessions.

(20)	ga s'it-ni zi siyya	I have-1SG eye two	'I have two eyes.'
	ik s'it-ki zi siyya	you have-2SG eye two	'You have two eyes.'
	hall s'it-a zi siyya	he has-3MS eye two	'He has two eyes.'
	hap'p' s'it-bi zi siyya	she has-3FS eye two	'She has two eyes.'
	ma s'it-ni zi siyya	we have-1PL eye two	'We have two eyes.'
	um s'it-mi zi siyya	you have-2PL eye two	'You have two eyes.'
	hun s'it-ni zi siyya	they have-3PL eye two	'They have two eyes.'

3.3 The noun

3.3.1 Case

As in the other Koman languages, the case morphology in Gwama is poor and hence is not discussed in detail. Nominative and accusative cases are not morphologically marked. In other words, they are identical with the absolutive form. Adpositions do the job for semantic cases (cf. sections 3.20 and 4.1 on adpositions).

3.3.2 Number

Nouns are marked for number in at least two categories: singulative and plural.

(21)	singular	singulative	Plural	
	warr	u-warr	ma-warr	'child/children'
	sit	u-site/u-sitte	ma-sit	'man/men'
	p'idill	u-pidill-e	ma-p'idill	'stone/stones'
	swal	u-swal	(ma)-swal	'house/houses'

Plural in nouns is almost uniformly marked by the prefix *ma-*.

(22)	t'wa	'mouth'	ma-t'wa	'mouths'
	ṣ̌i	'tooth'	ma-ṣ̌i	'teeth'
	zi	'eye'	ma-zi	'eyes'
	k'ondol	'horse'	ma-k'ondol	'horses'
	dure	'cat'	ma-dure	'cats'
	faala	'pot'	ma-faala	'pots'
	kikiyata	'female/woman'	ma-kikiyata	'females/women/wives'
	kikeezi	'male/husband'	ma-kikeezi	'males/husbands'
	ɲiru	'uncle'	ma-ɲiru	'uncles (mother's brother)'
	s'ull	'river'	ma-s'ull	'rivers'

Only one noun is recorded with a suppletive form: *warr* 'child' vs. *man* 'children'. In Bender's unpublished material, the following nouns are recorded with similar forms in the singular and plural.

(23)	swal	'house'	swal	'houses'
	sull	'river'	sull	'rivers'
	kaana	'dog'	kaana	'dogs'

However, all the above irregular forms have been supplied with the plural marker *ma-* in my data.

3.3.3 Gender

Gwama is among the few Nilo-Saharan languages where there is gender marking (see also Bender, 1989). As shown in sections, 3.1 and 3.2.1, gender is distinguished in the 3SG in pronouns and verbs. In nouns, gender distinction is marked by the words *kikiyata* ‘female’ and *kikeezi* ‘male’. Compare the following examples from Bender’s unpublished material.

(24)	k’ondəl-kikeezi	‘stallion’	k’ondil-kikiyaata	‘mare’
	baaka-kikeezi	‘sheep’	baaka-kikyaata	‘sheep (F)’
	k’wəl-kikeezi	‘elephant’	k’wəl-kikiyaata	‘elephant (F)’
	iimi-kikeezi	‘ox’	iimi-kikiyaata	‘cow’
	wərr-kikeezi	‘boy’	wərr-kikiyaata	‘female child (girl)’

Bender has recorded *huru* as an alternative form for *kikeezi*.

In the following example, feminine is marked by the suffix *-to(-ta)* and masculine by either a zero morpheme or *-zi*.

(25)	kikee-zi	‘male’	kikiya-ta	‘female’
	kul	‘king/judge/chief’	kul-to	‘queen’
	warr	‘child/boy’	warr-to	‘girl’
	sitšin	‘soldier (M)’	sitšin-to	‘soldier (F)’
	baga	‘sheep (M)’	bag-to	‘sheep (F)’
	ɲa	‘goat (M)’	ɲa-to	‘goat (F)’

The other gender markers which appear with adjectives are *al-* and *ab-* for masculine and feminine respectively.

(26)	gut	‘short’	al-gut	‘short (M)’	ab-gut	‘short (F)’
	p’i	‘strong’	al-p’i	‘strong (M)’	ab-p’i	‘strong (F)’
	tu	‘long’	al-tu	‘long (M)’	ab-tu	‘long (F)’
	teyendi	‘fat’	al-teyendi	‘fat (M)’	ab-teyendi	‘fat (F)’

3.4 Some nominal derivations

Gwama, like lots of others in Nilo-Saharan, seems to be not rich in derivational morphology. In the following examples, the verb stem serves as a result nominal.

(27)	k’ut	cut	k’ut	cut piece
	koboš	steal	koboš	stealing
	doozo	teach	doozo	teaching
	k’us’	be dry	k’us’	drought
	maɲa	be hungry	maɲa	hunger

Agent nominals can be formed from verbs by attaching nouns such as *sit* ‘man’, *warr* ‘child’, etc.

(28)	koboš	steal	sit-koboš	thief (stealing person)
	doozo	learn	warr-doozo	student (learning child)
	wondoozo	teach	sitwon-doozo	teacher (teaching person)

The infinitival nominal is identical with the verb stem.

(29)	ša-	‘eat’	or	‘to eat’
	t’op’-	‘drink’	or	‘to drink’
	ho-	‘go’	or	‘to go’
	gi-	‘work’	or	‘to work’
	sank’-	‘swim’	or	‘to swim’
	k’uš-	‘kill’	or	‘to kill’
	s’i-	‘die’	or	‘to die’
	?iš-	‘sleep’	or	‘to sleep’

Abstract nominals are identical with simple nouns. Rarely, however, they can be derived by prefixation, reduplication and modification:

(30)	sit	‘man’	sin	‘manhood’
	warr	‘child’	warrwarr	‘childhood’
	noko	‘kind’	ninoko	‘kindness’

3.5 The Passive

The passive is marked by the prefix *ba-* as in the following examples.

(31)	Active		Passive		
	ša	‘eat’	ma-ba-l-ša	PS-PASS-3MS-eat	‘was eaten’
	s’it	‘catch’	ma-ba-l-s’it	PS-PASS-3MS-catch	‘was caught’
	t’op’	‘drink’	ma-ba-l-t’op’	PS-PASS-3MS-drink	‘was drank’
	gi	‘work’	ma-ba-l-gi	PS-PASS-3MS-work	‘was worked’
	k’uš	‘kill’	ma-ba-l-k’uš	PS-PASS-3MS-kill	‘was killed’
	k’obo	‘cut’	ma-ba-l-k’obo	PS-PASS-3MS-cut	‘was cut’
	t’uš	‘tie’	ma-ba-l-t’uš	PS-PASS-3MS-tie	‘was tied’

Gwama passive verbs have a TN + PASS + SUBJ + VERB structural pattern.

(32)	u-muzu	ma-ba-	l-	ša.	u-bwaša	ma-	ba-	l-	k’uš.
	the banana	PS-PASS-3MS-eat			the snake	PS-PASS-3MS-kill			
	‘The banana was eaten.’				‘The snake was killed.’				
	sitkoboš	ma-ba-	l-	s’it.	bas’s’	ma-ba-	l-	t’op’.	
	the thief	PS-PASS-3MS-catch			milk	PS-PASS-3MS-drink			
	‘The thief was caught.’				‘The milk was drank.’				

3.6 The Reflexive

The reflexive is shown by the possessive pronouns (see section 3.1.3) attached to the noun *k’uup* ‘head’.

(33)	ga	k’uup-a-na	I	head-POSS-my	‘I myself’
	ik	k’uup-a-ke	you	head-POSS-your	‘you yourself’
	hall	k’uup-a-dal	he	head-POSS-his	‘he himself’
	hap’p’	k’uup-a-dab	she	head-POSS-her	‘she herself’
	ma	k’uup-a-ma	we	head-POSS-our	‘we ourselves’
	um	k’uup-a-kum	you	head-POSS-your	‘you yourself’
	hun	k’uup-a-kun	they	head-POSS-their	‘they themselves’

The structure, therefore, is PRONOUN + POSSESSIVE NP.

3.7 The Causative

The causative is marked by the discontinuous morpheme *ti-n*.

(34)	ti-nun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-1SG-PS-CAUS-call	'I caused to call.'
	ti-gun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-2SG-PS-CAUS-call	'You caused to call.'
	ti-wun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-3MS-PS-CAUS-call	'He caused to call.'
	ti-bun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-3FS-PS-CAUS-call	'She caused to call.'
	ti-nun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-1PL-PS-CAUS-call	'We caused to call.'
	ti-mun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-2PL-PS-CAUS-call	'You caused to call.'
	ti-nun-ma-n-tul	CAUS-3PL-PS-CAUS-call	'They caused to call.'
	ti-nun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-1SG-PS-CAUS-sleep	'I caused to sleep.'
	ti-gun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-2SG-PS-CAUS-sleep	'You caused to sleep.'
	ti-wun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-3MS-PS-CAUS-sleep	'He caused to sleep.'
	ti-bun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-3FS-PS-CAUS-sleep	'She caused to sleep.'
	ti-nun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-1PL-PS-CAUS-sleep	'We caused to sleep.'
	ti-mun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-2PL-PS-CAUS-sleep	'You caused to sleep.'
	ti-nun-ma-n-ʔiš	CAUS-3PL-PS-CAUS-sleep	'They caused to sleep.'

The causative verb structural pattern is: CAUSATIVE + SUBJECT MARKER + TENSE + CAUS + VERB. Some sentential examples are given below.

(35) hall ti- wun- ma- n- tul uwar.
 he CAUS-3MS PS-CAUS-call the child
 'He caused the child to be called.'

ga ti- nun- ma- n- s'it usitkoboš.
 I CAUS-1SG- PS-CAUS-catch the thief
 'I caused the thief to be caught.'

ma ti- nun- ma- n- k'uš ušifta.
 we CAUS-1PL-PS-CAUS- kill the bandit
 'We caused the bandit to be killed.'

3.8 The Jussive

The jussive marker is *ta-* and appears preceding the person marker inflections only in the third person. In the first person, it is represented by a zero morpheme.

(36)	ga Ø-n-hoyo	I JUSS-1SG-come	'Let me come.'
	hall ta-Ø-hoyo	he JUSS-3MS-come	'Let him come.'
	hap'p' ta-b-hoyo	she JUSS-3FS-come	'Let her come.'
	ma Ø-ni-hoyo	we JUSS-1PL-come	'Let us come.'
	hun ta-ni-hoyo	they JUSS-3PL-come	'Let them come.'
	ga Ø-n-hoho	I JUSS-1SG-come	'Let me go.'
	hall ta-Ø-hoho	he JUSS-3MS-come	'Let him go.'
	hap'p' ta-b-hoho	she JUSS-3FS-come	'Let her go.'

ma Ø-ni-hoho	we JUSS-1PL-come	‘Let us go.’
hun ta-ni-hoho	they JUSS-3PL-come	‘Let them go.’

The negative jussive looks like the following.

(37)	ga Ø-dab-ga-hoyo	I JUSS-NEG-1SG-come	‘let me not come.’
	hall ta-Ø-bir-hoyo	he JUSS-3MS-NEG-come	‘let him not come.’
	hap’p’ ta-bi-bər-hoyo	she JUSS-3FS-NEG-come	‘let her not come.’
	ma Ø-ni-bir-hoyo	we JUSS-1PL-NEG-come	‘let us not come.’
	hun ta-ni-bir-hoyo	they JUSS-3PL-NEG-come	‘let them not come.’
	ga Ø-dab-ga-ho	I JUSS-NEG-1SG-go	‘let me not go.’
	hall ta-Ø-bir-ho	he JUSS-3MS-NEG-go	‘let him not go.’
	hap’p’ ta-bi-bir-ho	she JUSS-3FS-NEG-go	‘let her not go.’
	ma Ø-ni-bir-ho	we JUSS-1PL-NEG-go	‘let us not go.’
	hun ta-ni-bir-ho	they JUSS-3PL-NEG-go	‘let them not go.’

The pattern in the negative jussive is: JUSSIVE + SUBJECT MARKER + NEGATION + VERB. Like in (36) above, the jussive is not morphologically marked in the first person.

3.10 Imperative

The imperative for the 2SG is shown in two ways: by a zero morpheme (by the verb stem) or by reduplication. In the 2PL, the prefix *mi-* is attached to the 2SG imperative form.

(38)	hoyo ‘come’	ho ‘go’
	hoyo ‘come!’ 2SG	huho ‘go!’ 2SG
	mi-hoyo ‘come!’ 2PL	mi-huho ‘go!’ 2PL
	ša ‘eat’	t’op’ ‘drink’
	šaša ‘eat!’ 2SG	t’op’at’op’ ‘drink!’ 2SG
	mi-šaša ‘eat!’ PL	mi-t’op’at’op’ ‘drink!’ 2PL

As the examples show, whereas monosyllabic verbs reduplicate, dysyllabic ones remain as they are in the 2SG imperative. When the verb has a CVC syllable structure, reduplication takes place with a linking element *a*.

The negative imperative has the following pattern where the prefix *bir-* stands as a negative marker.

(39)	Positive		Negative	
	šaša	‘eat!’ (2SG)	bir-ša	‘do not eat! (2SG)’
	mi-šaša	‘eat!’ (2PL)	mi-bir-ša	‘do not eat! (2PL)’
	hoyo	‘come!’ (2SG)	bir-hoyo	‘do not come! (2SG)’
	mi-hoyo	‘come!’ (2PL)	mi-bir-hoyo	‘do not come! (2PL)’
	huho	‘go!’ (2SG)	bir-ho	‘do not go! (2SG)’
	mi-huho	‘go!’ (2PL)	mi-bir-ho	‘do not go! (2PL)’

The negative imperative has the pattern NEGATION + VERB in the 2SG and IMPERATIVE + NEGATION + VERB in the 2PL. Note that the verbs in the negative imperatives do not reduplicate.

3.11 Negation

Verbal negation is marked by the morpheme *hil-* prefixed to the verb before person markers.

(40)	Positive			Negative		
	ma-n-ṣ̌a	PS-1SG-eat	‘I ate.’	hil-ga-ṣ̌a	NEG-1SG-eat	‘I did not eat.’
	ma-k-ṣ̌a	PS-2SG-eat	‘You ate.’	hil-gi-ṣ̌a	NEG-2SG-eat	‘You did not eat.’
	ma-Ø-ṣ̌a	PS-3MS-eat	‘He ate.’	hil-a-ṣ̌a	NEG-3MS-eat	‘He did not eat.’
	ma-b-ṣ̌a	PS-2FS-eat	‘She ate.’	hil-bə-ṣ̌a	NEG-2FS-eat	‘She did not eat.’
	ma-n-ṣ̌a	PS-1PL-eat	‘We ate.’	hil-lə-ṣ̌a	NEG-1PL-eat	‘We did not eat.’
	ma-m-ṣ̌a	PS-2PL-eat	‘You ate.’	hil-mi-ṣ̌a	NEG-2PL-eat	‘You did not eat.’
	ma-n-ṣ̌a	PS-3PL-eat	‘They ate.’	hil-li-ṣ̌a	NEG-3PL-eat	‘They did not eat.’

The negative marker *dab-* is recorded in the following imperfect conjugation (see also the negative jussive in (37) above).

(41)	Positive			Negative		
	ga-n-hoyo	IMP-1SG-come	‘I will come’	dab-ga-hoyo	NEG-1SG-come	‘I will not come.’
	a-k-hoyo	IMP-2SG-come	‘You will come’	dab-gi-hoyo	NEG-2SG-come	‘You will not come.’
	a-Ø-hoyo	IMP-3MS-come	‘He will come’	dab-a-hoyo	NEG-3MS-come	‘He will not come.’
	a-b-hoyo	IMP-3FS-come	‘She will come’	dab-bi-hoyo	NEG-3FS-come	‘She will not come.’
	a-n-hoyo	IMP-1PL-come	‘We will come’	dam-ni-hoyo	NEG-1PL-come	‘We will not come.’
	a-m-hoyo	IMP-2PL-come	‘You will come’	dam-mi-hoyo	NEG-2PL-come	‘You will not come.’
	a-n-hoyo	IMP-3PL-come	‘They will come’	dam-ni-hoyo	NEG-3PL-come	‘They will not come.’

The change of *b* to *m* in the negative marker in the plural is a result of progressive nasal assimilation. In his unpublished material, Bender recorded the morpheme *ab-* for the present negative and *yil-* for the past and perfect negative.

(42)	(Present)	das’ini (ga)ab-ni-ṣ̌a	‘I do not eat now.’
		das’ini ik-ab-gi-zala-ṣ̌a	‘You do not eat now.’
		das’ini hal-abə-zɛlla-ṣ̌a	‘I do not eat now.’
	(Past)	aka yil-ni-ṣ̌a akama	‘I did not eat yesterday.’
		ik yil-gi-ṣ̌a akama	‘You did not eat yesterday.’
		hal yil-a-ṣ̌a akama	‘They did not eat yesterday.’
	(Perfect)	ga-yil-ni-ṣ̌a	‘I have not yet eaten.’
		ik-yil-gi-ṣ̌a	‘You have not yet eaten.’
		hal-yil-a-ṣ̌a	‘He has not yet eaten.’
		hap-yil-bi-ṣ̌a	‘She has not yet eaten.’
		mini yiil-ni-ṣ̌a	‘We have not eaten.’
		um yiil-mi-ṣ̌a	‘You have not yet eaten.’
		hun yiil-ni-ṣ̌a	‘They have not yet eaten.’

The particle which shows negation in the copula is *-bə(weet)* (data from Bender’s unpublished material).

(43)	a-noko	‘it is good’	a-bə-noko	‘it is not good’
	a-k’ošš	‘it is bad’	a-bə-k’ošš	‘it is not bad’

a-sirko	‘it is true’	a-bəweet-sirko	‘it is not true’
a-woofkin	‘it is false’	a-bə-weet-woofkin	‘it is not false’

Note that *a-* in the two columns represent the copula.

3.12 Interrogation

The interrogative morpheme in the past is *-ʔa*.

(44)	ma-n-šša	PS-1SG-eat	‘I ate.’	ma-n-šša-ʔa	PS-1SG-eat-INTER	‘Did I eat?’
	ma-k-šša	PS-2SG-eat	‘You ate.’	ma-k-šša-ʔa	PS-2SG-eat-INTER	‘Did you eat?’
	ma-Ø-šša	PS-3SG-eat	‘He ate.’	ma-Ø-šša-ʔa	PS-3MS-eat-INTER	‘Did he eat?’
	ma-b-šša	PS-3FS-eat	‘She ate.’	ma-b-šša-ʔa	PS-3FS-eat-INTER	‘Did she eat?’
	ma-n-šša	PS-1PL-eat	‘We ate.’	ma-n-šša-ʔa	PS-1PL-eat-INTER	‘Did we eat?’
	ma-m-šša	PS-2PL-eat	‘You ate.’	ma-m-šša-ʔa	PS-2PL-eat-INTER	‘Did you eat?’
	ma-n-šša	PS-3PL-eat	‘You ate.’	ma-n-šša-ʔa	PS-3PL-eat-INTER	‘Did they eat?’

The same morpheme appears as interrogative marker in the imperfective.

(45)	ga-n-šišša	IMP-1SG-eat	‘I (will) eat.’	ga-n-šišša-ʔa	IMP-1SG-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do I eat.’
	a-ga-šišša	IMP-2SG-eat	‘You (will) eat.’	a-ga-šišša-ʔa	IMP-1PL-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do you eat.’
	a-Ø-šišša	IMP-3MS-eat	‘He (will) eat.’	a-Ø-šišša-ʔa	IMP-3MS-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do he eat.’
	a-ba-šišša	IMP-3FS-eat	‘She (will) eat.’	a-ba-šišša-ʔa	IMP-3FS-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do she eat.’
	a-na-šišša	IMP-1PL-eat	‘We (will) eat.’	a-na-šišša-ʔa	IMP-1PL-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do we eat.’
	a-ma-šišša	IMP-2PL-eat	‘You (will) eat.’	a-ma-šišša-ʔa	IMP-2PL-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do you eat.’
	a-na-šišša	IMP-3PL-eat	‘I (will) eat.’	a-na-šišša-ʔa	IMP-3PL-eat-INTER	‘Will/Do they eat.’

The suffix *-šši* which has a meaning of ‘what about?’ also marks interrogation.

(46)	ga-šši	1SG-INTER	‘what about me?’
	ik-šši	2SG-INTER	‘what about you?’
	hall-šši	3MS-INTER	‘what about him?’
	hap’p’-šši	3FS-INTER	‘what about her?’
	ma-šši	1PL-INTER	‘what about us?’
	um-šši	2PL-INTER	‘what about you?’
	hun-šši	3PL-INTER	‘what about them?’

The other forms of interrogative involve question words. The underlined words in the following data are the commonly used question words.

(47)	hall hoyi gi- <u>yabsi</u>	‘when did he come?’	swal aʔe <u>akara</u>	‘whose house is this?’
	hall hoyi gi- <u>yya</u>	‘from where did he come?’	ik šaggi <u>bi</u>	‘what is the one which you ate?’
	hall howa <u>iyya</u>	‘where did he go?’	saʔati zala <u>k’iya</u>	lit. ‘how many became the time?’
	u- <u>kara</u> ahoyiyal	lit. ‘who is the one who came?’	s’itgi man <u>k’iya</u>	‘how many children do you have?’
	aʔe <u>akara</u>	‘whose is this?’		

Intonation plays a role in the interrogative. Whereas in the affirmative, the intonation is level, in the interrogative, it is high.

3.13 The Cardinal Numerals

The Gwama digits (1-10) are the following.

(48)	sene	'1'	kuba-sene	'takes/lends/brings one'	(6)
	siyya	'2'	kuba-siyya	'takes/lends/brings two'	(7)
	twasan	'3'	kuba-twasan	'takes/lends/brings three'	(8)
	bis'in	'4'	kuba-bis'in	'takes/lends/brings four'	(9)
	kuumut'	'5'	k'uziya	'ten'	

Whereas the digits 1-5 are simple numerals, 6-9 are compounds based on a quinary system. The numeral 5 in 6-9 is expressed by an action verb *kuba* which means 'takes/lends/brings'. This makes the Gwama number system similar to Komo and Opo (see Zelealem forth.). The word *k'uziya* '10' refers to 'fingers'.

Higher numerals from 11-30 follow.

(49)	k'uzat sene	11	yisa sene tə sene	21
	k'uzat siyya	12	yisa sene tə siyya	22
	k'uzat twasan	13	yisa sene tə twasan	23
	k'uzat bis'in	14	yisa sene tə bis'in	24
	k'uzat kuumut'	15	yisa sene tə kuumut'	25
	k'uzat kuba sene	16	yisa sene tə kuba sene	26
	k'uzat kuba siya	17	yisa sene tə kuba siya	27
	k'uzat kuba twasan	18	yisa sene tə kuba twasan	28
	k'uzat kuba bis'in	19	yisa sene tə kuba bis'in	29
	yisa sene	20	saddoma	30

The word for '20' means 'body/one person'. It also means 'pair' which refers to the pairs of the two limbs. The body part, as a conceptual template, was used up to 100:

(50)	yisa sene gi k'uziya	'one person and fingers'	'30'
	masit siyya	'two persons'	'40'
	masit siyya gi k'uziya	'two persons and fingers'	'50'
	masit twasan	'three persons'	'60'
	masit twasan gi k'uziya	'three persons and fingers'	'70'
	masit bis'in	'four persons'	'80'
	masit bis'in gi k'uziya	'four persons and fingers'	'90'
	masit kuumut'	'five persons'	'100'

However, this vesesimal system has been replaced by a decimal system as a result of the frequent contact with speakers of Oromo. As shown below, beyond 30, whereas the digits remain Gwama, the bases are all borrowings from Oromo.

(51)	saddoma sene	31	afurtama sene	41
	saddoma siyya	32	afurtama siyya	42

saddoma twasan	33	afurtama twasan	43
saddoma bis'in	34	afurtama bis'in	44
saddoma kuumut'	35	afurtama kuumut'	45
saddoma kuba sene	36	afurtama kuba sene	46
saddoma kuba siyya	37	afurtama kuba siyya	47
saddoma kuba twasan	38	afurtama kuba twasan	48
saddoma kuba bis'in	39	afurtama kuba bis'in	49
afurtama	40	šantama	50
šantama sene	51	ǰaʔatama sene	61
šantama siyya	52	ǰaʔatama siyya	62
šantama twasan	53	ǰaʔatama twasan	63
šantama bis'in	54	ǰaʔatama bis'in	64
šantama kuumut'	55	ǰaʔatama kuumut'	65
šantama kuba sene	56	ǰaʔatama kuba sene	66
šantama kuba siyya	57	ǰaʔatama kuba siyya	67
šantama kuba twasan	58	ǰaʔatama kuba twasan	68
šantama kuba bis'in	59	ǰaʔatama kuba bis'in	69
ǰaʔatama	60	torbatama	70
torbatama sene	71	saddetama sene	81
torbatama siyya	72	saddetama siyya	82
torbatama twasan	73	saddetama twasan	83
torbatama bis'in	74	saddetama bis'in	84
torbatama kuumut'	75	saddetama kuumut'	85
torbatama kuba sene	76	saddetama kuba sene	86
torbatama kuba siyya	77	saddetama kuba siyya	87
torbatama kuba twasan	78	saddetama kuba twasan	88
torbatama kuba bis'in	79	saddetama kuba bis'in	89
sadde-tama	80	sagal-tama	90
sagaltama sene	91		
sagaltama siyya	92		
sagaltama twasan	93		
sagaltama bis'in	94		
sagaltama kuumut'	95		
sagaltama kuba sene	96		
sagaltama kuba siyya	97		
sagaltama kuba twasan	98		
sagaltama kuba bis'in	99		
ǰiba	100		

The pattern of numerals is [higher + smaller] and shows predominantly a decimal system inherited from Oromo.

3.14 The *a-gi-* relativizer

This discontinuous morpheme, which plays the role of a relativizer, is split by the verb stem and the subject markers.

(52)	a-ṣ̌i-n-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-1SG-REL-RED	‘which I saw’
	a-ṣ̌i-g-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-2SG-REL-RED	‘which you saw’
	a-ṣ̌i-ya-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-3MS-REL-RED	‘which he saw’
	a-ṣ̌i-b-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-3FS-REL-RED	‘which she saw’
	a-ṣ̌i-n-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-1PL-REL-RED	‘which we saw’
	a-ṣ̌i-m-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-2PL-REL-RED	‘which you saw’
	a-ṣ̌i-n-gi-ṣ̌i	REL-see-3PL-REL-RED	‘which they saw’
	a-ṣ̌a-n-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-1SG-REL-RED	‘which I ate’
	a-ṣ̌a-g-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-2SG-REL-RED	‘which you ate’
	a-ṣ̌a-ya-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-3MS-REL-RED	‘which he ate’
	a-ṣ̌a-b-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-3FS-REL-RED	‘which she ate’
	a-ṣ̌a-n-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-1PL-REL-RED	‘which we ate’
	a-ṣ̌a-m-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-2PL-REL-RED	‘which you ate’
	a-ṣ̌a-n-gi-ṣ̌a	REL-eat-3PL-REL-RED	‘which they ate’

There are also instances where the relativizer and subject suffixes interchange their position as in the following.

(53)	a-dul-gi-ga	REL-buy-REL-1SG	‘which I bought’
	a-dul-gi-ik	REL-buy-REL-2SG	‘which you bought’
	a-dul-gi-hall	REL-buy-REL-3MS	‘which he bought’
	a-dul-gi-hap’p	REL-buy-REL-3FS	‘which she bought’
	a-dul-gi-ma	REL-buy-REL-1PL	‘which we bought’
	a-dul-gi-um	REL-buy-REL-2PL	‘which you bought’
	a-dul-gi-hun	REL-buy-REL-3PL	‘which they bought’

Note that the *a-* prefix alone is similar to the possessive genitive marker mentioned in Section 3.1.3.

In the imperfective, however, the morpheme *ako-* which is prefixed to the verb plays the role of a relativizer instead of the *a-gi-* morpheme. Hence, the examples in (52) and (53) have the following conjugational pattern in the imperfective.

(54)	ako-n-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-1SG-see	‘which I see’
	ako-k-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-2SG-see	‘which you see’
	ako-Ø-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-3MS-see	‘which he sees’
	ako-b-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-3FS-see	‘which she sees’
	ako-n-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-1PL-see	‘which we see’
	ako-m-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-2PL-see	‘which you see’
	ako-n-ṣ̌iṣ̌i	REL-3PL-see	‘which they see’
	ako-dul-ga	REL-buy-1SG	‘which I buy’
	ako-dul-ik	REL-buy-2SG	‘which you buy’
	ako-dul-hall	REL-buy-3MS	‘which he buys’
	ako-dul-hap’p	REL-buy-3FS	‘which she buys’
	ako-dul-ma	REL-buy-1PL	‘which we buy’
	ako-dul-um	REL-buy-2PL	‘which you buy’
	ako-dul-hun	REL-buy-3PL	‘which they buy’

3.15 The (g)ama- subordinator

This subordinator expresses the conditional verb.

(55)

g-ama-n-ṣ̌a	1SG-if-1SG-eat	‘if I eat’	g-ama-n-ʔiṣ̌	1SG-if-1SG-sleep	‘if I sleep’
ama-k-ṣ̌a	if-1PL-eat	‘if you eat’	ama-k-ʔiṣ̌	if-1PL-sleep	‘if you sleep’
ama-Ø-ṣ̌a	if-3MS-eat	‘if he eats’	ama-Ø-ʔiṣ̌	if-3MS-sleep	‘if he sleeps’
ama-b-ṣ̌a	if-3FS-eat	‘if she eats’	ama-b-ʔiṣ̌	if-3FS-sleep	‘if she sleeps’
ama-n-ṣ̌a	if-1PL-eat	‘if we eat’	ama-n-ʔiṣ̌	if-1PL-sleep	‘if we sleep’
ama-m-ṣ̌a	if-2PL-eat	‘if you eat’	ama-m-ʔiṣ̌	if-2PL-sleep	‘if you sleep’
ama-n-ṣ̌a	if-3PL-eat	‘if they eat’	ama-n-ʔiṣ̌	if-3PL-sleep	‘if they sleep’

Note the exception in the 1SG where *g*, which is part of the 1SG pronoun, is added to the conditional marker. Interestingly, the conditional marker *ama* seems to be a fusion of the imperfect marker *a* and the past marker *ma-*.

3.16 The gəda- subordinator

This subordinator indicates a stative action or temporal simultaneity.

(56)	ga gəda-ho-ni-hoyo	I while-come-1SG-come	‘while I come’
	ik gəda-ho-gi-hoyo	you while-come-2SG-come	‘while you come’
	hall gəda-ho-yi-hoyo	he while-come-3MS-come	‘while he comes’
	hap’p’ gəda-ho-bi-hoyo	she while-come-3FS-come	‘while she comes’
	ma gəda-ho-ni-hoyo	we while-come-1PL-come	‘while we come’
	um gəda-ho-mi-hoyo	you while-come-2PL-come	‘while you come’
	hun gəda-ho-ni-hoyo	they while-come-3PL-come	‘while they come’

The above constructions can also express the temporal meaning: ‘when I come’, ‘when you come’, ‘when he comes’, ‘when she comes’, and so on.

3.17 The gi- subordinator

In addition to the multiple grammatical functions mentioned so far, the particle *gi-* also serves as a subordinator in the ‘that-clause’.

(57)	hall gi- ma-ga- hun-ni-hunu alaʔala.	hall gi- ma-hun-ni- hunu alaʔala.
	he that-PS-1SG-sick-1SG-sick he knows	he that-PS-sick-1PL-sick he knows
	‘He knows that I was sick.’	‘He knows that we were sick.’
	hall gi- ma-hun-gi- hunu alaʔala.	hall gi- ma-hun- mi- hunu alaʔala.
	he that-PS-sick-2SG-sick he knows	he that-PS-sick-2PL-sick he knows
	‘He knows that you were sick.’	‘He knows that you (PL) were sick.’
	hall gi- ma-hun-a- hunu alaʔala.	hall gi- ma-hun-ni- hunu alaʔala.
	he that-PS-sick-3MS sick he knows	he that-PS-sick-3PL-sick he knows
	‘He knows that he was sick.’	‘He knows that they are sick.’

hall gi- ma-hun-bi- hunu ala?ala.
 he that-PS-sick-3FS-sick he knows
 'He knows that she was sick.'

3.18 Adverbs

The following time adverbials have been identified in Gwama.

(58)	akama	'yesterday'	giwotko	'tomorrow'
	tabko	'quickly'	kene	'today'
	hilagom	'suddenly'	daas'ine	'now'
	gek'alba	'slowly'		

These adverbs appear following the verb they modify.

(59)	ga anhoy	giwotko.	hall ho?aga akama.
	I	will come tomorrow	he went yesterday
		'I will come tomorrow.'	'He went yesterday.'
	hap'p'	šabga tabtabko.	ga manguss gek'alba.
	she	ate quickly (intensified)	I ran slowly
		'She ate so quickly.'	'I ran slowly.'

3.19 Adjectives

Simple adjectives include the following:

(60)	koozo	'old'	nooko	'good'	teyendi	'fat'
	seere	'white'	ašull	'far'	didišš	'new'
	ak'ošš	'bad'	ziinzi	'thin'	šwala	'black'
	kiisi	'near'	gašer	'big'	k'eyabiko	'narrow'
	warkin	'small'	gut	'short'	fall	'wide'
	tu	'long'				

These adjectives play an attributive role following their head N.

(61)	oolo koozo	'old cloth'	oolo didišš	'new cloth'
	k'ondol gašer	'big horse'	k'ondol warkin	'small horse'
	sit nooko	'good person'	sit k'ošš	'bad person'
	surgan tu	'long trousers'	surgan gut	'short trousers'
	warr teyendi	'fat child'	warr ziinzi	'thin child'

3.20 Adpositions

Gwama has predominantly prepositions. The most common ones are the following:

(62)	iwus-	'on'	gi-	'with/by'
	iš-	'under'	tat-	'through/in' (lit. belly)
	izal-	'at'	isiga-	'near/around'
	ak'aš-	'for'	gimo-	'like'
	iziya-	'in front of'	i-	'at'
	duši-	'toward'	t'a-	'outside'
	k'wass-	'behind/out of'	daak-	'middle'

There are only a few postpositions.

- | | | | | |
|------|----------|---------------|----------------|----------|
| (63) | -dušeeni | ‘side of’ | -dušiiida/šele | ‘beyond’ |
| | -šušu | ‘at the side’ | -dušik’was | ‘after’ |
| | -dušizi | ‘before’ | | |

Some of the above prepositions are derived from the existing lexicon through grammaticalization. These include the words *k’wass* ‘back’ and *tat* ‘belly’. Some sentential examples of prepositional phrases are given in section 4.1 below.

3.21 Comparison

Gwama is one of those languages which show comparison by the action schema (see Heine et al. (forth.) on comparatives in African languages).

- | | | | |
|------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| (64) | k’ondol paša kana. | | |
| | horse exceed dog | | |
| | ‘The horse is bigger than the dog.’ | (lit. The horse exceeds the dog.) | |
| | uduul muney tuwa paša udul munani. | | |
| | stick this long exceed stick that | | |
| | ‘This stick is longer than that stick.’ | (lit. This stick exceeds that stick.) | |

The superlative is encoded by the quantifier ‘all’.

- | | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| (65) | kwal paša mun ku-kum. | | |
| | elephant exceed thing from-all | | |
| | ‘The elephant is the biggest of all.’ | (lit. The elephant exceeds all things.) | |
| | hall teyendi paša mun ku-kum. | | |
| | he fat exceed thing from all | | |
| | ‘He is the fattest of all.’ | (lit. He exceeds from all things in fatness.) | |

4 Word order

The basic order of constituents in simple declarative sentences is SVO. Following the typological classification of African languages (Heine, 1976), Gwama is a type A language.

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-----------------|
| (1) | ubunga mak’uš zelšar. | ga manši haall. |
| | Bunga killed the lion | I saw him |
| | ‘Bunga killed the lion.’ | ‘I saw him.’ |
| | ukaana mafiš udure. | hall maši gaa. |
| | the dog chased the cat | he saw me |
| | ‘The dog chased the cat.’ | ‘He saw me.’ |

In the following sentences with bi-transitive verbs, indirect objects appear preceding direct objects.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (2) | ubunga tutaga haap’p’ tut. | uhall tiya gaa šin siya. |
| | Bunga asked her a question | he gave me spears two |
| | ‘Bunga asked her a question.’ | ‘He gave me two spears.’ |

4.1 Prepositional Phrases

Some examples of prepositional phrases are given below (see also 3.20).

(3)	iwus-swal	‘on the tree’	gi-gaa	‘with me’
	iš-kojo	‘under the table’	itat-maskoti	‘through the window’
	itat-iyā	‘in the water’	izal-t’ut’umbu	‘at the door’
	isiga-s’ul	‘near the river’	gi-kuru	‘by donkey’
	iswal-dušene	‘nearer from the forest’	i-swal-dušiidā	‘beyond house’
	išušu-dušini	‘farther from the forest’	gimo-ukum	‘like his father’
	ak’aš-usit	‘for the man’	gimo-usit	‘like the man’
	i-təkən-šušu	‘at the side of the forest’	ik’was-das’ne	‘after now’
	kene-dušizi	‘before today’	iziya-masgidi	‘in front of the mosque’
	ik’was-swal	‘behind/out of the house’	gi-gaango	‘by mule’

The morpheme *doši* ‘to’ which is optional marks the allative case.

(4)	hall howa (<u>doši</u>)-asosa.	ga gewotko ganho (<u>doši</u>)-addis ababa.
	he went to- Asosa	I tomorrow will go to Addis Ababa
	‘He went to Asosa.’	‘I will go to Addis Ababa tomorrow.’

The morpheme *gi-* marks the ablative case.

(5)	hall hoyi <u>gi-</u> asosa.	hap’p’i hobi <u>gi-</u> addis ababa.
	he came from-Asosa	she came from-Addis Ababa
	‘He came from Asosa.’	‘She came from Addis Ababa.’

The morpheme *gi-* also marks instrumental case.

(6)	ga songu kurum <u>gi-</u> šin.	hall šegu bāga <u>gi-</u> šigi.
	I stab the pig with-spear	he slaughtered the sheep with-knife
	‘I stabbed the pig with a spear.’	‘He slaughtered the sheep with a knife.’

gi- also marks commutative case.

(7)	ga hon <u>gi-</u> gu-baba.	usit aho <u>gi-</u> kikiyata.
	I went with my father	the person went with the woman
	‘I went with my father.’	‘The person goes with the woman.’

4.2 The Noun phrase

By and large, Gwama is a head-initial language. As the following simple NPs illustrate, head nouns appear preceding their complements.

(8)	uswal munani	maswal naala	swal twasan
	house that	house many	house three
	‘that house’	‘many houses’	‘three houses’
	uswal gašer munani	maswal seere siyya	warr faš sene
	house big that	houses white two	child big one
	‘that big house’	‘two houses’	‘one big child’

The pattern seems to be strict regarding demonstratives which must appear preceding all modifiers. Others such as adjectives and numerals can interchange their positions without bearing any meaning change.

Bender (unpublished material) has recorded the following data where the head N appears following other modifiers except numerals.

- (9) u-noko šwala šwala iim-siyya maaya-ni t'wassenəkən innəkɔ tuntu me-sit
 the good black black cow-two those two of them good tall people
 'The two fine black cows.' 'Those three good tall people.'

On the other hand, though they do not reject it completely, my informants prefer the two head nouns to appear initially in the above sentences.

The following genitive NPs also show a similar Head + Modifier structural pattern.

- (10) swal a-aster 'Aster's house' bak' aster 'Aster's hair'
 swal aw-kasa 'Kasa's house' bak aw-kasa 'Kasa's hair'
 šin aw-sit 'man's spear' bas's' a-ɲa 'goat's milk'
 sum a-iimi 'cow's meat' swal twat'a 'mud house'
 duš oolo 'cotton cloth'

As shown in the examples, the possessive morphemes *a-* (cf. section 3.1.3) and *aw-* are attached to the feminine and masculine head nouns respectively. In the source genitives, these morphemes are neutralized and therefore the possessive is indicated by a zero morpheme.

The usual HEAD + REL pattern can be seen in complex NPs such as the following:

- (11) oolo gadulliga kama makina agerghall
 cloth which I bought yesterday car which he drove
 'The cloth which I bought yesterday' 'The car which he drove'

Generally, Gwama can be taken as a head-initial language. Whether or not it follows a strict head + complement pattern in an NP needs further investigation.

4.3 The Verb phrase

In the following VPs, the constituents are the Vs and adverbial complements.

- (12) kikiyata hobi kene ga-gi- ik anho giwotko
 the woman came today I and you we will go tomorrow
 'The woman came today.' 'I and you will go tomorrow.'

The syntactic pattern of the above VPs is: V + ADV.

In the following VPs, a direct object appears as complement following its head.

- (13) ga šingi uum zelšer k'ag usit
 I saw you (PL) lion ate person
 'I saw you.'

When a VP contains a direct and an indirect object NP, the latter, which is structurally a PP, appears preceding the former.

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| (14) | hall <u>ak'aš-hap'p' mati munšiša.</u>
he for her he gave food
'He gave her food.' | hall <u>ak'aš-hun mati munšiša.</u>
he for them he gave food
'He gave them food.' |
| | hall <u>ak'aš-ma mati munšiša.</u>
he for-us he gave food
'He gave us food.' | hall <u>ak'aš-um mati munšiša.</u>
he for you he gave food
'He gave you (PL) food.' |

Gwama VPs, therefore, have a HEAD + COMPLEMENT pattern.

4.5 Connectives

The two connectives are *gi* 'and' *akwako* 'or'. The following examples show the occurrence of *gi* conjoining two nouns.

- | | | |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| (15) | ga gi ik | 'you and me' |
| | ga gi hall | 'I and he' |
| | ma gi hun | 'we and they' |
| | asosa gi addis ababa | 'Asosa and Addis Ababa' |
| | baga gi ja | 'sheep and goat' |

In the following constructions, *akwako* 'or' is the connective (data from Bender's unpublished material):

- | | | |
|------|--------------|--|
| (16) | ga akwako ik | agašer akwako awarkini |
| | I or you | the big one or the little one |
| | 'I or you.' | 'either the big one or the little one' |

Another conjunctive recorded is *kama* 'but'.

- | | |
|------|--|
| (17) | hall algašer kama alkwaka.
he is big but is coward
'He is big but he is a coward.' |
| | was's' ša nənoko kama gadabgaša.
fish food is good but I do not eat
'Fish is good food but I do not eat it.' |
| | (ga) gamanša kama gahilgafis.
I I ate but I am not satisfied
'I ate but I am not satisfied.' |

It is not always the case that connectives appear in all sentences. In the following compound sentences, clauses appear without bearing any connective element.

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| (18) | hall maša mayiš.
he ate he slept
'He had eaten and slept.' | ga t'omnit'op' gamanzal.
I drank I sat down
'I had drunk and sat down.' |
|------|--|---|

ga gazaligizal t'omnigit'op'.	(ga) kis'dušniga swal šinu warr.
I sat down I drank	I I enter to house I saw child
'I had sat down and drank.'	'I had entered the house and saw the child.'

In the following sentences too, connectives are lacking. The converb appears first followed by the main verb. In such constructions, the action performed first appears preceding the action that follows.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (19) ga t'omnigit'op' mašnimaaša. | ma t'obnigit'op' mašnimaaša. |
| I I, having drunk, I became intoxicated | we we, having drunk, we became intoxicated |
| 'I, having drunk, became intoxicated.' | 'I, having drunk, became intoxicated.' |
| ik t'obgigit'op' mašgimaaša. | um t'ommigit'op' mašmimaaša. |
| you you, having drunk, you became intoxicated | you you, having drunk, you became intoxicated |
| 'You, having drunk, became intoxicated.' | 'You, having drunk, became intoxicated.' |
| hall t'obagit'op' mašamaaša. | hun t'omnigit'op' mašnimaaša. |
| he he, having drunk, he became intoxicated | they they, having drunk, they became intoxicated |
| 'He, having drunk, became intoxicated.' | 'They, having drunk, became intoxicated.' |
| hap'p' t'obbigit'op' mašbigimaaša. | |
| she she, having drunk, she became intoxicated | |
| 'She, having drunk, became intoxicated.' | |

4.6 Complex Sentences

In complex sentences where there are subordinate and main verbs, the former occurs preceding the latter. In the following sentences, the pattern is: subject of the subordinate verb + subject of the main verb + the subordinate verb + ADV + main verb.

- | |
|--|
| (20) (ga) usida gašingiši akama mas'i. |
| I man whom I saw yesterday died |
| 'The man whom I saw yesterday died.' |
| (hall) бага adulagidul mas'i. |
| he sheep which he bought died |
| 'The sheep which he bought died.' |
| (swala) aswalgu ubunga anooko. |
| house which he built Bunga is good |
| 'The house which Bunga built is good.' |

The same phenomenon of subordinate + main clause pattern applies in *complement clauses*.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (21) (hall) gima ga hunihunu ala?ala. | (ga) gima ik makša mank'ep. |
| he that I am sick he knows | I that you ate I heard |
| 'He knows that I am sick.' | 'I heard that you ate.' |

In the above two sentences, the optional independent subject pronoun appears first, followed by the subordinate *that-clause* and then the main verb.

5 Concluding remarks

This piece of work is a preliminary sketch of a little-known language. The objective is to provide some grammatical information for the detailed work of the grammar which lies ahead. If one seriously examines by applying the \pm ATR features, the number of distinctive vowels might exceed the five long and five short vowels already identified. Given the scarcity of data, the analysis of tone needs special attention since Gwama is indeed a tonal language. High and low tones have been identified. However, I suspect the existence of glide tones as well. The verb conjugation, which seems to be complex, needs more data and careful analysis. Reduplication, which seems to be multifaceted, needs deeper investigation. Case is not well described. Both inflectional and derivational morphology need more attention. Given the fact that Gwama is a much-neglected language, the present material would give some linguistic insight about the language. More data and texts should be collected in order to fill-in the gaps witnessed in this paper. Above all, it is possible to have a reliable and comprehensive data now before the language suffers from severe structural reduction as a result of the strong pressure from dominant languages of the area.

References

- Bender, M.L. (1975). The Beginning of Ethnohistory in Western Wollega: The Mao Problem. *Patterns in Language, Culture and Society: Sub-Saharan Africa*. OSU WPL 19, 125-141.
- _____ (1976). Nilo-Sharan Overview. *Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia*. 439-483.
- _____ (1983). Proto-Koman Phonology and Lexicon. *Africa and Ubersee*. 66.2, 259-297.
- _____ (1989). Nilo-Saharan pronouns/demonstratives. *Topics in Nilo-Saharan Linguistics*, 1-34.
- _____ (1990). The Limits of Omotic. *Omotic Language Studies*. 584-616.
- _____ (2000). Nilo-Saharan. In: Heine, B. and Derek Nurse (eds.), *African Languages*, 43-73. Cambridge University Press.
- Burns, S. and Guth, C.J. (n.d). *Koma Language*. Daga Post, Sudan. Sudan Interior Mission.
- Greenberg, J. (1963). The Languages of Africa. *International Journal of African Linguistics* 29, 1.
- Hayward, R. (2000). Afroasiatic. In: Heine, B. and Derek Nurse (eds.), *African Languages*, 74-98. Cambridge University Press.
- Heine, B. (1976). *A Typology of African Languages based on the Order of Meaningful Elements*. Kölner Beiträge zur Afrikanistik, 4. Berlin: Reimer.
- Heine, B. et al. (forth.). *Comparative constructions in Africa*. To appear in *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere*. Institut für Afrikanistik, Universität zu Köln.
- James, Wendy (1979). Kwanim Pa: The Making of the Uduk People. An Ethnographic Study of Survival in the Sudan – Ethiopian Borderlands. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Moges Yigezu (1995). Dying twice. *AAP* No. 43. 67-95
- Tesemma Ta'a (1980). *The Oromo of Wollega: A Historical Survey to 1910*. M.A. Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- Tucker A.N. et al. (1966). *Linguistic Analyses: The Non-Bantu Languages of North-Eastern Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Zelealem Leyew (2004). *The Cardinal Numerals of Nilo-Saharan Languages*. Proceedings of 4th World Congress of African Linguistics, 237-258. Rutgers University, NJ. Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. Cologne.

The following abbreviations are used in the paper: 1PL/2PL/3PL = first, second and third plural; 1SG/2SG/3SG = first, second and third singular; SING = Singulative; CAUS = Causative; PASS = JUSS = Jussive; Passive; NP = Noun Phrase; VP = Verb Phrase; PS = Past; ASP = Aspect; IMP = Imperfect; PER = Perfect; POSS = Possessive; ADJ = Adjective; ADV = Adverb; NEG = Negation, INTER = Interrogative; REL = Relative; CONT = Continuous

Gwama Vocabulary

kùm	all
gìs'ìn	alone
kàl kùkùm	always
p'íkín	ashes
tùt	ask
zì sònk'	ankle (eye foot)
kwáp'á	arm
píss	arrow
t'ùl	angry, be
fàns'	axe
íiti	ape
p``ass	add more
ní	antelope
k'ék'èṅàasà	ant
nii	antelope
pì	bear (child)
pùunzù	beard
tìini	baboon/monkey
tàaṅà	bamboo
gòolò	basket
kwaša	bean(s)
sánzà	bed
tàk'às'	bed bug
kùmtàm	bee
šúl	beer
k'íṅí	break
kàb	bring
k'wáss	back
ák'òšš	bad
kàss	blow
gòk'óš	bark
tát	belly
w`əsin	body
g`aš`er	big

bítibítì	butter fly
šìš	boil
bít	bird
sùns'	bite
šìš	boil
šùwàlà	black
s'ám	blood
sí	bone
s'úp'	breast
šìnšì	breathe
šáa	burn
šùšùmo	big snake
wòrkwàm	brother
dùrè	cat
k'òol	chew
m`anwájá	chicken
kùll	chief
k'òol	chew
k'úk'út	cough
tòṅàs	chest
fìšì	chase
siìzì	crocodile
k'òkòl	cheek
náamá	change
k`aš	close
òolò	cloth
dòrr	cry
sáanzá	cattle/property
s'ís'in	charcoal
k'ùmp'	claw (nail)
w`arr	child
ùwùkù	cloud
s'úf	cold
hòyò	come
íimí	cow
k'ùut	cut
kùrù	donkey
àlmùmùn	dream
k'éyéndí	dark
s'í	die
šà	dig
káaná	dog
t'óp'	drink
k'ús'	dry
t'ùt'ùmbù	door

t'ót'ó	dirt (of body)
ùunzù	dirt (generic)
bùrbùt	dust
kwàl	elephant
sìt'úp	enemy
s'éyé	ear
šá	eat
yàss	earth
símp'	egg
zì	eye
yì	exit
kis's'	enter
t'ùš	excrement
fì	fall
àšùll	far
t'òzzi	face (mouth + eye)
téyéndí	fat/thick
kwàakà	fear
tàafkò	fast
p'iš	find
k'úndú	finish
t'ís'	forget
kwàtà	frog
ánt'	fire
w`as's'	fish
šáŋá	field
kùumùt'	five
yàazò	friend
bis'in	four
wáŋú	fox
ílí	full
f all	fly
sònk'	foot
ŋá	goat
úugú	gourd
gòlò	granary
s'ílí	green
bòʔàš	grave
tí	give
yéré	God
áanzá	gold
hò	go
ànòokò	good
šùšù	grass
b`ak'	hair

p'ì	hard/heavy/strong
bìt'	hand
inè	here
sùt	hang down
wàšàl	hare
ní	hide
šàp	hit
k'àndà	hate
kwàp'	horn
t'òš	hot, be (v.)
májà	hunger
šáp'	hit
nì	hide
tàm	honey
swál	house
k'úup	head
géndél	hive
k'ép	hear
k'óndól	horse
t'òš	hot
wùtùp'	husband
gà	I
bùk'	jump
kùl	judge
k'úš	kill
dúgùll	knee
?àlà	know
tòtò	liver
t'áfán	lick
zèlš`er	lion
s'íl	lough
gòlí	left
hòbòl	lie/mistake
šùnù	love
tù	long
s'òwànzò	louse
hàandà	many
súumm	meat
kikéezi	male
nàa/inì	mother
s``awàn	moon
tìnì	monkey
t'wá	mouth
sit	man/person
b`as`s'	milk

kò	mountain
wéyéré	mad
twát'á	mud
bùušù	malaria
kíísí	near
sónk'	name
màafà	needle
k'úšš	neck
dídíšš	new
ánzúgún	night
šúnš	nose
dàas'inè	now
àsiyéne	one
k'òšš/gàatà	old
sitgàatà	old person
kàlà	open
síyá	penis
šù	pull
tùš	push
kò	put
t'al`aš	pour
kwàlà	plough
dòwòkò	potato
bóoló	pumpkin
sitùnù	patient
yill	play
p'ènzè	pay
hìns'	rain
s'i	rat
k``ašš	red
k'àanà	right
šùdùl	rope
gúss	run
àṅà	road
s'áns'	root
s'úl	river
s'ùwàs'ù	rub
pùušù	sand
t``ašš	salt
k'ùns'	scratch
ùss	sew
gùt	short
kwákó	say
šì	see
múny`e	seed

gòngò	skin
wùss	sky
t'íšš	smell
hàt'ìš	sneeze
p'í	strong
àk'át'	smooth
šín	spear
ʔìš	sleep
sínk'	smoke
bwášà	snake
k'éyèm	speak
zùugù	stand
k'éjés'	soil
kàamà	scar
sìtkē	shepherd
bìzìn	star
p'idill	stone
káalá	sun/day
sànk'	swim
k`ap	take away
k'óziyà	ten
àni	that
íní	there
gòm	think
kòlò	throw
t'úš	tie
š'al	turn
k'ik'ìš	tortoise
úwúǰú	tail
ziinzì	thin
á?è	this
ùnannì	those
kàṅà	thorn
kènè	today
twásàn	three
f at	touch
t'ákáll	tongue
šíi	tooth
swálá	tree
síyà	two
zéláfárá	tiger
gíwòtkò	tomorrow
sírkó	true
dùs'	urine
piru	uncle (mother's brother)

bwábwàr	uncle (father's brother)
pít	vulva
fagas'	vomit
búulù	worm
gíyabsí	when
kàss	wind
íyá	where
ìyyà	water
mùnkìšš	wet
šùt	whistel
bì	what
s`eerè	white
kára	who
swasant'	wood
káamá	wound
kikíyàtà	woman/wife
gí	work
f'all	wide
háwá	yawn
ěyě	yes!
àkàmà	yesterday
nàatà	year

Days of the week

kaala sene	first day	'Monday'
kaala siyya	second day	'Tuesday'
kaala twasan	third day	'Wednesday'
kaala bis'in	fourth day	'Thursday'
kaala kuumut'	fifth day	'Friday'
kaala kuba sene	sixth day	'Saturday'
kaala kuba siyya	seventh day	'Sunday'

Months of the year

s'awan sene	first month/moon	'September'
s'awan siyya	second month/moon	'October'
s'awan twasan	third month/moon	'November'
s'awan bis'in	fourth month/moon	'December'
s'awan kuumut'	fifth month/moon	'January'
s'awan kuba sene	sixth month/moon	'February'
s'awan kuba siyya	seventh month/moon	'March'
s'awan kuba twasan	eighth month/moon	'April'
s'awan kuba bis'in	ninth month/moon	'May'
s'awan k'ozíya	tenth month/moon	'June'
s'awan k'uzat sene	eleventh month/moon	'July'
s'awan k'ozat siyya	twelfth month/moon	'August'