

NOTES ON GWAMA GRAMMAR¹

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Based on original field work, the paper provides a preliminary characterization of the grammar of Gwama, a little-researched Nilo-Saharan language of western Ethiopia belonging to the Koman language cluster. Following a brief overview of the phonology, the article covers the major word classes and structures of the language. Special attention is given to the structure of nouns and verbs, including converbs. The article makes a unique contribution to the study of Gwama in that most of the analysis is based on collected elicited texts. Occasional references are made to discourse features. Copious examples from texts illustrate the grammatical points throughout the article. Two sample texts appear in an appendix.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the main points of the morphology and syntax of Gwama with a few brief comments on the phonology. Based primarily on a set of texts collected

¹ The research presented here was conducted by Erika Robertson in partnership with the Bureau of Culture, Sport, and Tourism of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional Administration of Ethiopia. It was carried out primarily in Asosa between February and September 2006 with the help of language assistants from Keser, Tongo, and Zebsher. The data is supplemented with data collected by Mike Bryant in December 2004. Dirk Kievit was responsible for the write-up of the data. We would like to thank Ato Gida Maram, Ato Hangug Wedesa, Ato Mamut Madali, and Ato Tolina Nitar for working as language assistants, and Ato Melese Mihretu for his assistance as translator. Further thanks are due to Dianne Friesen for her assistance as consultant in the project and to Colleen Ahland, Gerrit Dimmendaal, Anne-Christie Hellenthal, Don Killian, Constance Kutsch Lojenga as well as the reviewers from SAL for commenting on earlier versions of the paper. Any remaining deficiencies in the paper are entirely the authors' responsibilities.

during field work in 2004 and 2006, the paper complements Zelealem (2005), which is a more detailed grammatical description but possibly of a different variety of the language here described. Besides elicited texts, the present study is also based on elicited sentences, word lists, and grammatical paradigms.

The primary texts on which this study is based are twenty-four brief texts by a number of native speakers of Gwama mostly from Keser and some from Zebsher. Siebert, Siebert, and Wedekind (2002:10) report that “Zebshir [Zebsher] is considered a village of high prestige” among the Gwama. In addition, three texts by non-native speakers of Gwama whose first language was Komo were also used (but not relied on to the same extent as the other texts).

As mentioned in Siebert and Bryant (2007:461), confusion abounds about the language names and classification surrounding Gwama. Zelealem (2005) does not indicate the home towns of the informants for his data and in some ways—particularly in the description of the verb—the data there presented is quite different from the data described here. The discrepancy between the two studies may be due to dialectical differences.

A preliminary paper such as this cannot hope to describe the grammar exhaustively. It is hoped that others will continue to research this little-known language and benefit from the research presented here.

2. Language and people

Gwama (more commonly known in the literature as Kwama) is a Nilo-Saharan language and one of five Koman languages belonging to the Komuz group, the others being Gule and Komo in Sudan, and Opo and Uduk in Ethiopia (Lewis 2009). It is spoken by several thousand speakers in western Ethiopia, with additional speakers living across the border in Sudan. The Gwama people are subsistence farmers. Culturally, they are considered part of the Mao people. Intermarriage between the Gwama and the Komo is common. In Ethiopia, the Komo tend also to speak Gwama but the Gwama do not tend to speak Komo; the reverse is said to be true in Sudan. Gwama does not appear to be imminently endangered (A. Joswig, pers. comm.). Language development efforts are promising for the future vitality of the language; in fact, the Gwama are reported to have “a very positive attitude” towards their own language (Siebert, Siebert, and Wedekind 2002:13).

3. Notes on phonology

Table 1 provides an inventory of the 21 consonant phonemes in Gwama. Note especially the presence of ejectives.

Table 1. Inventory of consonant phonemes in Gwama.

Manner of articulation		Bi-labial	Alveolar	Post alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives	Vl	/p/	/t/			/k/	
	Vd	/b/	/d/			/g/	
Ejectives		/pʰ/	/tʰ/ /sʰ/			/kʰ/	
Fricatives	Vl		/s/	/ʃ/			/h/
	Vd		/z/				
Nasals		/m/	/n/			/ŋ/	
Lateral approximant			/l/				
Trill			/r/				
Central approximants	Un-rnd				/y/		
	Rnd					/w/	

Contrary to Bender (1983:285), a recent study by Hellenthal and Kutsch Lojenga (2011) found Gwama to have seven basic vowel phonemes, five [-ATR] and two [+ATR]. The former set consists of /i/, /ɛ/, /o/, /ɔ/, and /a/, while the latter set consists of /i/ and /u/. ATR vowel harmony is found in verbal morphology, and vowel length is predictable.

Moreover, contrary to Wedekind and Wedekind (2002:10), which posits two contrastive tones, Hellenthal and Kutsch Lojenga (2011) discovered three contrastive level tones (High, Mid, and Low), as well as a rising and a falling tone.² Minimal

² In the present paper, tone is marked as either Low or High, as transcribed when the data was collected. In light of Hellenthal and Kutsch Lojenga (2011), tone will need to be rechecked for the data presented here. Words that are unmarked for tone in the present paper should not

pairs in Table 2 show the importance of lexical tone (Mid tone is unmarked in this table).

Table 2. Lexical tone.

mono-syllabic words			disyllabic nouns		
H	pák	‘shoes’	HH	t’áfá	‘mushroom’
M	wal	‘child’	MH	tak’í	‘saliva’
L	tám	‘honey’	LH	káká	‘grandmother’
R	măn	‘children’	RH	tǎjá	‘bamboo’

4. Pronouns and pronominal affixes

Table 3 shows the free pronouns as well as the verbal pronominal affixes. (Tone is not marked in this table as it is not yet clear at this point what the underlying tone is for each form.) Note the gender distinction in 3SG³ and the inclusive versus exclusive distinction in 1PL—two features that are said to be common in Koman languages but rare in other Nilo-Saharan languages (Bender 2007:418). Possibly there is a 3SG neuter form as well, as in Komo (Burns 1947:14), but this requires further investigation.

be interpreted as being Mid (as in Hellenthal and Kutsch Lojenga 2011) but rather as not being transcribed fully. Rather than leaving tone entirely unmarked, as is done in Zelealem (2005) (with the exception of the wordlist), we hope that the tone marked as it is—though imperfect—will serve as a starting point for future researchers of Gwama.

³ See list of abbreviations in the appendix.

Table 3. Pronouns and pronominal affixes.

Person	Pronouns		Subject pronominal affixes			
	SBJ, OBJ	POSS	IPFV	PFV	NEG	PASS
1SG	ga	na	na-	-ni	-ga	-ba
2SG	ik	kε	ga-	-gi	-bi	-bi
3MSG	uhay	dε	na-	-ni	-bi	-bε
3FSG	hap	dap	a-	-a	-bab	-bab
1PL.EXCL	ma	ma	ma-	-mε	-ma	-ba
1PL.INCL	mεεnε	mεεnε	na-	-nε	-mε	-ba
2PL	um	kɔm	mi-	-mε	-bum	-ba
3PL	hun	bun	bi-	-bε	-bun	-bun, -bugun

Many alternate forms of the pronouns and pronominal affixes presented above are attested in the data, particularly in terms of the vowels. Some—perhaps most—of these variants may be phonologically conditioned (in terms of vowel harmony or contrast) while other variants may be due to interaction with other, not yet fully analyzed, environments. Verb morphology, including pronominal affixation, remains, therefore, a particularly important area requiring further study and analysis.

4.1 Free pronouns. (a) Subject and object. Since the subject may be marked on the verb by a pronominal affix, free subject pronouns are not required in Gwama and, for this reason, are seldom encountered in the texts elicited for the present study. However, example (1) illustrates the use of an emphatic subject pronoun in the opening line of a text on Gwama culture.

- (1) bilte **ma** gwama k^we-me siyana
 until.now 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama grow-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV grain
 ‘Until now we Gwama have been growing grain.’⁴

As in the closely related language Komo, independent subject and object pronouns are identical (see Burns (1947:14) for Komo). This is illustrated with the third person plural pronouns in example (2) (both of these sentences were elicited independently rather than forming part of a text).

- (2) a. **hún** dè-bùn ǰá páàkà
 3MPL.SBJ NEG-3PL.SBJ.NEG eat injera
 ‘They are not eating *injera*.’
- b. ga ǰú-ní **hún**
 1SG.SBJ love-1SG.SBJ.PFV 3MPL.OBJ
 ‘I love them.’

According to Zelealem (2005:8), subject and object pronouns have contrastive vowel length with objects having long vowels. However, Hellenthal and Kutsch Lojenga (2011:2) do not find vowel length to be distinctive in Gwama (see also Hellenthal n.d.:§3.4). The exact form of the object pronouns requires further investigation.

Another difference with Zelealem (2005) is found in the form for the third singular masculine pronoun. Zelealem (2005:8) omits the initial *u*. Note the presence of this vowel both in subject and object forms in example (3) (all clauses from non-textual elicited data).

- (3) a. **úháy** dè-bè ǰá páàkà
 3MSG.SBJ NEG-3MSG.SBJ.NEG eat injera
 ‘He is not eating *injera*.’

⁴ As much as possible, we have restricted the examples for this paper to ones in which tone is marked. However, for some of the data elicited, such as the text from which this example was taken, tone was not recorded. Such examples may still be illustrative of certain grammatical features being discussed. Note also that where personal names are changed, the substituted names are given without their tones.

- b. **ùháý** gà fĩ-nè-fĩ
 3MSG.OBJ 1SG.SBJ know-1SG.SBJ-PFV-know
 ‘I know him.’
- c. ga ní-tí kéréfè k’áf **uhày**
 1SG.SBJ 1SG.SBJ.IPFV-give gourd to 3MSG.OBJ
 ‘I am giving the gourd to him.’

If the vowel *u* here is the singulative prefix that is also found on nouns (discussed in section 10.3 below), the question remains why it does not appear on other pronouns, notably the third person *feminine* singular form, a question that remains to be answered.

(b) Possessive pronouns. Possessive pronouns follow the genitive marker *a*. They are illustrated in example (4) for kinship (a), ownership (b), and part-whole (c). Note that only the first person plural forms of the possessive pronouns are identical to the subject pronouns. (Note also the variant form *é* of the genitive marker in example (c).)

- (4) a. wàl-kwám á **ná** á-ná-ki úne úúgú
 child-father GEN 1SG.POSS IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-put into gourd
 ‘My brother puts it into the gourd.’
- b. gità hóò wàp’ fǎ-ná-fǎá
 when come pig eat-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED
 kàp-mì fín à **mà**
 take-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV spear GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 ‘When a pig comes to eat, we take our spear.’
- c. úp é **dé** tótó kò-mé t’wà zìzínjí
 head GEN 3MSG.POSS bring put-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV mouth fence
 ‘We bring its (the pig’s) head and put it on the compound fence.’

Zealelem (2005:8) treats the genitive marker as part of the possessive pronoun. However, since the same marker is used in possessive phrases (see section 13 below), it is more appropriately treated as a separate word.

4.2 Pronominal affixes. (a) Imperfective. The imperfective subject pronominal affixes follow the imperfective prefix *a-*, as illustrated in example (5).

- (5) gidè p'á-mè-p'á
 when dance-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 á-mè-yì-yìs t'wà zìzìíjí
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-circle-RED mouth fence
 ‘When we dance, we circle around the compound fence.’

In examples where this imperfective marker appears to be missing it may have elided following the vowel *a*; slower, more carefully enunciated speech may reveal its presence.

(b) Perfective. Perfective pronominal subject suffixes are illustrated in example (6) with a simple root in (a) and a reduplicated root in (b). In the latter, the pronominal affix occurs between the two root morphemes (see also *p'á-mè-p'á* ‘we dance’ in example (5) above). Because of pronominal marking on the verb, an overt subject is not required.

- (6) a. s'ít-ní gí màn twààsén
 have-3MSG.SBJ.PFV ACC children three
 ‘He has three children.’
- b. mà-bàábá gidà hìm-bí-hìm jìn-kò
 PL-father when quarrel-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED past-ADV
 dà-bòn hó k'áf kàsàs úbú kwèy
 NEG-3PL.SBJ.NEG go to accusation place chief
 ‘Our fathers, when they quarreled in the past, did not go to the place of judges to bring an accusation.’

(c) **Negative.** Negative subject pronominal affixes attach to the negative auxiliary, as shown in example (7). The affixes are uninflected for tense.

- (7) a. **dè-bùn** wé óóyò
 NEG-3PL.SBJ.NEG wear clothes
 ‘They didn’t wear clothes.’
- b. gírìj̄ dà-**mà** s’it
 coins NEG-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.NEG have
 ‘Coins we don’t have.’

(d) **Passive.** Passive subject pronominal affixes are illustrated in example (8). Note that the verb root is reduplicated in the passive.

- (8) a. kí-k-yáàtà á nà nukta kò-**báb**-kò
 CLF-person-female GEN 1SG.POSS Nukta call-3FSG.SBJ.PASS-RED
 ‘My wife is called Nukta.’⁵
- b. gaya kò-**bún**-kò
 Oromo call-3PL.SBJ.PASS-RED
 ‘They are called Oromo.’

For the third person plural, an alternative, longer form is also attested, as shown in example (9). Possibly, the difference in form is due to the difference in tense/aspects, the longer form being used for past tense. This calls for further investigation. Note also the absence of verb reduplication with the second occurrence of the long form in the same sentence that has the reduplicated form. Further data will be needed to clarify this apparent inconsistency.

⁵ Personal names in the examples have been altered to ensure the privacy of the individuals concerned.

- (9) gide pi-**búgún**-pi mà-sàkó
 when give.birth-3PL.SBJ.PASS-RED PL-grandfather
 pi-**búgún** gi yís zíyánkò
 give.birth-3PL.SBJ.PASS with body naked
 ‘When our grandfathers were born, they were born with naked bodies.’

Zealelem (2005:17) shows the passive marker as being *ba-* followed by the subject marker.⁶ Although the form *ba-* can be traced in some of the forms, it appears in the present data that the passive marker has amalgamated with the subject pronoun. This is another instance where the data for this research differs significantly from that presented in Zealelem (2005).

Note that the short form of the third person plural passive is identical in form to the third person plural negative affix and, aside from its being an affix, to the independent third person plural possessive pronoun.

5. Demonstratives

There are two sets of demonstrative pronouns: proximal and distal. Each set is inflected for gender and number, as shown in Table 4. Slashes indicate variant forms. (Note that tone was not marked when this data was recorded.)

Table 4. Demonstrative pronouns.

	Proximal		Distal	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
M	ute kikeezi ‘this man’	anun kikeezi ‘these men’	uni/ani kikeezi ‘that man’	aton kikeezi ‘those men’
F	oo kikjata ‘this woman’	anun kikjata ‘these women’	ato/ate kikjata ‘that woman’	aton/ate kikjata ‘those women’

⁶ Except for the third person masculine singular, Zealelem (2005) does not describe what the subject markers for the passive are in his section 3.5 which discusses the passive structure. A comparison with his example (12) on p.12 suggests that the subject markers for the passive are identical to the object pronominals for verbs that mark both subject and object.

While in these paradigms, the demonstrative occurs before the noun it modifies, in the texts the order is the opposite. This may indicate flexibility. Certainly it requires further investigation.

Demonstrative pronouns may be used independently, as in example (10).

- (10) gìdà gèlè-báà nà àtè màánpéé kò-pá-kò
 when drive-3PL.SBJ.PFV goat those.F niece call-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘When they drive goats, those (females) they call nieces.’

A demonstrative clitic that attaches to the end of a noun or noun phrase is also used. It has two forms: *-tè* (M) and *-tò* (F). The latter is illustrated in example (11).

- (11) gide pèéns’gí dwá dwá-tò jé yá-kwà biyá
 when pay with girl girl-the.F also 3FSG.SBJ.IPFV-do what
 ‘When they have paid with the girl, that girl also, what does she do?’⁷

6. Prepositions and postpositions

The most common preposition is *gì*. It signals that the following noun has an unspecified kind of adverbial relation to the verb. Example (12) illustrates its use to mark temporal location (a) and instrument (b).

- (12) a. só-ní-gé **gì** sùgùn
 spear-1SG.SBJ.PFV-3MSG.OBJ at night
 ‘I spear it (i.e., the pig) at night.’
- b. mà jé kwèy jáf-mì
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ also hoe eat-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV
gì gàáfá mà-bàbá
 with hoe PL-father
 ‘We also hoe in order to eat, with a hoe like our fathers.’

⁷ In Gwama culture, when a man kills another man, he must give a girl from his family as wife to the dead man’s family as payment.

Some prepositions are grammaticalized nouns. Examples are shown in Table 5. Further research may reveal others.

Table 5. Nouns functioning as prepositions.

	Noun	Preposition
kwás	‘back’	‘behind’
tát	‘stomach’	‘in’
t’wà	‘mouth’	‘around’
wúús	‘sky’	‘on’

Example (13) illustrates the preposition *tát* ‘in,’ as well as two other prepositions, *búgúnè* ‘around’ and *idágà* ‘among.’

- (13) a. má gwámá bilé zèè-má
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama when live-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV
tát wàwàn éyě kwéé-me síyàná
 in grass hut cultivate-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV grain
 ‘When we Gwama lived in grass huts, we cultivated grain.’
- b. kàp-bí wáàṅà-wáàṅ sùyà ù-sééné
 bring-3PL.SBJ.PFV chicken-RED two SGV-one
 bà-pí **búgúnè** úp
 circle-3PL.SBJ.PFV around head
 ‘They bring two chickens and circle one around the head.’
- c. máyò hò kès-bá **idágà** gwámá
 Bertha come enter-3PL.SBJ.PFV among Gwama
 ‘The Bertha came and entered among the Gwama.’

Example (14) illustrates the postposition *páy* ‘without.’ This may have a different origin from the prepositions.

- (14) hò tò-tò kò-bé iyisá kòfì nyá òòyè páŋ
 come take-RED put-3PL.SBJ.PFV body skin goat clothes without
 ‘They come and take the body and put it on the goat skin without clothes.’

7. Adverbs

Adverbs ending with the suffix *-kɔ* or *-ko* indicate manner or time. Table 6 illustrates adverbs of manner. The form of the adverb is not inflected for number as seen by comparing the singular and plural forms for ‘walk slowly’ in this table.

Table 6. Adverbs.

Verb	Adverb	Gloss
t’wá	ɲàzní-kò	‘Speak loudly! (SG)’
t’wá	t’éyák’à-kó	‘Speak quietly! (SG)’
hó	t’éyák’à-kó	‘Walk slowly! (SG)’
mí-hò	t’éyák’à-kó	‘Walk slowly! (PL)’

Example (15) illustrates the use of the affix with adverbs of time.

- (15) a. sit múmún **ɲɪŋ-kó** bàf-bí ɟwí
 person spirit past-ADV make-3PL.SBJ.PFV beer
 ún-bá kòónó
 add-3PL.SBJ.PFV pot
 ‘In the past, local prophets made beer and added it to the pot.’
- b. gí **ɔt-kó** à-nà-twí máni gwà
 in morning-ADV IPFV-1SG.SBJ.IPFV-call children brother
 à nà táb-á ɟĩ ú-wàp
 GEN 1SG.POSS follow-IPL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV see SGV-pig
 ‘In the morning I call my brothers and we follow the pig and see it.’

Not all adverbs of manner and time take this suffix, however, as illustrated in example (16). The absence of the suffix in (c) may be due to the fact that *bàdén* is a loanword from Arabic.

- (16) a. *bili ze-mí gí kǎǎn*
 like.this be-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV in today
 ‘Like this we are today.’
- b. *u-kwekɔ-ni-kɔ ga*
 SGV-elephantsay-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED 1SG.SBJ
ni-gusa paf ik
 1SG.SBJ.IPFV-run fast 2SG.SBJ
 ‘The elephant said, “I run faster than you.”’
- c. *bàdén sít-è kú-kwám ábúm kù kwòó*
 afterwards person-PL PL-father 3PL.OBJ call say
á-mí-bàf jwíí
 IPFV-2PL.SBJ.IPFV-make beer
 ‘Afterwards, the elders call and say, “You (PL) will make beer.”’

The same suffix is also found on some adjectives, as shown below.

8. Adjectives

There are two ways of expressing attributes in Gwama: as adjectives and as verbs. The former is illustrated in example (17). The latter is discussed below in section 11.6. Note that the adjective follows the noun it modifies.

- (17) a. *á-s’íw ù-sít gàátá gèlè-ba nà*
 IPFV-die SGV-person old drive-3PL.SBJ.PFV goat
 ‘When an old person dies, they drive goats.’

- b. gidɛ kwɛ̀-bí-kwɛ̀ kwé ɪf-bí
 when hoe-3PL.SBJ.PFV-hoe hoe sleep-3PL.SBJ.PFV
 gí yís **zɪyán-kò**
 with body naked-ADJ
 ‘When they hoed, they hoed and slept with naked bodies.’

- c. u-kalawandi hɔ k’afa-ni u-kwe
 SGV-squirrel go deceive-3MSG.SBJ.PFV SGV-elephant
 oya **haant-ko** hɔ-ni zɛ-ni
 2SG.SBJ⁸ big-ADJ come-IMP live-IMP
 ‘The squirrel deceived the elephant, “You are big. Come, live with me.”’

Adjectives may be reduplicated with diminutive meaning.

- (18) ho-ni kwe **wal-wal** dàdó sèɛn ini
 come-IMP hoe small-RED job one here
 ‘Come and hoe. There is one small job here.’

9. Numerals

Gwama numerals follow a base-five system, as suggested by the numbers 1–10 in Table 7.

Table 7. Numbers 1–10.

séésk’ín	‘one’	kúpà-sén	‘six’
swíyá	‘two’	kúpá-swíjá	‘seven’
twàsén	‘three’	kúp-twàsɛn	‘eight’
béés’ín	‘four’	kù-béés’ín	‘nine’
kómòt’	‘five’	k’oos’i	‘ten’

⁸ Possibly this is an emphatic pronoun which may be used either with or without the regular subject pronoun. In the same narrative, the following phrase occurs: *ik ukoya haantko* ‘you (emphatic?) are big.’ This needs further investigation.

10.1 Types of roots and stems. A noun root may be a simple noun, such as *tàm* ‘honey’ in example (21).

- (21) *hò-nì* *tóp* ***tàm***
 come-IMP drink honey
 ‘Come and drink honey.’

Examples of reduplicated roots are given in Table 10. Note in *t’áp’-t’áp’* ‘fetus’ that the two roots do not necessarily have identical tones.

Table 10. Reduplicated noun roots.

<i>hòf-hóf</i>	‘lung’
<i>búúm-búúm</i>	‘drum’
<i>t’áp’-t’áp’</i>	‘fetus’
<i>síϕ-síϕ</i>	‘light rain’
<i>bùlù-bùlù</i>	‘butterfly’

The reduplication may be partial with the reduplicated syllable consisting only of CV, as in the words *mú-mún* ‘spirit’ and *wá-wàn* ‘grass.’ These examples suggest that the reduplication is from right to left with the reduplicated syllable only copying the first consonant and vowel of the original part. Alternatively, a second process after reduplication truncates the first element. The same process is evident with some reduplicated verbs. Note again in *wá-wàn* ‘grass’ that the tone on the two elements of the reduplicated noun stem may not be identical.

A noun stem may consist of a compound noun, such as *wàl-kwám* ‘brother’ (lit. child-father) in example (22). The absence of the genitive marker and the idiomatic meaning suggest this is indeed a compound noun rather than a noun phrase.

- (22) ***wàl-kwám*** *á* *ná* *á-ná-kì* *úne* *úúgú*
 child-father GEN 1SG.POSS IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-put into gourd
 ‘My brother puts it into the gourd.’

The root of a noun may be a proper noun, as in example (23). Note that in this particular example, the two proper names (referring to two individuals) are both prefixed by the singulative prefix *ù-*, which is discussed below. (Note, however, that because the personal names have been altered for this paper, tone is not marked on them.)

- (23) *tàb kwàsà [u-dìbab] [u-kinan] bungul demis*
 follow after SGV-Dibab SGV-Kinan Bungul Demis
kò-bé-kò
 call-3MSG.SBJ.PASS-RED
 ‘After Dibab comes one called Kinan Bungul Demis.’

A noun root may be derived from a verb, as is the case with the noun glossed as ‘the one who died’ in example (24). (Note here too the singulative prefix *ù-*.)

- (24) *í-yàsà kwaba tó-tó kò ù-s’í-tè*
 DAT-place several.people take-RED put SGV-die-the
 ‘Several people take the one who died and put him in that place.’

10.2 Noun classes. At least five classes of nouns may be identified in Gwama based on the marking (or lack thereof) of singular and plural. These are presented in Table 11. Some nouns mark the plural while others mark the singular; others mark neither the singular nor the plural. In addition, some nouns use suppletion to mark the difference between singular and plural. The five classes are discussed below.

Table 11. Noun classes.

Class	Singular	Plural
1	no affix	no affix
2	no affix	ma-
3	-ku, u-	no affix/-a
4	noun 1	noun 2
5	?	no affix

The variety of prefixes and suffixes suggests these classes of nouns may have different origins—which is a topic for further investigation. Most nouns belong to class 1 in which both singular and plural are unmarked. For these nouns, number must be inferred from the context. This is illustrated in example (25).

- (25) a. **ʃig** á màn á nà
 name GEN children GEN 1SG.POSS
 ‘The names of my children are...’
- b. atɛ wèt-mé **wàl-kwàm**
 then become-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV child-father
 ‘Then we have become brothers.’

Class 2 nouns are unmarked for singular but have a plural affix. As shown in Table 12, most nouns with the prefix *ma-* refer to humans.

Table 12. Nouns with *ma-* plural prefix.

má-bàába	‘fathers’
má-sàkó	‘grandfathers’
má-íkàkà	‘grandmothers’
ma-kekeezi	‘men’
ma-ɲá	‘goats’

Note, however, in Table 12 that the word for ‘goat’ also takes the plural marker *ma-*. This is consistent with what is found to be the case in Northern Gumuz, where the prefix *má-* is used to mark the plural for nouns referring to people as well as livestock (Ahland 2010:2.1.6). Zelealem (2005:15) also records the *ma-* prefix with the word for ‘horses’ (another livestock animal) but also ‘cats’ and even some body parts and the word for ‘rivers.’

The plural marker is illustrated in example (26). Note in this example that the human-referring nouns are marked, while the word *s’i* ‘rats’ is unmarked. (The

context makes it clear that the reference is to more than one rat.) Perhaps the significant semantic criterion is domesticated versus non-domesticated animals.

- (26) *gí* *ḡḡ-kó* *s'í* *gidè* *ḡá* *k'ú-ní*
 in past-ADV rat when eat finish-3MSG.SBJ.PFV
sàmún *sit-á* ***má-sàkó*** ***má-íkàkà*** *hó*
 corn person-PL PL-grandfather PL-grandmother go
sò-bí *k'ònzí* *ḡá*
 dig-3PL.SBJ.PFV root eat
 'In the past, when rats ate all the corn, people—(our) grandfathers and grandmothers—went and dug and ate (bamboo) root.'

There are other plural affixes as well. For example, the word *sit* 'person' takes a plural suffix *-a* as shown in example (27).

- (27) ***sit'-a*** *kú-kwám* *gida* *tú-tú* *t'wà-nú-t'wà*
 person-PL PL-father when ask-RED tell-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED
 'The elders ask and tell them...'

Note the use of the singular subject suffix *-nú* on the final verb in this example even though the subject of the verb is plural. In Gumuz a singular affix is commonly used with a plural subject and a plural suffix is used only to emphasize the individuality of the people involved (C. Ahland, pers. comm.). This is a topic for further research. The noun *kwám* 'father' takes the plural prefix *kú-*, as shown in example (28).

- (28) *bàdén* *sit-è* ***kú-kwám*** *ábúm* *kù* *kwòó*
 afterwards person-PL PL-father 3PL.OBJ call say
á-mí-bàḡ *ḡwíí*
 IPFV-2PL.SBJ.IPFV-make beer
 'Afterwards, the elders call them and say, "You (PL) will make beer."'

An alternative interpretation of the *ku-* prefix analyzes it as an allomorph of the ancient classifier prefix *ki-* discussed below in section 9.3.

Class 3 nouns take a singulative marker *ù-*. There may or may not be a plural marker. Some examples are given in example (29). In (a) the marker is used for ‘God’; in (b) and (c) for humans (including proper nouns); in (d) for animals; and in (c) and (e) for inanimate objects. (Note that the texts from which examples (a) and (d) were taken did not mark tone while in example (b) the names were changed; tone is not marked on the substitutes.)

- (29) a. *gidi halak-ni-ma* **u-yεεrε**
 when create-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-1PL.EXCL.OBJ SGV-God
tii-ni-ma-ge t’wa mεne uwe
 give-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-1PL.EXCL.OBJ-? language 1PL.INCL.POSS this
 ‘When God created us, He gave us this our language.’
- b. *tàb kwàsà* **u-dibab** **u-kinan** *bungul demis*
 follow after SGV-Dibab SGV-Kinan Bungul Demis
kò-bé-kò
 call-3MSG.SBJ.PASS-RED
 ‘After Dibab comes one called Kinan Bungul Demis.’
- c. **ú-páyàk’-tè** *tí-né-gé* *dèèp húnú*
 SGV-shell-the give-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-? show sickness
ì-yìs *à* **ú-sít** *húún-tè*
 DAT-body GEN SGV-person sick-the
 ‘The shell shows the sickness in the body of the sick person.’
- d. **u-kalawandi** *hò k’afà-ni* **u-kwe**
 SGV-squirrel go deceive-3MSG.SBJ.PFV SGV-elephant
 ‘The squirrel deceived the elephant.’

- e. *daz-a* *s'íg-mà-s'íg-í*
 grind-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV knead-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED-REL
ate páf-mì ú-yádé
 then cover-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV SGV-dough
 'When we have ground and kneaded, then we cover the dough.'

It might be argued that since example (d) is taken from a folk tale in which the animals are given human qualities, such as being able to speak, this example may not be indicative of how animals are normally handled in the grammar. This calls for an analysis of a text about animals in which they are not given human qualities.

Class 4 nouns indicate plurality by means of suppletion. This is illustrated in example (30). The word *màn* 'children' in (a) is the plural counterpart to the word *wàl* 'child' in (b).

- (30) a. *pé-bí màn dídíf*
 bear-3PL.SBJ.PFV children new
 'They bore new children.'
- b. *á-ní-s'ít à-té wál kí-kí-zà*
 IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-catch PURP-give child CLF-person-male
sééné gí wàl kí-kí-yátà sééné
 one and child CLF-person-female one
 'They catch in order to give one boy and one girl (lit. He catches to give one male child and one female child).'

Class 5 nouns have only one form referring to a group, as illustrated in example (31). In this case, context determines whether the singular is intended, unless number is indicated by object marking on the verb. Unlike class 1 nouns, these nouns are plural by default.

- (31) *kúúrù dà-mà s'ít*
 donkey NEG-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.NEG have
 'Donkeys we don't have.'

10.3 the *u-* prefix. Besides marking singulative (as discussed above in section 10.2), the prefix *ù-* seems to have a discourse function as well. A particular noun may have the singulative prefix in one sentence and lack it in another sentence in the same text, even when in both cases the reference is singular. This is illustrated in example (32). In (a) *kaana* ‘dog’ does not take the marker while in (b), taken from a few lines further in the same text, it does.

- (32) a. *hɔ kaana buk’ a-fa-ni pwaɸ-te*
 come dog snatch PURP-eat-3MSG.SBJ.PFV porridge-the
 ‘The dog came and snatched it (the porridge) away to eat it.’
- b. *hɔ-na zε hanɔ’ k’afa-no wàjú u-kaana*
 come-IMPLive together deceive-3MSG.SBJ.PFV fox SGV-dog
 ‘‘Come and let’s live together,’’ the dog deceived the fox.’

The *u-* prefix may also be used with the numeral ‘one’ to refer to one person or one object, as shown in example (33).

- (33) *ù-sééné bà-pí búgúnè úp*
 SGV-one circle-3PL.SBJ.PFV around head
 ‘They circle one (chicken) around the (person’s) head.’

Possibly, the prefix is used to contrast one person or object with another. The context for the sentence quoted in example (33) is given in example (34). The ‘one’ chicken is circled around the person’s head and the (other) ‘one’ chicken is slaughtered.

- (34) a. *kàp-bí wáàn-à-wáàn sùya*
 bring-3PL.SBJ.PFV chicken-*-RED two
 ‘They bring two chickens.’
- b. *ù-sééné bà-pí búgúnè úp*
 SGV-one circle-3PL.SBJ.PFV around head
 ‘They circle one (chicken) around the head.’

- c. gɪdɛ̀ b̀à-pí búgúnè úp=i ù-séén
 when circle-3PL.SBJ.PFV around head=REL SGV-one
 ʃɛ̀-bé-ʃɛ̀
 slaughter-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘When they circle one around the head, they slaughter the other one.’

It appears then that while the *u-* prefix is limited to singular nominals, the label “singulative” does not fully capture its function. Although it is predominantly used with subject nominals, it also occurs with nouns functioning as objects (as seen in example (33) just quoted as well as in example (29) (e) above). Clearly, further research on the discourse level is needed to fully characterize this marker.

Zealelem (2005:29) quotes unpublished material from Bender in which the *u-* prefix is glossed as ‘the.’ This is clearly not an adequate translation.

10.4 *ki-* nouns. The prefix *ki-/k’i-* found on some nouns is a remnant of an old definite article or classifier. It is found in many other Nilo-Saharan languages as well (see Greenberg 1990:47). Examples are given in Table 13 (from elicited data). Note that in the word *t’wàŋ-kí-t’wàŋk* ‘scorpion’ it occurs between the root and its reduplicated counterpart.

Table 13. *ki-*nouns.

kí-kámbí	‘camel’	k’í-ánzà	‘instrument’
t’wàŋ-kí-t’wàŋk	‘scorpion’	k’ì-’líiti	‘flute’
k’í-’k’áŋsá	‘army ant’	kí-kízà	‘male’
k’í-’k’íʃ	‘tortoise’	kí-kyáàtà	‘female’
k’í-’ʃín	‘bow’		

The word *ki-kámbí* ‘camel’ is probably a loanword from Arabic *gāmāl* and thus provides strong evidence that *ki-* is indeed a prefix. Further support for this analysis comes from a comparison of some of the words with Gumuz. For example, the word *gánda* ‘army ant’ (in the Mandura dialect of Gumuz) is similar to *k’áŋsá* in *k’í-k’áŋsá*, and *gwinzá* ‘male’ (in all Gumuz dialects) is similar to *kízà* in *ki-kízà* (data

from C. Ahland, pers. comm.). The prefix *kú-* in *kú-kúnjùfú* ‘bow’ and *kú-kwám* ‘fathers’ is possibly an allomorph of the same prefix.

Example (35) illustrates a *kí-* noun with a plural marker, showing the relative ordering of the plural marker followed by the *kí-*prefix.

- (35) ak’as ho ho ho **ma-ke-kee-zi** kò-nà-kó
 others go go go PL-CLF-person-male call-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘Others, the men, call, “Go! Go! Go!”’

11. Verbs

11.1 Structures. Gwama verbs may be grouped into four main categories, as presented in Table 14. Type 1 verbs consist of an unaffixed root or stem (i.e., a reduplicated root). Type 2 and 3 verbs take suffixes while type 4 verbs take prefixes. In type 3 verbs, the verb root is also reduplicated after the suffix(es).

Table 14. Types of verb structures.

Type	Prefixes			Root/Stem	Suffixes		
1				Root/Stem			
2				Root/Stem	SBJ	OBJ	
3				Root1	SBJ	OBJ	Root2
4	TAM	SBJ	OBJ	Root			

The first verb structure is an unaffixed simple root or a stem consisting of a reduplicated root. This structure is illustrated in example (36) with a simple root in (a) and a reduplicated root in (b).

- (36) a. í-yàsà kwaba tó-tó kò ù-s’í-tè
 DAT-place several.people take-RED put SGV-die-the
 ‘Several people take the one who died and put him in that place.’

- b. *bààdéní gídà zè-gí má-sàkó*
 after when live-3PL.SBJ.PFV PL-grandfather
kèèr-kò sít-à s'í-s'í ùbù má-à
 past-ADV person-PL die-RED village 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 'When our grandfathers lived in the past, people of our village died.'

Frequently, unaffixed verb roots are used in a series of verbs called converbs before a final, inflected verb, as in example (37) (the series of verbs is marked with brackets). Note that only the last verb in the series is inflected—the opposite, incidentally, of what is found in the related language Komo, where it is the first verb in the series that is inflected (Burns 1947:23). (Converbs are discussed in more detail in section 12.1 below.)

- (37) [*hò tò-tò kò-bé*] iyisá kòfì ñyá òóyè pán
 come take-RED put-3PL.SBJ.PFV body skin goat clothes without
 'They come and take the body and put it on the goat skin without clothes.'

The second verb structure, which is also very common, involves the addition of a subject and/or object suffix to the simple or reduplicated root. A simple root is shown in example (37) above (the final verb in the series of verbs); a reduplicated root is shown in example (38).

- (38) *gide ís sàmún òbù mää púnt'-má*
 when ripe corn village 1PL.EXCL.POSS cut-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV
kò-kò-má swúy é-lògún
 put-RED-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV house on-wall
 'When the corn is ripe in our village, we cut it and put it in (our) house on the wall.'

A verb with an object suffix is illustrated in example (39).

- (39) *tí-mà púf'dúf*
 give-1PL.EXCL.OBJ tied.cotton
 'Give us tied cotton.'

When there is a subject pronominal, the object suffix always follows the subject suffix, as in example (40). Note here that the object suffix *-ma* follows the perfective subject suffix *-ni* (here transcribed as *-ni*).

- (40) gidi **halak-ni-ma** u-yεεε
 when create-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-1PL.EXCL.OBJ SGV-God
tii-ni-ma-ge t'wa mεε uwe
 give-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-1PL.EXCL.OBJ-? language 1PL.INCL.POSS this
 'When God created us, He gave us this our language.'

The third verb structure involves a reduplicated verb root with a subject (and sometimes an object) suffix occurring between the two root morphemes. Note the contrast with type 2 verbs, where the subject affix follows the reduplicated root. This verb type is illustrated in example (41) with a subject affix in (a) and both a subject and an object affix in (b).

- (41) a. gità **kààm-é-kààm** mée
 when find-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED 1PL.EXCL.SBJ
sò-mé-sò
 spear-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 'When we find (it, i.e., the pig) we spear (it).'
- b. gà-í jìg á ná banti
 1SG.SBJ-FOC name GEN 1SG.POSS Banti
 marfo **kò-bí-gà-kò**
 Marfo call-3PL.SBJ.PFV-1SG.OBJ-RED
 'As for me, my name, they call me Banti Marfo.'

The fourth verb structure involves pronominal prefixes rather than suffixes. The verb root consists of a subject (and sometimes an object) prefix following the imperfective prefix, as shown in example (42). Note that while the affixes are now prefixed to the root rather than suffixed, the relative order of the affixes is still subject-object, as shown in (b).

- (44) a. gide **kwè-bí-kwè** kwé **if-bí**
 when hoe-3PL.SBJ.PFV-hoe hoe sleep-3PL.SBJ.PFV
 gí yís zíyán-kò
 with body naked-ADJ
 ‘When they hoed, they hoed and slept with naked bodies.’
- b. sit mómún fɪŋ-kó **bàf-bí** fwi
 person spirit past-ADV make-3PL.SBJ.PFV beer
ún-bá kòónó
 add-3PL.SBJ.PFV pot
 ‘In the past, local prophets made beer and added it to the pot.’

The perfective may also be used to describe habitual activities, as in example (45). These two sentences are taken from texts that describe the present lifestyle of the people.

- (45) a. **kap-mi** gɛɛnde
 hang-1PL.SBJ.PFV beehives
 ma **tɔp-mi** tam
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ take out-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV honey
 ‘We hang beehives (and) we take out honey.’
- b. **p’éénz-mì** sómum p’áz-ma ken
 take.out-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV corn soak-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV like.this
 ‘We strip corn and we soak it like this.’

(b) Imperfective. In its latter use discussed above, the perfective overlaps with the imperfective, which may also be used for narrative sequences. This is illustrated in example (46), which is taken from a text describing how honey is collected from a tree.

- (46) wàl-kwám á ná **á-ná-kì** úne úúgú
 child-father GEN 1SG.POSS IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-put into gourd
 ‘My brother puts it into the gourd.’

Sometimes, the imperfective is used to interject a comment in a text that uses the perfective throughout, as in the sentences in example (47), which seem to function as parenthetical comments in their respective texts.

- (47) a. gìdè p'á-mè-p'á
 when dance-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFB-RED
 á-mè-yì-yìs t'wà zìzínjí
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-circle-RED mouth fence
 'When we dance, we circle around the compound fence.'
- b. à-bì-tí màn sùyà sùyà sùyà
 IPFV-3PL.SBJ.IPFV-give children two two two
 'They give two children (to each chief, or two per family?).'

Many questions remain about the distinctions between the tenses. None of the verb conjugations described in Zelealem (2005:10–13) could be identified in the narratives used in this study.

11.3 Negation. Negation is accomplished by means of a negative verb, which is always inflected for subject. The forms of the negative auxiliary are listed in Table 15 along with the free subject pronouns for comparison.

Table 15. Negative verb.

Person	Negative verb	SBJ/OBJ pronouns
1SG	dá-gá	ga
2SG	dé-bí	ik
3MSG	dé-bí	uhay
3FSG	dá-báb	hap
1PL.EXCL	dá-má	ma
1PL.INCL	dé-mé	mεεne
2PL	dá-búm	um
3PL	dá-bún	hun

Note the vowel harmony as [á] becomes [é] before a front vowel. This is not a hard and fast rule, however, as the form *dê-bùn* is also attested (see example (7) above). Note also that the High tone on the forms as given here is from the paradigm as given in isolated form. In actual textual data, the tones may vary, as in example (54).

As illustrated in example (48), the negative verb is always the first in a series of verbs and carries the subject inflection. It never takes an object suffix. Time setting for negative clauses needs to be determined from the context or some time-reference such as the adverb *ſiŋkɔ* ‘in the past’ in example (b).

- (48) a. t’wa gozom **da-ma** aya
 language Amhara NEG-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.NEG know
 ‘The Amhara language we did not know.’
- b. i-bírò **dá-bùn** jè má-bàába ſiŋ-kɔ
 FOC-office NEG-3PL.SBJ.NEG know PL-father past-ADV
 ‘Our fathers did not know offices in the past (lit. Offices they did not know our fathers in the past).’

Imperatives use a different negative verb, *bilgí*, which is discussed below.

11.4 Imperatives. The singular imperative is an unaffixed verb form. Some verbs form their (singular) imperative by means of reduplication, as with *ſú-ſí* ‘bring’ in example (49).

- (49) **ſú-ſí** nà tí-yà k’áf ù-wál-kwán
 bring-IMP goat give-3MSG.OBJ to SGV-child-father
 ‘Bring a goat and give it to (your) brother.’

Plural imperatives are formed with the addition of the prefix *mí-* as in *mí-gùgùs* ‘run (PL)!’ in example (50). (The prefix is possibly the 2PL imperfective form.) Note that in this example, following Zelealem (2005:19), we would have expected to find the form *mí-gùs-a-gùs* with what he calls a “linking element *a*.” Possibly, *mí-gù-gùs* is a contracted form.

- (50) gǐdè ʃi-mí gàyá **mí-gù-gùs**
 when see-2PL.SBJ.PFV Oromo IMP.PL-run-RED
 ‘When you (PL) see Oromos [ethnic group], run (away)!’

In the imperative, negation is indicated with the verb *bilgí*, as illustrated in Table 16. In the plural, the prefix *mí-* is affixed to the negative verb root and not the main verb. It appears that in the negative imperative, the verb is never reduplicated.

Table 16. Negative imperative.

Negative verb		Main verb	Gloss
Subject	Root		
	bilgí	zè	‘Don’t sit! (SG)’
mí-	bilgí	zè	‘Don’t sit! (PL)’

The hortative (“let’s...”) consists of the first person inclusive plural prefix *ni-* followed by the verb root, as shown in example (51).

- (51) hǒ **ni-tuta** hǒ
 come 1PL.INCL.SBJ.IPFV-return go
 ‘Come. Let’s return and go (home).’

11.5 Verb ‘to have.’ The verb ‘to have’ is *s’it*, which is usually followed by a subject marker, as shown in example (52). Zelealem (2005:14) claims that this is a personal affix only, not inflected for tense, but it appears that this is actually the perfective suffix.

- (52) **s’it-ni** kí-k-yáta swíyá éè
 have-3MSG.SBJ.PFV CLF-person-female two INTER
 gí màn kùbá-swíyá
 and children five-two
 ‘He has two wives and seven children.’

Note the alternative and synonymous expression in (53), which uses an existential verb rather than the verb ‘to have.’

- (53) mǎn á na zè-bí kùpá sènè
 children GEN 1SG.POSS be-3PL.SBJ.PFV five one
 ‘I have six children (lit. My children, they are six).’

Note, however, that this example comes from a text by a speaker whose first language is Komo and may, therefore, be a translation from Komo. This is something that will need to be checked with native speakers of Gwama. Unfortunately, Burns (1947) does not describe the structure of the verb ‘to have’ in his notes on the grammar of Komo.

As with other verbs following the negative auxiliary, the verb ‘to have’ is uninflected when negated, as shown in example (54). Negation is marked on the auxiliary instead.

- (54) éém dà-mà s’it
 ox NEG-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.NEG have
 ‘Oxen we don’t have.’

See example (94) below for an uninflected form of the verb ‘to have’ in an adjectival clause.

11.6 Reduplication. A common feature of Gwama verbs, reduplication is triggered by a number of factors. As discussed in section 4.2 (d) above, passive voice is formed by reduplicating the verb root separated by the passive affix. Furthermore, as shown in section 11.4, some verbs form their imperative by reduplicating the root. Another function of reduplication is to indicate attributes that in English would be expressed as adjectives, as shown in example (55).

- (55) gumunə seene twi-be néjè kǎnz-ní-kanza
 other one call-3PL.SBJ-PFV stone be.red-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘The other one they call “red stone (lit. the stone is red).”’

Note that like “regular” adjectives (see section 8 above), this “verbal adjective” also follows the noun it modifies.

Zelealem (2005:11–12) indicates that reduplication is also used to mark certain verb conjugations, including the present and past continuous. While the verb form bears little resemblance to that given for the past continuous in Zelealem (2005:12), this may explain the use of reduplication for the verbs that are highlighted in example (56).

- (56) a. gide **kwè-bí-kwè** kwé if-bí
 when hoe-3PL.SBJ.PFV-hoe hoe sleep-3PL.SBJ.PFV
 gì yís zíyán-kò
 with body naked-ADJ
 ‘When they hoed [or: while they were hoeing], they hoed and slept with naked bodies.’

- b. gidè **p’á-mé-p’á**
 when dance-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 tòòt-bé kó **kwif-bé-kwif**
 take-3PL.SBJ.PFV put skin-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘While we are dancing, they take [the tiger] and put it down and skin it.’

Reduplication may have other functions as well, such as indicating repeated action as in example (57) for frying corn (a) and for taking out scoops of honey from a beehive (b).

- (57) a. àtémá **t’ò-t’òf**
 then 1PL.EXCL.SBJ RED-fry
 ‘Then we fry it (i.e., the corn).’

- b. gìdà má m̀è-k'òpè t'wí
 when 1PL.EXCL.SBJ 1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-cut widen
 b̀ò tàm í-yàs zé tàm-í
 hole honey LOC-place be honey-REL
á-m̀è-t̀ópè-t̀ópéé
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-take.out-RED
 'When we have cut to widen the honey hole in the place where the honey
 is, we take it out.'

Similarly, in example (58), reduplication may be used to indicate actions performed by multiple agents.

- (58) a. bààdéní gìdà zè-gí má-sàkò
 after when live-3PL.SBJ.PFV PL-grandfather
 k̀èèr-k̀ò s̀it-à s'í-s'í ùbù má-à
 past-ADV person-PL die-RED village 1PL.EXCL.POSS-?
 'When our grandfathers lived in the past, people of our village died.'
- b. mà-bàábá gìdà **h̀im-bí-h̀im** ɸin-k̀ò
 PL-father when quarrel-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED past-ADV
 'when our fathers quarreled in the past'

That reduplication is at least partly a stylistic matter is evident from example (59), which presents two nearly identical clauses from the same text. In both clauses the initial verb in the expression 'began to wear' is reduplicated. However, only in (a) is the main verb 'wear' reduplicated while in (b), which immediately follows (a) in the text, the same verb is not reduplicated.

- (59) a. kú sú-sú **wé-bí-wé** óóyò
 3PL.SBJ? begin-RED wear-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED clothes
 'They began to wear clothes.'

- b. *ina sú-sú wé-bí òóyó*
 mothers begin-RED wear-3PL.SBJ.PFV clothes
 ‘Mothers began to wear clothes.’

Example (60) presents a similar contrast between two instances of the same verb which is reduplicated on one occasion and not reduplicated later on in the text.

- (60) a. **kú-mà-kú**
 carry-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘We carry it (i.e., firewood).’
- b. **kú-mà** *úúp*
 carry-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV head
 ‘We carry on our head.’

A possible explanation is that reduplication is used to highlight the action of the verb itself.

As is evident from this discussion of verb reduplication, further investigation is required. For the related language Komo, Burns mentions reduplication in that language as used “in some contexts” for continuous action as well as to indicate “something done for no reason – ‘just doing it’” (Burns 1947:22).

11.7 Copula. A copula is not normally used, as shown in example (61).

- (61) [*túl a nàs*] [*késè̀r_{SC}*]
 place GEN 1SG.POSS Keser
 ‘My place is Keser.’

However, in the case of locatives, the personal subject pronoun functions something like a copula, as shown in example (62).

- (62) [*ú-s'ítézés'ítè̀s*] *ǰě hày* [*swí_{SC}*]
 SGV-corpse also 3MSG.SBJ house
 ‘The corpse also is in the house (lit. The corpse also he house).’

12. Verb phrases

12.1 Converb and finite verb. A common feature in Gwama grammar—and one which it shares with other Afroasiatic and Nilo-Saharan languages in northeastern Africa (see Amha and Dimmendaal 2006:394)—is the presence of converbs. These non-finite verb forms appear as part of a series of closely related verbs in which only the last (or in some instances, as will be discussed below, the first) verb carries a pronominal marker indicating person, number, and tense/aspect. While converbs may be reduplicated, they lack the pronominal affix(es). Converbs are used in two different situations in Gwama.

(a) Consecutive converbs. In the first situation, the converb and main verb constitute a series of sequential actions arranged in temporal order—what Hetzron calls the “consecutive” function of converbs (Hetzron 1972:99–100, as quoted in Amha and Dimmendaal 2006:412). This is the situation described in Zelealem (2005:31) as sentences that lack “connectives” and where a converb precedes the main verb. “In such constructions,” he says, “the action performed first appears preceding the action that follows” (Zelealem 2005:31).

Example (63) illustrates this situation. In (a) the two actions are ‘hoe’ and ‘sleep’; the first is a converb while the second (probably intended as happening subsequently) is a finite verb that carries the pronominal suffix. In (b) the two actions are ‘bring’ and ‘put.’ Again, the verbs appear in the order that mirrors the sequence of actions in real life.

(63) a. gide kwè-bí-kwè kwé ìf-bí
 when hoe-3PL.SBJ.PFV-hoe hoe sleep-3PL.SBJ.PFV
 gì yís zíyán-kò
 with body naked-ADJ
 ‘When they hoed, they hoed and slept with naked bodies.’

b. úp é dé tótó kò-mé t’wà zìzínjí
 head GEN 3MSG.POSS bring put-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV mouth fence
 ‘We bring its (i.e., the pig’s) head and put it on the compound fence.’

Note that rather than “main verb” (the term used in Zelealem 2005:31), it may be more accurate to use the term “finite verb” since the two actions seem to be equally significant. The translations in Zelealem (2005:31, his example (19)), which express the converb by means of a participle (as in ‘having drunk,’ indeed give the impression that the finite verb is more in focus but this may not be entirely accurate.

Two converbs may precede a finite verb, as illustrated in example (64). Note in this example that while the second converb is reduplicated (which may be lexically determined), only the final verb is inflected with the pronominal affix.

- (64) **hò tò-tò kò-bé** iyisá kòfì nyá òyè páŋ
 come take-RED put-3PL.SBJ.PFV body skin goat clothes without
 ‘They come and take the body and put it on the goat skin without clothes.’

In addition to the actions being sequential, the finite verb may also express the *purpose* of the action described by the converb. This is illustrated in example (65). Sometimes the finite verb contains a prefix *a-* indicating purpose. It is not clear why this prefix is absent in (a).

- (65) a. **mà jě kwèy jáf-mì**
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ also hoe eat-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV
 gí gàáfá mà-bàbá
 with hoe PL-father
 ‘We also hoe in order to eat, with a hoe like our fathers.’
- b. **waŋu hò a-tòt-ni** sum-te
 fox come PURP-take-3MSG.SBJ.PFV meat-the
 ‘The fox came in order to take the meat.’

Note further in (a) above that the prepositional phrase follows the finite verb though it modifies the converb. This confirms that the converb and finite verb constitute a tight syntactic structure. In example (66), however, the converb and finite verb are separated by a subject noun.

- (66) gità hǒǒ wàp' já-ná-fàá
 when come pig eat-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED
 kàp-mì jín à mà
 take-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV spear GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 'When a pig comes to eat (lit. comes and eats), we take our spear.'⁹

Further research is needed to see whether there are any restrictions on what may separate the converb(s) and finite verb.

(b) Coextensive converbs. There is also a second situation in which converbs are used, one which does not fall into the category described by Zelealem (2005:31) as one action preceding another action. Hetzron uses the term "coextensive" to refer to a group of functions for such converbs.

One coextensive function is a converb that is "governed" by the lexical nature of the finite verb. This is the case in example (67) with 'begin to wear' (lit. 'begin and wear') in (a) and 'eat completely' (lit. 'eat and finish') in (b). These may have become idiomatic expressions.

- (67) a. ina sú-sú wé-bí òyó
 mothers begin-RED wear-3PL.SBJ.PFV clothes
 'Mothers began to wear clothes (lit. Mothers began and wear clothes).'
- b. gí jín-kó s'í gǐdè já k'ú-ní sàmún
 in past-ADV rat when eat finish-3MSG.SBJ.PFV corn
 'In the past, when rats ate all the corn (lit. ate and finished the corn)...'

In this case it is clear that the converb and finite verb do not indicate a series of actions in temporal sequence but one in which the two verbs refer to one united action.

Another non-sequential function of converbs is one where the actions described by the converb and the finite verb are actually meant to be understood as being

⁹ This interpretation assumes that the verb is uninflected. Compare the form of the verb *hǒǒ* with the verb *hò* in the next example. This needs to be checked.

simultaneous rather than sequential. This may be the case in example (68) with the verbs ‘go’ and ‘look for.’

- (68) má gwàmá gídà hòò-mì k’áf
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama when go-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV to
 tòp tám-í hò fǎá-mà swáyá
 drink honey-REL go look.for-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV tree
 ‘We Gwama, when we go to collect honey, we go and look for a tree (or: we go while looking for a tree?).’

Unfortunately, this example is ambiguous whether the converb *hò* ‘go’ refers to the action of leaving or of walking along. The same is true in the following example which can be interpreted as being either sequential or simultaneous.

- (69) máyò hò kès-bá idágà gwàmá
 Bertha come enter-3PL.SBJ.PFV among Gwama
 ‘The Bertha came and entered (or: came while entering) among the Gwama.’

Less ambiguous examples need to be found to verify whether Gwama converbs can in fact be used for simultaneous actions.

(c) Converb-final constructions. Another exception to the rule stated in Zelealem (2005:31) quoted above (namely that converbs precede “main,” or finite, verbs) concerns imperfective verbs. With such verbs, the order of the verbs is reversed. In example (70) the finite verb occurs first followed by the uninflected converb. Note that in both (a) and (b), the finite verb carries the pronominal prefix while the converb is uninflected. In (a) the finite verb is also marked with the imperfective aspect marker; in (b) this marker has possibly dropped following the pronoun *má* and might appear in slow speech. Both (a) and (b) are examples of consecutive converbs.

- (70) a. gídà ìsá-mà-ìs
 when come.down-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
á-mè-tótá **fám** èdídíf
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-return look.for new
 ‘When we have come down, we go back and look for a new (tree).’
- b. gídà má **mè-k’òpè** **t’wí** b̀ò
 when 1PL.EXCL.SBJ 1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-cut widen hole
 tàm í-yàs zé tàm-í á-mè-tópètópèé
 honey in-place be honey-REL IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-take.out-RED
 ‘When we cut and widen the honey hole in the place where the honey is,
 we take it out.’

Further data will be needed to verify whether the order finite verb followed by converb always appears with imperfective verbs, and whether this can happen with other verbs as well.

(d) Converbs with direct objects. An object noun phrase may either follow or precede the converb–finite verb construction, as shown in example (67). (The verb phrase is bolded and the object marked with brackets.)

- (71) a. gèté **h̀ò fám-ní** [kùlfí]
 when go look.for-3MSG.SBJ.PFV safety.pin
 ‘When he goes to look for the safety pin,’
- b. idóónó [kwò]í ñyá-té **h̀ò síkín-bà** tát b̀ò
 there skin goat-the go lay-3PL.SBJ.PFV in hole
 ‘There the goat skin they go and lay in the hole.’

In line with the standard SVO word order of the language, the post-verb phrase position may be considered the default position while the pre-verb phrase position is likely a focus position.

(e) **Non-converb constructions.** Instead of a converb and a finite verb, a series of actions may also be expressed by means of separate clauses containing finite verbs. In this case, the actions appear to be less closely connected than the situations described above involving a converb. This also appears to be the standard format when the verbs have different objects as in example (72).

- (72) **kap-mi** gɛɛnde ma
 hang-1PL.SBJ.PFV beehives 1PL.EXCL.SBJ
tɔp-mi tam
 take out-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV honey
 ‘We hang beehives (and) we take out honey.’

In all instances of converbs in the data, the subject of the converb and of the finite verb are identical. Further data will be needed to see whether converbs can also be used with different subjects.

The reason for choosing a finite verb versus a converb is not always obvious. In example (73), a finite verb is used initially where a converb might be expected.

- (73) a. **tɔd-ní** úg tàm té-nà-té
 take-3MSG.SBJ.PFV container honey give-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘He takes a container of honey (and) he gives it to him.’
- b. **tɔ̀̀t-bé** kó kwɪf-bé-kwɪfɪ
 take-3PL.SBJ.PFV put skin-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘They take (the tiger’s body) and put it down and skin it.’

Further analysis on a discourse level will be needed to fully describe the conditions for casting a sentence in the form of a finite-finite or a converb–finite construction.

12.2 Auxiliary plus main verb. A second type of verb phrase, and one which in some ways resembles the converb–finite verb construction, involves the sequence of an auxiliary and a main verb. Like the converb–finite verb constructions discussed above, the auxiliary and main verbs also have the same subject. In this case, however, the first verb acts only as a carrier of grammatical information and has lost any

lexical meaning it may have had before. Auxiliaries include the negative auxiliary and the verb *tí*.

(a) Negative verb. The negative construction consists of the negative verb followed by an uninflected main verb. It is illustrated in example (74). Note that the negative verb in this example is followed by two uninflected verbs. (The auxiliary and main verbs are marked by brackets and the negative auxiliary is bolded.)

- (74) òyá méntèé gó háy gó háy
 3MSG.SBJ?¹⁰ also and 3MSG.SBJ and 3MSG.SBJ
 [dèè-bè tuta s'it] bàrà-gàrà¹¹ tánì pàṅ
 NEG-3MSG.SBJ.NEG return have enmity other no
 'He_i also, he_i and he_{ii} no longer have enmity (lit. He_i also, he_i and he_{ii} does not return to have no other enmity).'

(b) *tí*- verb. A second type of auxiliary is the verb *tí* (whose literal meaning is 'give'). In this case, too, the first verb is an inflected auxiliary while the second verb is an uninflected main verb. It is illustrated in example (75). Note that this auxiliary is used with an intransitive verb, 'dance,' in example (a), and with a transitive verb, 'dilute,' in (b).

- (75) a. àtà má [tí-mà-gé p'á]
 then 1PL.EXCL.SBJ give-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-? dance
 'Then we dance.'
- b. atɛ pàyi-b ú-fwí-tè [tí-bé-gé t'òp]
 then dilute-3PL.SBJ.PFV SGV-beer-the give-3PL.SBJ.PFV-? drink
 'Then they dilute the beer and drink.'

This auxiliary consists of the root *tí* 'give' followed by the subject suffix (which agrees with the subject of the main verb) and a final suffix *-gé*, which remains

¹⁰ The meaning of the word *òyá* is unclear. If it's an alternative form for the third person masculine singular, it is curious that in the same sentence the word *háy* is used.

¹¹ The word *bàrà-gàrà* is an Oromo loanword.

constant. The suffix does not appear to be the *-ga/-gi* particle mentioned in Zelealem (2005:12), meaning past action, as it is used in texts describing habitual rather than past actions. It may, however, be a variant of the coordinating particle *gi*.

Note that the verb *ti* may be used by itself as the main verb of a clause with the literal meaning ‘give,’ as in example (76). As seen in (a), even as the main verb it may contain the suffix *-ge*.

- (76) a. *gidi halak-ni-ma* u-yεεεε
 when create-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-1PL.EXCL.OBJ.SGVS_{GV}-God
tii-ni-ma-ge t’wa
 give-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-1PL.EXCL.OBJ? language
meŋe uwe
 1PL.INCL.POSS this
 ‘When God created us, He gave us this our language.’¹²

- b. ***tí-mà*** púfdúf
 give-1PL.EXCL.OBJ tied.cotton
 ‘Give us tied cotton.’

While as an auxiliary the *ti* verb carries grammatical information, other, discourse-related functions for the auxiliary are not ruled out. The auxiliary plus uninflected verb appears to be synonymous with the inflected finite verb, as shown in example (77). The clause in (a) appears to be synonymous with the adverbial clause in (b), which immediately follows it in the narrative.

- (77) a. *tí-mà-gá* tòp’
 give-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-3MSG.OBJ drink
 ‘We drink.’
- b. *tòp’-mà* dòŋfi kwé-mà-kwé dòɔnò
 drink-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV after hoe-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED there
 ‘After we drink, we hoe there.’

¹² The final part of the translation is tentative. It is not clear whether *uwe* is a variant of *ute*. In addition, the expected genitive marker *a* is missing before the pronoun.

One possibility is that the auxiliary actually has the meaning ‘all’ so that (a) could be translated as ‘we all drink.’

Although the *ti* construction also occurs in narratives from native Gwama speakers, it may be significant that it occurs most frequently in the Gwama texts produced by the speakers whose first language is Komo. Zelealem (2005) does not discuss this particular auxiliary.

13. Noun phrases

Noun phrases are head-initial. This section discusses the position of various modifiers.

The genitive construction consists of a head noun followed by a genitive marker and a possessive pronoun, noun, or noun phrase. This is illustrated in example (78). (The noun phrases are marked by brackets and the genitive construction is bolded.)

- (78) àté [kwám **á wàl**] gù [kúm **á wàl**
 then father GEN child and mother GEN child
 tí-bé-gé k’à
 give-3PL.SBJ.PFV-? eat
 ‘Then the father of the child and the mother of the child eat.’

A noun may be modified by another noun without any derivational marking, as shown in example (79). Here again, the modifier *wàp* ‘bride’ follows the head noun *fwi* ‘beer.’

- (79) [fwi **wàp**] kò-bá-kò
 beer bride call-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘They call it bride beer.’

This may be an example of what Zelealem (2005:29) calls a “source genitive” (such as ‘cloth of cotton’ and ‘house of mud’) which does not require an overt genitive marker. The meaning might then be that the beer was prepared by the bride (something that is not clear from the text itself).

If both an adjective and a numeral occur, the numeral follows the adjective, as illustrated in example (80). Further data with numbers above ‘one’ is needed to substantiate this conclusion.

- (80) ù-sít àséénè kwá-ní húnù [ù-št **gàátá** **séénè**]
 SGV-person one do-3MSG.SBJ-PFV sick SGV-person old one
 ‘if a person—one old person—gets sick’

Note that the numeral follows a modifying noun, just as it follows an adjective, as shown in example (81). In the two noun phrases (marked with brackets), the numeral *sééné* ‘one’ (bolded) follows the modifying noun *kíkizà* ‘male person’ and *kíkíyàtà* ‘female person.’

- (81) á-ní-s’ít à-té [wál kí-kí-zà
 IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-catch PURP-give child CLF-person-male
sééné] gí [wàl kí-kí-yàtà **sééné**]
 one and child CLF-person-female one
 ‘They catch in order to give one boy and one girl (lit. He catches to give one male child and one female child).’¹³

The head noun may also be modified by a verb or relative clause, as illustrated in example (82). Note that the relative clause (bolded) follows the genitive construction in the noun phrase (marked with brackets). (The relative clause also contains a genitive construction.)

- (82) àtà má tí-mà-gé p’á
 then 1PL.EXCL.SBJ give-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-? dance
 [ú-díìn á mà **jà k’úún s’iyàn á má**]
 SGV-enemy GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSSeat finish grain GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 ‘Then we dance (because of) our enemy, who ate and finished our grain.’

¹³ People in the past had to give a male and female child to the local chief as tax for living on his land.

The demonstrative pronoun or clitic occurs at the end of the noun phrase, as shown in example (83). Here the demonstrative pronoun *àté* follows the numeral.

- (83) a. gide má-k'à [mán swúya **àté**]
 when PST-eat children two those.F
 'when those two children have eaten'
- b. idóónó [kwòjĩ ñyá-**àté**] hò síkín-bà tát bò
 there skin goat-this go lay-3PL.SBJ.PFV in hole
 'There this goat skin they go and lay in the hole.'

14. Main clauses

14.1 Word order. Word order in Gwama is flexible. However, most often the object follows the verb as in (84).

- (84) dàz-bí dà?
 grind-3PL.SBJ.PFV butter
 'They grind butter.'

With an overt subject pronoun or noun phrase, the standard word order is SVO, as in example (85).

- (85) [u-kalawandi_S] [k'we kɔ-ni_V] [bo_O]
 SGV-squirrel makes dig-3MSG.SBJ.PFV hole
 'The squirrel dug a hole.'

Order is flexible, however, as seen in example (86), where the constituent order is SOV.

- (86) [gàyá_S] [ábù_O] [s'it-à k'á-k'á_V]
 Oromo 2PL.OBJ catch-? eat-RED
 'Oromo will catch you and eat you.'

It is also possible to bring the object into focus by having it switch places with the subject, as shown in example (87). The word order of this clause is OVS.

- (87) [i-bírò₀] [dá-bùn [jè̃v] [má-bàába_s] jɪŋ-kɔ
 FOC-office NEG-3PL.SBJ.NEG know PL-father past-ADV
 ‘Our fathers did not know offices in the past (lit. Offices they did not know our fathers in the past).’

14.2 Locative obliques. Sometimes the exact relationship of a noun and a verb can be determined only from context, as is the case in the clauses in example (88) (the locatives are bolded). Possibly, this applies only to physical locations.

- (88) a. ás’é zè-bí **yàs**
 pay live-3PL.SBJ.PFV land
 ‘They paid and lived on the land.’
- b. gìdè pwòòf-bá t’òòmó kò-bé **gàbàrà**
 when reach-3PL.SBJ.PFV house put-3PL.SBJ.PFV chair
 ‘When they reach home they put it on a chair.’

14.3 Coordination. Two noun phrases may be coordinated with the particle *gì* (or its allomorph *gù*) as in the clauses in (89).

- (89) a. tó-tót kàp-ní úg [tãm ásè̀̀n] **gì** [nà]
 return-RED take-3MSG.SBJ.PFV container honey one and goat
 ‘He returns and takes one container of honey and a goat.’
- b. s’ít-ni [kí-k-yáta swíyá] é̀̀é̃
 have-3MSG.SBJ.PFV CLF-person-female two INTER
gí [màn kùbá-swíyá]
 and children five-two
 ‘He has two wives and seven children.’

15. Complex sentences

15.1 Adverbial clauses. An adverbial clause is usually introduced with a temporal conjunction. The most common conjunction is *gìdè* (or some variation of this, such as *gìdà* or *gìtè*) ‘when.’ Contrary to the impression given in Zelealem (2005:25), the usual position of the conjunction is the beginning of the clause, as in (90). The conjunction is bolded and the adverbial clause marked with brackets.

- (90) a. [**gìdè** ʃi-mí gàyá] mí-gù-gùs
 when see-2PL.SBJ.PFV Oromo IMP.PL-run-RED
 ‘When you (PL) see Oromos, run (away)!’
- b. [**gide** ís sàmún òbù màá]
 when ripe corn village 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 púnt’-má kò-kò-má swúy é-lògún
 cut-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV put-RED-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV house on-wall
 ‘When the corn is ripe in our village, we cut it and put it in (our) house on
 the wall.’

The adverbial conjunction also appears in non-initial position, as shown in (91). Note that in this position it may be preceded not only by the subject in (a) (as noted in Zelealem 2005:25), but also by the object in (b). Furthermore, in (a) it is also preceded by an adverbial phrase.

- (91) a. gí ʃiŋ-kó [s’í **gìdè** ʃá k’ú-ní sàmún]
 in past-ADV rat when eat finish-3MSG.SBJ.PFV corn
 sìt-á má-sàkó má-íkàkà hó
 person-PL PL-grandfather PL-grandmother go
 sò-bí k’ònzí ʃá
 dig-3PL.SBJ.PFV root eat
 ‘In the past, when rats ate all the corn, people—(our) grandfathers and
 grandmothers—went and dug (bamboo) root and ate it.’

- b. [ùùzéé **gìdè** k'úf-bè-k'úf] á-bé-tw
 animals when kill-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED IPFV-1PL.SBJ.IPFV-call
 sí't-a bε-tòòtítòò-tò
 person-PL 3PL.SBJ.IPFV-take-RED¹⁴
 'When they kill animals, they call people to take (the animals).'

Example (92) shows another conjunction, *bilé*, also translated 'when,' in second position.¹⁵

- (92) má gwàmá **bilé** zèè-má
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama when live-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV
 tát wàwàn éyě kwéé-me síyàná
 in grass hut cultivate-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV grain
 'We Gwama, when we lived in grass huts, we cultivated grain.'

The non-initial position for the conjunction is commonly employed in introductory statements of a text. The initial phrase introduces the topic of the story. Thus, rather than interpreting the *conjunction* as having moved, it is more appropriate to see the *subject or object noun* as having moved to the beginning of the clause, before the adverbial conjunction, in order to bring it into focus as the topic of the text.

Relative clauses often end with the relative marker *-i*. Compare the two clauses in example (93). The main clause is given in (a); the relative clause is given in the first part of (b). The two clauses are identical except for the relative marker at the end of the adverbial clause in (b).

- (93) a. ù-sééné bà-pí búgúnè úp
 SGV-one circle-3PL.SBJ.PFV aroundhead
 'They circle one (chicken) around the (person's) head.'

¹⁴ An imperfective prefix *a-* would be expected on this verb. Likely, it has merged with the suffix *a-* on the preceding noun.

¹⁵ This conjunction may refer to a more remote past. It is used by the same speaker who uses *gìdè* elsewhere (even in the same text), which does not rule out the possibility of its being a synonym or a borrowed word.

- b. gídè bà-pí búgúnè úp-í
 when circle-3PL.SBJ.PFV around head-REL
 ù-séén ǰè-bé-ǰè
 SGV-one slaughter-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘When they circle one (chicken) around the (person’s) head, they slaughter
 the other one.’

From a discourse perspective, the example above also demonstrates the use that is made of adverbial clauses in narratives. Often the information is presented first by way of a main clause and then repeated in the form of an adverbial clause, as a means of creating text cohesion.

15.2 Adjectival clauses. Just like an adjective, an adjectival clause follows the noun it modifies, as in example (94). The adjectival clause has been marked with brackets.

- (94) a. átè beteseb sít-á [s’ít gà Bungul Demis
 those relatives person-PL have 1SG.SBJ Bungul Demis
 gi ítùr késèr]
 in town Keser
 ‘These relatives are the people that I, Bungul Demis, have in the town of
 Keser.’
- b. tútú kútóbóó s’é yàgàs séénò swáyá sèene
 return cut ear leaf one tree one
 [púyúǰ kò-pá-kò]
 tree.SP call-3PL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 ‘They return and cut one leaf of a tree they call the *puyush* tree.’

Note in (a) above that rather than an inflected verb, we find an uninflected verb followed by the free pronoun (c.f. example (52) above). In (b) the object precedes the verb. Both of these features may be specific to adjectival clauses. This will need to be checked against additional data.

Abbreviations

?	Meaning unknown/uncertain	M	Masculine
1	first person	NEG	Negative
2	second person	OBJ	Object
3	third person	PASS	Passive
ACC	Accusative	PFV	Perfective
ADV	Adverb	PL	Plural
CLF	Classifier	POSS	Possessive
DAT	Dative	PST	Past
EXCL	Exclusive	PURP	Purposive
F	Feminine	RED	Reduplication
FOC	Focus	REL	Relativizer
GEN	Genitive	SBJ	Subject
IMP	Imperative	SC	Subject Complement
INCL	Inclusive	SG	Singular
INTER	Interjection	SGV	Singulative
IPFV	Imperfective		

Appendix: Texts

(1) Hunting wild pigs

1. **má gwàmá bílé zèè-má tát wàwàn éyé**
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama when live-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV in grass hut
kwéé-mε síyáná
 cultivate-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV grain
 ‘When we Gwama lived in grass huts, we cultivated grain.’

2. **gità hóò wàp'** **jà-ná-jàá kàp-mì**
 when come pig eat-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED take-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV
ǰín à mà
 spear GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 'When a pig comes and eats, we take our spear.'
3. **tí-mágá** **t'óòhò** **één** **súgúm**
 creep-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV? slowly at night
 'We creep slowly at night.'
4. **gità kààm-é-kààm** **méé**
 When find-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED 1PL.EXCL.SBJ
 sò-mé-sò
 spear-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 'When we find (it, i.e., the pig) we spear (it).'
5. **gìdà gùs-ní-gùs-íí** **gí ót-kó**
 When run-3MSG.SBJ.PFV-RED-REL in morning-ADV
à-nà-twí **mání gwà** **à nà**
 IPFV-1SG.SBJ.IPFV-call children brother GEN 1SG.POSS
táb-áǰí **ú-wàp**
 follow-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV see SGV-pig
 'When it runs, in the morning, I call my brothers and we follow the pig and see it.'
6. **só-ní-gé** **gì sùgùn**
 spear-1SG.SBJ.PFV-3MSG.OBJ at night
 'I spear it at night.'

7. **gìtè** **ùù** **táp-mè-táp** **én zìirí**
 when ? follow-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED in morning
tàb-à **kófí-mè-kófí**
 follow-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV kill-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
p'á-mè-p'á
 dance-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
 'When we track it in the morning, we follow and kill it and we dance.'
8. **gìdè** **p'á-mè-p'á** **á-mè-yìyìs**
 when dance-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-circle
t'wà **zìzìíjí**
 mouth fence
 'When we dance, we circle around the compound fence.'
9. **úp** **é** **dé** **tòtò** **kò-mé** **t'wà** **zìzìíjí**
 head GEN 3MSG.POSS bring put-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV mouth fence
 'We bring its head and put it on the compound fence.'
10. **àtà** **má** **tí-mà-gé** **p'á** **ú-dîn**
 then 1PL.EXCL.SBJ give-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-? dance SGV-enemy
á **mà** **jà** **k'úún** **s'íyàn** **á** **má**
 GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSSeat finish grain GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSS
 'Then we dance because of our enemy who ate and finished our grain.'
11. **àtè** **gélè** **mìnà** **gí** **tà-mà** **mà-báàbá**
 that ? ? work leave.behind-1PL.EXCL.OBJ PL-father
àtè **gélè**
 that ?
 'That is the work our fathers left behind for us.'

(2) Collecting wild honey

1. **má gwàmá gídà hòò-mì k'áf**
 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama when go-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV to
tòp tám-í hò jáá-mà swáyá
 drink honey-REL go look.for-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV tree
 'We Gwama, when we go to collect honey, we go and look for a tree.'
2. **i-zíy é máá wí-màà wús swáyá**
 PL-eye GEN 1PLPOSS look-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV up tree
 'We look at the tree (lit. Our eyes we look up the tree).'
3. **gídà kàm-é kúm tám-í twí-nó**
 when find-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV bees honey-REL call-1SG.SBJ.PFV
wàl-kwá wè-yá-wè hò-nì tó� tám
 child-father friend ? come-IMP take honey
 'When we find honey bees, I call my brother, "Friend, come and take honey.'
4. **átè mì-sélé wússíí**
 then 1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-climb up
 'Then we climb up.'
5. **à-mè-kúf gí ànt**
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-blow.smoke with fire
 'We blow smoke with fire.'
6. **wàl-kwám á nà á-ní-ǰí-ǰí sél**
 child-father GEN 1SG.POSS IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-hold-RED climb?
gí gí úúgú gí pans'
 with ? gourd and axe
 'Then my brother holds the gourd and climbs the tree with the gourd and the axe.'

7. **á-mè-gó** **k'òóó**
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-cut cut
 'We cut.'
8. **gìdà má** **mè-k'òpè** **t'wí bò tàm**
 when 1PL.EXCL.SBJ 1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-cut widen hole honey
í-yàs zé tàm-í á-mè-tópètópèé
 in-place be honey-REL IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-take.out-RED
 'When we cut to widen the honey hole in the place where the honey is, we take it out.'
9. **wàl-kwám á ná á-ná-kì úne úúgú**
 child-father GEN 1SG.POSS IPFV-3MSG.SBJ.IPFV-put into gourd
 'My brother puts it into the gourd.'
10. **áté míné gû zè mà gwàmá-tè**
 that ? work be 1PL.EXCL.SBJ Gwama-the
 'That is the work we Gwama do.'
11. **gìdà ìisá-mà-ìis**
 when come.down-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.PFV-RED
á-mè-tótá fám èdídíf
 IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-return look.for new
 'When we have come down, we return and look for a new (tree).'
12. **gida íí úúg á màá á-mè-tútá**
 when fill gourd GEN 1PL.EXCL.POSS IPFV-1PL.EXCL.SBJ.IPFV-return
hò pwàṅ bwá
 go road home
 'When we fill our gourd, we go home.'

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