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## Nominal and Verbal Modification in Gwama

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### 1. Introduction

The Gwama are located in the Mao-Komo special *wäräda* of the Beni Šangul-Gumuz region in Ethiopia. They call themselves Gwama and their language T'wa Gwama (that is, Kwama, T'wa Gwama, ISO 639-3 [kmq]), which literally means 'mouth of Gwama'. It is part of the Koman language family within the larger Nilo-Saharan phylum. Since the Gwama live alongside the Komo and other ethnic groups, which 'are found in scattered enclaves along the Ethio-Sudan border [...] as far South as Gambela',<sup>1</sup> it can be difficult to differentiate them. The precise population size of the Gwama is recorded neither in reports of population nor in housing census documents of Ethiopia. The total size of the Gwama, however, is estimated to be 15,000.<sup>2</sup>

As noted above, the Gwama reside amicably together with other ethnic groups, mainly the Komo, in the same areas and villages.<sup>3</sup> According to language consultants, the Gwama are primarily located in the *qäbälä* Zebsher, Keser, Ya'a Masera, and Lake in the Mao-Komo special *wäräda*. Small communities of Gwama also live in Yangu, Penishüba, Kawi Shumate, and Tongo. This ethnic group is aware of the existence of other Gwama speakers in the Yabus area of Sudan.<sup>4</sup> Ethnologue, in contrast, notes that the language is spoken in 'some villages' located 'south of Asosa to' the Gidaamii *wäräda* in Qeellam Wallaggaa, the Oromia Regional State, 'including one (Yabus) in Sudan'.<sup>5</sup>

The Gwama's livelihood is based on small-scale agriculture, including cultivating maize, haricot beans, and sorghum. However, the majority of them do not produce sufficient agricultural products for annual consumption, so to subsidize their living, they hunt different wild animals, such as *wap* ('warthog'), which

<sup>1</sup> Bender 1983, 260.

<sup>2</sup> Eberhard et al. 2025, <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/kmq/>, accessed on 18 August 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Küspert 2015, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Komo and Gwama localities given according to Otero 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Eberhard et al. 2025, <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/kmq/>, accessed on 18 August 2025; cf. Lewis et al. 2014, <https://www.ethnologue.com/17/language/kmq/>, accessed on 18 August 2025.

they call *im-a b̄aba* ('father's ox'), *ni* ('antelope'), *ʃur̄nk* ('guinea fowl'), etc. They also dig up edible roots (such as *kolam*, 'yam'), collect edible plants (such as *ʃur̄ju*, *pwasʔi*), and produce (or collect) wild honey, etc.

This paper describes modifiers in Gwama, focusing on the use of adjectives, adverbs, and the systemic form of counting numbers. Modifiers are adjuncts to a Noun Phrase (NP) or Verb Phrase (VP).<sup>6</sup> They can be genitives, adjectives, demonstratives, numerals, adverbials, clauses, etc. The major function of such modifiers is to add information to another element in a sentence. Modifiers, thus, impart additional information to the word they modify. In this paper, only single-word modifiers, such as adjectives, adverbs, and numerals, are addressed.

## 2. Methodology

The sources that provide data for this study are native Gwama speakers in the Mao-Komo special *w̄ar̄ada* of the Beni Šangul-Gumuz region. Audiovisual data was collected during fieldwork that occurred from 2015 to 2019. The data consists of a wordlist and texts of various genres. Three male informants of different age groups were mainly involved in the data collection, transcription, and analysis. Different elicitation techniques were employed while collecting the wordlist and transcribing and translating texts; additional illustrations were also requested during this process.

## 3. Noun Modification

Noun modifiers in Gwama consist of other nouns, adjectives, or clauses. Clauses are beyond the scope of the present work. Modifiers appear following the nouns they modify. Modified nouns are followed by an associative morpheme *-á* with high tone. When an underived simple noun functions as a modifier, the possessor noun can be a pronoun (possessive) or another noun in the noun phrase.<sup>7</sup> The structure in (1a) shows a head noun modified by a possessive pronoun, whereas (1b) shows a head noun possessed by another noun. Nouns that appear following the head nouns have the role of pronoun in the possessive function (1a) and of genitival modifier (1b, 1c).<sup>8</sup>

- (1a)
- |             |           |                 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| <i>oj-á</i> | <i>ke</i> | <i>haj-dono</i> |
| cloth-ASC   | 2SG.POSS  | 3SG-there       |
- 'There is your cloth.'

<sup>6</sup> Kroeger 2005, 87; Dryer 2005, 342.

<sup>7</sup> Mütze and Ahland 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Creissels 2017.

(1b)

*póns-á*      *ú-sít*  
 beard-ASC    SGV-person  
 ‘beard of the man’

(1c)

*wal-te-á*              *ú-sítkuj*  
 child-DEF-ASC    SGV-farmer  
 ‘The farmer’s child’

### 3.1. Functions of Adjectives

Adjectives occur as predicates and/or modifiers in a clause. When they function as predicates, reduplication does not occur. Similar to attributive adjectives, predicate adjectives follow the head noun, as in the examples in (2):

(2 a)

*u-pak-e*              *a-t’ot’o*  
 SGV-shoe-this    COP-black  
 ‘This shoe is black.’

(2 b)

*uwe*    *u-sít-i*              *e-p’i*  
 that    SGV-man-DD1    COP-clever  
 ‘That man is clever.’

Adjectives can also modify nouns by suffixing the modification marker *-á*, which is also known as an associative morpheme, on the head noun (3a). When an adjective modifies a noun, it has partial reduplication, which is usually the property of nouns in Gwama.

(3 a)

*sulgand-á*              *t’o-t’ot’o-te*  
 trousers-ASC    RED-black-DEF  
 ‘the black trousers’

(3 b)

*ga*    *ma-n-t’op’*              *ija-a*              *se-sele*  
 I    PFV-1SG-drink    water-ASC    RED-clean  
 ‘I drank clean water.’

In some languages, adjectives form a distinct word class; in others, they do not and their function is represented by forms of verbs or nouns.<sup>9</sup> Adjectives seem to

<sup>9</sup> Dryer 2005.

form an independent word class in some Koman languages, such as Opuo and Uduk.<sup>10</sup> As noted above, adjectives in Gwama mainly appear in clauses as noun modifiers. In the collected texts and elicited sentences, the vowels in the reduplicated forms of modifiers are acoustically identified as an epenthetic vowel /i/.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the first syllable appears reduplicated without vowel change, such as in the example with the monosyllabic adjective *tu* ('tall') in (4):<sup>12</sup>

(4)  
*fufufu-a tu-tu,*  
 grass-ASC RED-tall  
 'tall grass'.

The reduplication process does not obtain in all adjectives in Gwama. For instance, *gafar* ('big') and *gata* ('old') do not follow the pattern, as in the following examples (5):

(5a)  
*u-kan gafar*  
 SGV-dog big  
 'big dog'

(5b)  
*u-sit gata*  
 SGV-person old  
 'old person'.

### 3.1.1. The Categorization of Adjectives

In many languages, adjectives either precede or follow the noun that they modify, and they semantically indicate dimension, age, value, colour, physical property, etc.<sup>13</sup> The semantic categories expressed by Gwama adjectives include colour, age, value, physical property, and the human propensity of the referent. Examples of these six types of semantic categories are as follows:

(6) Dimension

|                 |         |            |         |
|-----------------|---------|------------|---------|
| <i>ha:dniko</i> | 'big'   | <i>tu</i>  | 'high'  |
| <i>warkin</i>   | 'small' | <i>gut</i> | 'short' |

<sup>10</sup> For the former, see Mellese Gelaneh Alemu 2017, 114; for the latter, see Killian 2015, 123.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Goldberg 2018, 16

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Goldberg 2018, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Dixon 2009–2012, II, 73.

Andargachew Getu Gebeyehu

|                        |                      |               |               |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>tindi</i>           | ‘fat, thick’         | <i>jeji</i>   | ‘light’       |
| <i>zinsi</i>           | ‘thin’               | <i>meje</i>   | ‘sharp’       |
| <i>paj</i>             | ‘wide’               | <i>k’at’</i>  | ‘smooth’      |
| <i>zoro/kwi</i>        | ‘deep’               | <i>k’japa</i> | ‘narrow’      |
| <i>duju</i>            | ‘round’              |               |               |
| (7) Colour             |                      |               |               |
| <i>sele</i>            | ‘white’              | <i>zizi</i>   | ‘yellow’      |
| <i>’o’o</i>            | ‘black’              | <i>sisi</i>   | ‘green’       |
| <i>k’af</i>            | ‘red’                | <i>tadus</i>  | ‘blue’        |
| (8) Age                |                      |               |               |
| <i>bwanza</i>          | ‘young (for male)’   |               |               |
| <i>dwa</i>             | ‘young (for female)’ |               |               |
| <i>gata</i>            | ‘old’                |               |               |
| (9) Value              |                      |               |               |
| <i>situlu</i>          | ‘poor’               | <i>no:ko</i>  | ‘good’        |
| <i>sits’it</i>         | ‘rich’               | <i>peti</i>   | ‘bad’         |
| <i>ep’i</i>            | ‘expensive’          | <i>da:ŋa</i>  | ‘wrong’       |
| (10) Physical Property |                      |               |               |
| <i>mis’i</i>           | ‘sweet’              | <i>p’i</i>    | ‘strong’      |
| <i>ifi</i>             | ‘wet’                | <i>ma:za</i>  | ‘weak’        |
| <i>’t’ugu</i>          | ‘sour’               | <i>ùnzú</i>   | ‘dirty’       |
| <i>ka:ga</i>           | ‘bitter’             | <i>s’éré</i>  | ‘clean’       |
| <i>kus’</i>            | ‘dry’                | <i>si:</i>    | ‘heavy’       |
| (11) Human Propensity  |                      |               |               |
| <i>gomga</i>           | ‘kind’               | <i>p’i</i>    | ‘clever’      |
| <i>kana</i>            | ‘selfish’            | <i>kege</i>   | ‘cowardly’    |
| <i>aman</i>            | ‘honest’             | <i>no:ko</i>  | ‘healthy’     |
| <i>jam</i>             | ‘happy’              | <i>p’izi</i>  | ‘intelligent’ |
| <i>piss</i>            | ‘jealous’            | <i>kwaga</i>  | ‘shy’         |

All types of adjectives occur after the noun they modify. When the adjectives are attributive, reduplication of the initial syllable (a consonant followed by a vowel or a vowel alone) is applied from right to left, and the associative marker -á is suffixed to the head noun, as illustrated by the examples in (12a–12e):

(12a)

*ga ma-n-t'op'-gi*                      *ija-á*                      *si-sele*  
 I    PFV-1SG-drink-DD2<sup>14</sup>    water-ASC            RED-clean  
 'I drank clean water.'

(12b)

*wal-á*                      *fi-faja*                      *ma-n-s'i*  
 child-ASC    RED-handsome            PFV-3MSG-die  
 'The handsome boy died.'

(12c)

*pak-á*                      *u-unzu*                      *ma-n-hint'*  
 shoes-ASC    RED-dirt                      PFV-3MSG-be lost  
 'The dirty shoes were lost.'

(12d)

*u-sit-á*                      *pi-peti-ge*                      *ma-n-ho*  
 SGV-man-ASC    RED-bad-DEF            PFV-3MSG-go  
 'The bad man went.'

(12e)

*wal-dwa-á*                      *k'i-k'af-to*                      *twi-ab-twi*  
 child-girl-ASC    RED-red-DEF                      call-3FSG-RED  
 'Call the red girl.'

### 3.1.2. Inflection of Adjectives

Attributive adjectives in Gwama undergo some morphological processes similar to those of nouns in a noun phrase. In particular, as mentioned above, they are inflected for number and definiteness when used without context to refer to something. In this sense, they are noun-like adjectives.<sup>15</sup> In an inflected NP, the inflection occurs on the noun phrase itself and not on the adjective per se.

In Gwama, adjectives take the morpheme *ma-* for plural formation, just as nouns do. The following are examples of plural adjectives appearing without context:

(13a)                      *no:ko* 'beautiful'                      *ma-no-no:ko* 'beautiful (PL)'

(13b)                      *t'ot'o* 'black'                      *ma-t'o-t'ot'o* 'blacks'

(13c)                      *sele* 'white'                      *ma-ma-se-sele* 'whites'

<sup>14</sup> Hellenthal 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Dixon and Aikhenvald 2004, 227.

|       |                     |                                     |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (13d) | <i>k'af</i> 'red'   | <i>ma-k'ə-k'af</i> 'reds'           |
| (13e) | <i>tindi</i> 'fat'  | <i>ma-ti-tindi</i> 'fats; big ones' |
| (13f) | <i>zinzi</i> 'thin' | <i>ma-zi-zinzi</i> 'thins'          |
| (13g) | <i>si</i> 'heavy'   | <i>ma-si-si</i> 'heavies'           |
| (13h) | <i>gut</i> 'short'  | <i>ma-gu-gut</i> 'shorts'           |
| (13i) | <i>tu</i> 'tall'    | <i>ma-tu-tu</i> 'talls/longs'       |

As shown above, whenever adjectives appear independently without the (understood) head noun as the main and only element in a noun phrase position, they take the plural marker *ma-* as nouns in isolation do. In addition, they undergo partial reduplication, from right to left, of the initial CV syllable. Though on the surface the forms in (13g) and (13i) look like full reduplication, they are probably better understood in line with the others as partial reduplication of the initial CV syllable, which in these cases happen to be the entire form.

Although adjectives are marked for number when they occur without the head noun, they are more often found in an NP with the head noun, where the NP as a whole is marked for number (14a–14e). In these examples, the adjective is part of the noun modifier construction. In most cases, the final vowel of a word is deleted to avoid the occurrence of two identical vowel sequences at the morpheme boundary, as with *bwafa* 'snake' in (14a):

|       |                                   |                      |                    |
|-------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| (14a) | <i>ma-bwaf-a</i>                  | <i>t'u-t'ot'o</i>    | <i>ma-nun-k'uf</i> |
|       | PL-snake-ASC                      | RED-black            | PFV-3PL-be killed  |
|       | 'Black snakes were killed.'       |                      |                    |
| (14b) | <i>ma-na-a</i>                    | <i>zi-zinzi</i>      | <i>ma-b-s'i</i>    |
|       | PL-goat-ASC                       | RED-thin             | PFV-3PL-die        |
|       | 'Thin goats died.'                |                      |                    |
| (14c) | <i>man-a</i>                      | <i>k'ijapko-nunu</i> | <i>hun a-na</i>    |
|       | children-ASC                      | little-these         | they GEN-1SG.POSS  |
|       | 'These little children are mine.' |                      |                    |
| (14d) | <i>ma-dwa-a</i>                   | <i>fi-faja-tunu</i>  | <i>ma-b-huho</i>   |
|       | PL-girl-ASC                       | RED-beautiful-DEF    | PFV-3PL-come       |
|       | 'The beautiful girls came.'       |                      |                    |

(14e)

*ma-duj-ni*            *ma-na-á*            *si-sele*  
 PFV-buy-1SG        PL-goat-ASC     RED-white  
 ‘I bought white goats.’

As can be seen in these examples, the plural prefix *ma-* is attached to the noun in the NP. The number marker does not move to the attributive adjective from the head noun. In a plural NP with demonstrative pronouns or definite markers, the demonstrative and definite markers are attached to the modifiers; this is shown in 14c–14d above, with *-nunu* (‘these’) and *-tunu* (‘the’), respectively.

A noun phrase consisting of a head noun and an adjective is inflected for definiteness in the same way as nouns. The definite markers used for inflection are *-te* for masculine, *-to* for feminine, and *-tunu* for plural forms. In definite adjectival NPs, the definite marker moves to the modifiers and appears after the adjective. The following pairs of definite and indefinite adjectival NPs illustrate the structures of the phrases and the position of the definite markers:

(15a)

*kikjat-á*        *ti-tindi*  
 woman-ASC    RED-fat  
 ‘fat woman’

(15b)

*kikjat-á*        *ti-tindi-to*  
 woman            RED-fat-DEF  
 ‘the fat woman’

(16a)

*u-sit*            *gata*  
 SGV-man        old  
 ‘old man/person’

(16b)

*u-sit*            *gata-te*  
 SGV-man        old-DEF  
 ‘the old man’

(17a)

*u-kan*            *gafar*  
 SGV-dog        big  
 ‘big dog’

(17b)

*u-kan*            *gafar-te*  
 SGV-dog        big-DEF  
 ‘the big dog’

(18a)

*ma-na*            *si-sele*  
 PL-goat        RED-white  
 ‘white goats’

(18b)

*ma-na-á*        *si-sele-tunu*  
 PL-goat-ASC    RED-white-DEF  
 ‘the white goats’

As can be seen in these examples, attributive adjectives in definite noun phrases are marked for definiteness, whereas attributive adjectives in indefinite noun phrases are unmarked morphologically. In all the cases, the definite markers are placed after the modifiers.

Definite markers can also alternatively move to the head nouns from the attributive adjectives (19a–19d), though this is not common. The usual position of

adjectives in a noun phrase is after the head noun, but sometimes adjectives may precede the nouns they modify (19b–19d). In the following examples, the noun phrases show the movement of the definite markers and the position of adjectives:

(19a)

*u-sit-e*                      *gu-gut*  
 SGV-man-DEF    RED-short  
 ‘the short man’

(19b)

*u-t’u-t’ot’o*              *u-sit-ge*  
 SGV-RED-black    SGV-man-DEF  
 ‘the black man’

(19c)

*a-ti-tindi*                      *im-go*  
 GEN-RED-fat              cow-DEF  
 ‘the fat cow’

(19d)

*a-si-sele*                      *kikjat-go*  
 GEN-white                  woman-DEF  
 ‘the white woman’

Although there are occasions when the definite markers move from adjectives to the head nouns, they are frequently suffixed to adjectives. The following examples illustrate the definite markers in a definite noun phrase, where attributive adjectives modify nouns:

(20a)

*u-bwaf-á*                      *si-sisi-te*                      *ma-na-fi*  
 SGV-snake-ASC              RED-green-DEF              PFV-3SG-see  
 ‘I saw the green snake.’

(20b)

*ma-bwaf-á*                      *si-sisi-tunu*                      *ma-nun-fi*  
 PL-snake-ASC                  RED-green-DEF                  PFV-3PL-see  
 ‘I saw the green snakes.’

(20c)

*im*                      *gafar-to*                      *ma-fa*                      *fufufu*  
 cow                      big-DEF                      PFV-eat                      grass  
 ‘The big cow ate the grass.’

(20d)

*uhaj ma-ŋa-á si-sɛɛ-tunu ma-nun-t'uf*  
 he PL-goat-ASC RED-white-DEF PFV-3PL-tie  
 'He tied up the white goats.'

In Gwama, it is possible to use sequences of attributive adjectives in a noun phrase. Each adjective has right-to-left partial reduplication (21a–21c). In definite noun phrases, the adjective that comes last carries the definite marker as in (21a):

(21a)

*ma-kur gaŋar-a t'u-t'ot'o-tunu ma-b-gus*  
 PL-donkey big-ASC RED-black-DEF PFV-3PL-run  
 'The big, black donkeys ran.'

(21b)

*wal-dw-á fi-fajá-a ti-tindi ma-n-ab-gwe*  
 child-ASC RED-beautiful-ASC RED-fat PFV-1SG-3SG.F-see  
 'I saw a beautiful fat girl.'

(21c)

*wal-dw-á zi-zinzi-a si-sɛɛ ma-ø-huho*  
 child-girl-ASC RED-thin-ASC RED-white PFV-3SG.F-come  
 'A thin white girl came.'

#### 4. Adverbs

The most common function of adverbs is to specify the mode of action of the verb.<sup>16</sup> Adverbs are usually related to questions like *when*, *how*, *how much*, or *where* and can be classified accordingly as adverbs of time, adverbs of manner, adverbs of frequency, and adverbs of place. Gwama has all of these classes of adverbs, which carry additional information about an action. Adverbs can be derived from adjectives, 'or an adjective may also be used in adverbial function'.<sup>17</sup> Some Gwama manner adverbs are derived from their adjectival counterparts by adding the morpheme *gi-*. The following subsections present the adverbials attested in Gwama with illustrative sentences.

##### 4.1. Time Adverbs

Time adverbs, also known as temporal adverbs, are used to signal the time of events in a sentence. I begin with adverbs that indicate time within a day. Gwama has different adverbial time frames that describe periods for the day, as in (22). Most of these begin with *an-*, whose precise function is not yet identified.

<sup>16</sup> Crystal 2008, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Dixon 2009–2012, II, 266.

(22)

|                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>kwaja</i>       | ‘dawn (before sunrise)’ |
| <i>anzili</i>      | ‘morning’               |
| <i>ant’of-kaja</i> | ‘noon’                  |
| <i>ankajfunu</i>   | ‘afternoon’             |
| <i>ansugun</i>     | ‘evening’               |

Gwama also has different time adverbs that refer to a certain moment of the day based on the time reference *das’ini* (‘now’).

(23)

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| <i>das’ini</i> | ‘now’          |
| <i>it’ozi</i>  | ‘before’       |
| <i>ik’was</i>  | ‘after/latter’ |

Another type of time adverbs indicate present, past, and future times. The reference point for such adverbs is *gikene* (‘today’). Most of these adverbs begin with *gi*, which may be related to the prepositional morpheme *gi-* (‘with’).

(24)

|                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>gikene</i>          | ‘today’                    |
| <i>giotko/gik’jana</i> | ‘tomorrow’                 |
| <i>gi-?if-suja</i>     | ‘the day after tomorrow’   |
| <i>kajkukum</i>        | ‘always’                   |
| <i>akama/gikama</i>    | ‘yesterday’                |
| <i>akamusu</i>         | ‘the day before yesterday’ |
| <i>gifingo</i>         | ‘in the past’              |
| <i>asas-a-finko</i>    | ‘a long time ago’          |

There are also adverbs that indicate the current year, the past year, and the next year as in (25). The adverbs of time that refer to the year derive from two or more combined words. The compound word *natmine* (‘this year’), for example, consists of *nata* (‘year’) and *mine* (‘this’), and the time adverb *nata i k’was* (‘last year’) consists of the word *nata*, the locative morpheme *i*, and the noun *k’was* (‘back’). Except for the compound adverb *natmine*, the rest are phrasal structures.

(25)

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>nata i k’was</i>           | ‘last year’                               |
| <i>nata bef-ga-inzi</i>       | ‘the year before last year’               |
| <i>nata i t’ozi/nat-ko-ho</i> | ‘next year’                               |
| <i>nata-ko ho t’ozi</i>       | ‘the year after next year’                |
| <i>nat-suja gikene</i>        | ‘two years later’ or ‘two years from now’ |

Days of the week are expressed by joining three lexemes: the noun *kaja* ('sun'), the morpheme *gi* ('and'), and a cardinal number from one to five. The words for working days are formed with *sene* ('one') to *kumut* ('five'). As for Saturday and Sunday, they are formed by using the same cardinal numbers and adding *kaj-baj*, which is composed of *kaja* and *baj* ('rest', refers to a break or the time of rest during the week days).

- (26)
- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| <i>kaj-gi-sene</i>    | 'Monday'    |
| <i>kaj-gi-suja</i>    | 'Tuesday'   |
| <i>kaj-gi-twasene</i> | 'Wednesday' |
| <i>kaj-gi-bes'ini</i> | 'Thursday'  |
| <i>kaj-gi-kumut</i>   | 'Friday'    |
| <i>kaj-baj-sene</i>   | 'Saturday'  |
| <i>kaj-baj-suja</i>   | 'Sunday'    |

The following examples demonstrate some of the time adverbs of Gwama. The time adverbs can appear in the clause's initial position, as in (27a), or in the final position, as in (27b–27f):

- (27a)
- |               |              |           |              |                |
|---------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>anzili</i> | <i>ho-ni</i> | <i>gi</i> | <i>sont'</i> | <i>bes'ini</i> |
| morning       | go-3SG.M     | by        | foot         | four           |
- 'In the morning, he walks with four legs.'

- (27b)
- |             |                |               |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>uhaj</i> | <i>a-ni-ho</i> | <i>gikene</i> |
| he          | IMPFV-3SG.M-go | today         |
- 'He will go today.'

- (27c)
- |             |              |             |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| <i>hap'</i> | <i>ho-ba</i> | <i>kama</i> |
| she         | go-3SG.F     | yesterday   |
- 'She went yesterday.'

- (27d)
- |           |              |                          |
|-----------|--------------|--------------------------|
| <i>ik</i> | <i>ho-ga</i> | <i>kamusu</i>            |
| you       | come-2SG     | the day before yesterday |
- 'You (SG) came the day before yesterday.'

- (27e)
- |           |                 |               |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| <i>ik</i> | <i>a-gi-ho:</i> | <i>giotko</i> |
| you       | IMPFV-2SG-come  | tomorrow      |
- 'You (SG) will come tomorrow.'

(27f)  
*mini de-ni-gi-den t'oses'k'in*  
 we RED-1PL-DD2-meet once  
 'We (INCL) met once.'

#### 4.2. Manner Adverbs

Manner adverbs express the way in which the action is carried out. Gwama derives manner adverbs by prefixing adjectives with the morpheme *gi-*. While previous scholars have recorded that a suffix *-ko* is also used to derive manner adverbs,<sup>18</sup> it was not attested in the data for this study.

(28) Adjectives and Derived Adverbs

|             |               |                |               |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>faja</i> | 'beautiful'   | <i>gi-faja</i> | 'beautifully' |
| <i>kisi</i> | 'near'        | <i>gi-kisi</i> | 'nearly'      |
| <i>maza</i> | 'weak'        | <i>gi-maza</i> | 'weakly'      |
| <i>ki</i>   | 'careful'     | <i>gi-ki</i>   | 'carefully'   |
| <i>sep</i>  | 'fast, quick' | <i>gi-sep</i>  | 'quickly'     |

These derived adverbs of manner, akin to adverbs of time, appear following the verbs they modify. Below are examples that illustrate the adverbs *gikwi* ('deeply'), *gifi-sep* ('fast'), and *giki* ('carefully'), respectively.

(29a)

|           |                 |              |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>bu</i> | <i>ma-ni-fa</i> | <i>gikwi</i> |
| well      | PFV-1SG-dig     | deeply       |

'I dug the well deeply.'

(29b)

|             |              |                 |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <i>uhaj</i> | <i>ma-ho</i> | <i>gifi-sep</i> |
| he          | PFV-go       | RED-quick       |

'He went quickly.'

(29c)

|                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| <i>ma-ba-k'und</i> | <i>giki</i> |
| PFV-3PL-finish     | carefully   |

'They finished carefully.'

#### 4.3. Adverbs of Frequency

Gwama derives frequency adverbs from time adverbs through partial reduplication or by combining two words. The frequency adverb *kaj-kukum* ('always', lit. 'all day'), for example, is a combination of the words *kaja* ('day/sun') and *kukum*

<sup>18</sup> Kievit and Robertson 2012, 51.

(‘all’). Some reduplicated frequency adverbs drop only the last vowel of the reduplicated word, as in *anzil-anzili* ‘every morning’, which is derived from the word *anzili* (‘morning’). Temporal adverbs can be formed from three morphemes. The frequency adverb *kaj gi sen-sene* ‘every Monday’, for instance, is derived from *kaj gi sene* ‘Monday’, with the last word being reduplicated.

|                       |             |                              |  |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| (30)                  |             |                              |  |                   |
| <i>kaja</i>           | ‘day’       | <i>kaj-kukum</i>             |  | ‘always’          |
| <i>kaj-sene</i>       | ‘once’      | <i>kaj-sen-sene</i>          |  | ‘sometimes’       |
| <i>anzili</i>         | ‘morning’   | <i>anzil-anzili</i>          |  | ‘every morning’   |
| <i>ankajfunu</i>      | ‘night’     | <i>ankajfun-ankajfunu</i>    |  | ‘every night’     |
| <i>kaj-gi-sene</i>    | ‘Monday’    | <i>kaj-gi-sen-sene</i>       |  | ‘every Monday’    |
| <i>kaj-gi-twasene</i> | ‘Wednesday’ | <i>kaj-gi-twasen-twasene</i> |  | ‘every Wednesday’ |
| <i>kaj-baj-sene</i>   | ‘Saturday’  | <i>kaj-baj-sen-sene</i>      |  | ‘every Saturday’  |
| <i>kaj-baj-suja</i>   | ‘Sunday’    | <i>kaj-baj-suj-suja</i>      |  | ‘every Sunday’    |

Unlike time and manner adverbs, the frequency adverbs listed above precede verbs, as in (31a–31f):

|                                     |              |                         |                 |                  |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (31a)                               |              |                         |                 |                  |
| <i>ma</i>                           |              | <i>kaj-ku-kum</i>       | <i>a-mi-ho</i>  | <i>i-swidozo</i> |
| we                                  |              | day-RED-all             | IMPFV-1PL-go    | LOC-school       |
| ‘We (EXCL) always go to school.’    |              |                         |                 |                  |
| (31b)                               |              |                         |                 |                  |
| <i>hun i</i>                        |              | <i>kaj-baj-sen-sene</i> | <i>a-bi-ho</i>  | <i>i-gabi</i>    |
| they                                | LOC          | day-rest-RED-one        | IMPFV-3PL-go    | LOC-market       |
| ‘They go to market every Saturday.’ |              |                         |                 |                  |
| (31c)                               |              |                         |                 |                  |
| <i>ga</i>                           |              | <i>kaj-sen-sene</i>     | <i>t’op’-ni</i> | <i>fwi</i>       |
| I                                   |              | sometimes               | IMPFV-1SG-drink | local alcohol    |
| ‘I sometimes drink local alcohol.’  |              |                         |                 |                  |
| (31d)                               |              |                         |                 |                  |
| <i>ankajfun-ankajfunu</i>           |              | <i>at-ni</i>            |                 | <i>minkwans</i>  |
| RED-night                           |              | IMPFV-1SG-read          |                 | book             |
| ‘I read books every night.’         |              |                         |                 |                  |
| (31e)                               |              |                         |                 |                  |
| <i>i-kaj-gi-kumut’-kumut’</i>       | <i>ho-na</i> | <i>i-jas-jan-jere</i>   |                 | <i>i-masgid</i>  |
| LOC-day-by-five-RED                 | go-1SG       | LOC-place-beg-Allah     |                 | LOC-mosque       |
| ‘I go to mosque every Friday.’      |              |                         |                 |                  |

(31f)

|                                |                         |              |                  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>i</i>                       | <i>kaj-baj-suj-suja</i> | <i>ho-na</i> | <i>i-swi-jan</i> |
| LOC                            | day-rest-RED-two        | go-1SG       | LOC-house-beg    |
| 'I go to church every Sunday.' |                         |              |                  |

During right-to-left partial reduplication, a word or part of a word that ends in a vowel (as in 31b–31d and 31f) or in a consonant (as in 31a) usually do not include the final vowel or consonant in the reduplication process. However, it is also common to find adverbs of frequency that undergo full reduplication of the last morpheme, such as *kaj-gi-kumut'-kumut'* 'every Friday' (31e).

## 5. Numerals

There are two forms of numerals in Gwama: cardinal and ordinal. The cardinal numerals 1–100 have previously been enumerated by Zelealem Leyew Temesgen.<sup>19</sup> While that description is more or less similar to the present study, the numeral system found in the current data displays a certain difference from the list of numbers provided there. For instance, Zelealem claims that *diba* means 'hundred'; in the current data, however, 'hundred' is *s'it kùmút'* (lit. 'five person(s)'). The commonly used word for 'person' is *sit*, but /s'/ and /s/ seem to be in free variation here, as in *sɛle* and *s'ɛle* ('white/clean'). Another previous publication on the grammar of Gwama presented the first twenty cardinal numbers,<sup>20</sup> and again it is more or less similar to that attested in the present research.

### 5.1. Numerals as Modifiers

The numbers of Gwama follow a base-five system. It has been claimed that the word *k'uzi* ('ten') refers to fingers.<sup>21</sup> The number *k'uzi* does not, however, correspond in any meaningful way to the names for the fingers of the hand. Consider how informants counted one to five in the following examples:

(32)

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| <i>sene</i>   | 'one'   |
| <i>sùjá</i>   | 'two'   |
| <i>twàsen</i> | 'three' |
| <i>bés`in</i> | 'four'  |
| <i>kùmút'</i> | 'five'  |

<sup>19</sup> Zelealem Leyew Temesgen 2005, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Kievit and Robertson 2012, 53.

<sup>21</sup> Zelealem Leyew Temesgen 2005.

To form ordinal numerals in Gwama, the prefix *t'o-* ('-th') is attached to a cardinal numeral (33).<sup>22</sup>

- (33)
- |                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| <i>t'o-sés'k'in</i> | 'first'  |
| <i>t'o-sùjá</i>     | 'second' |
| <i>t'o-twàsen</i>   | 'third'  |
| <i>t'o-bés'in</i>   | 'fourth' |

The number counting system of Gwama is quinary. When the counting reaches twenty, however, it becomes vigesimal, likely based on the sum of the fingers and toes. When being counted, the head noun or the modifier is marked with the associative morpheme *-á* with high tone and followed by the number. For example, *jis-á sene* ('body of one') refers to one person and *s'it-suja* ('two persons/bodies') refers to two people. The same pattern obtains up to hundred. The aim of this paper is not to provide the morphological structure of the number system, but rather to discuss how modifiers function in Gwama. The following examples are, therefore, meant to illustrate how numerals modify nouns, specifically where the modifier follows the head noun.

- (34a)
- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| <i>swi</i>        | <i>i-t'o-sene</i> |
| house             | LOC-ORD-one       |
| 'the first house' |                   |

- (34b)
- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| <i>swi</i>         | <i>i-t'o-suja</i> |
| house              | LOC-ORD-two       |
| 'the second house' |                   |

- (34c)
- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>swi</i>        | <i>i-t'o-twasen</i> |
| house             | LOC-ORD-three       |
| 'the third house' |                     |

The examples in (35) below illustrate the use of cardinal numerals, which can also inflect for definiteness. The example in (35c) presents the head noun *geji* ('flexible stick'), which is inflected for definiteness with the morpheme *-tunu*.

<sup>22</sup> Other Koman languages such as Opuuo and Komo also have ordinal markers: *-en* and *-de*, respectively. For the former, see Mellese Gelaneh Alemu 2017, 121; for the latter, see Tesfaye Negash Bayou 2014, 104.

(35a)

*kaj-sene ga ma-ni-gi s'it kam pidi*  
 sun-one I PFV-1SG-DD2 have get hunger  
 'One day, I was very hungry.'

(35b)

*gide-wet-ni-gi nat-k'uz-ot-sùja ...*  
 when-COP-1SG-DD2 year-ten-and-two  
 'When I was twelve years old, ...'

(35c)

*ma-gejri twasene-tun-fi ...*  
 PL-stick three-DEF-also  
 'The three round flexible sticks also ...'

(35d)

*ma-k'ondol a-gi-gafar a-t'u-t'ot'o-tunu*  
 PL-horse GEN-RED-big GEN-RED-black-DEMO  
 'those big, black horses'

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented the adjectives, adverbs, and numerals of Gwama as they are used for nominal and verbal modification. Nouns can be modified either by another noun or by adjectival modifiers, where, in most cases, the head noun is marked with an associative morpheme *-á*. While adjectives can be inflected for definiteness, which is a feature of nouns, they reduplicate like verbs. Various forms of adverbial modifiers have also been described. Brief notes about the function of cardinal and ordinal numerals as modifiers have also been provided. Since Gwama has very complex verb morphology structure, further analytical investigations of this topic are much welcomed.

## Abbreviations

|      |                    |       |              |
|------|--------------------|-------|--------------|
| 1    | first person       | F     | feminine     |
| 2    | second person      | GEN   | genitive     |
| 3    | third person       | IMPFV | imperfective |
| ASC  | associative        | INCL  | inclusive    |
| COP  | copula             | LOC   | locative     |
| DD   | directional marker | M     | masculine    |
| DEF  | definite marker    | ORD   | ordinal      |
| EXCL | exclusive          | PFV   | perfective   |

|      |               |     |             |
|------|---------------|-----|-------------|
| PL   | plural        | SG  | singular    |
| POSS | possessive    | SGV | singulative |
| RED  | reduplication |     |             |

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Andargachew Getu Gebeyehu

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### Summary

This paper presents a descriptive analysis of the modifiers of Gwama, one of the Koman languages spoken mainly in Western Ethiopia. In addition to nouns and verbs, the language has the following word classes: adjectives, adverbs, and numerals. Adjectives express six semantic categories: dimension, colour, age, value, physical property, and human propensity. These adjectives have noun-like features, since they are inflected for number and definiteness. Though derivation is not a productive process, manner adverbs are derived from adjectives. To express how frequently something is done or has happened, partial reduplication of time adverbs occurs. Numerals follow the base-five number system, quinary. This base-five numeral system is an areal pattern that is also found in Komo and Opo. The general overview of numerals as modifiers presented here covers the functions of cardinal and ordinal numerals, where ordinals are formed from cardinals with the suffix *-t'o*.