



**HAL**  
open science

## Number in Kambaata: A category between inflection and derivation

Yvonne Treis

► **To cite this version:**

Yvonne Treis. Number in Kambaata: A category between inflection and derivation. 2012. hal-00728439v1

**HAL Id: hal-00728439**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00728439v1>**

Preprint submitted on 6 Sep 2012 (v1), last revised 30 Sep 2013 (v2)

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# Number in Kambaata: A category between inflection and derivation

Yvonne Treis

LLACAN (INALCO, CNRS, PRES Paris-Cité)

## 1. Introduction

Kambaata<sup>1</sup> is a Cushitic language spoken in South Ethiopia. It is a rigidly head-final and strictly suffixing language with a rich nominal and verbal morphology. Regarding parts of speech, there are four sets with open membership (nouns, verbs, adjectives and ideophones) and several closed sets (pronouns, numerals and quantifiers, demonstratives).<sup>2</sup>

This paper analyses the expression of number; more precisely, it investigates on which parts of speech and by which linguistic means number is grammatically encoded in the language.<sup>3</sup> In Kambaata, number is marked, to different degrees, on common nouns (section 2), proper nouns (section 3) and pronouns (section 4). Traces of number agreement are found on modifiers (section 5) and verbs (section 6). The core of this paper deals with number marking on common nouns, especially the interaction of number marking with the lexical semantics of certain noun classes (section 2). A comparison with the grammatical categories of case and gender shows that number is a grammatical category between inflection and derivation (section 7).

## 2. Number marking on common nouns

A minimal Kambaata noun consists of a stem and a (primary) case morpheme. The stem can be a simple root or a root plus (a) derivational morpheme(s). Nouns inflect for the categories of case and gender, which are jointly expressed by portmanteau-morphemes. Depending on the endings of the accusative and nominative forms,<sup>4</sup> the nouns fall into about 20 nominal declensions (Treis 2008: 103). In most feminine declensions, the primary case morpheme is followed by an additional secondary case/gender morpheme

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: The article is based on data that was collected during several fieldtrips sponsored by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* in the projects *Dokumentation des Hochlandostkuschitischen* (2002-2005) and *Essen – Trinken – Nahrungszubereitung in äthiopischen Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zur lexikalischen Semantik von Verben* (2005-2007). This support is gratefully acknowledged. I am indebted to my Kambaata consultants, especially Tessema Handiso and Deginet Wotango.

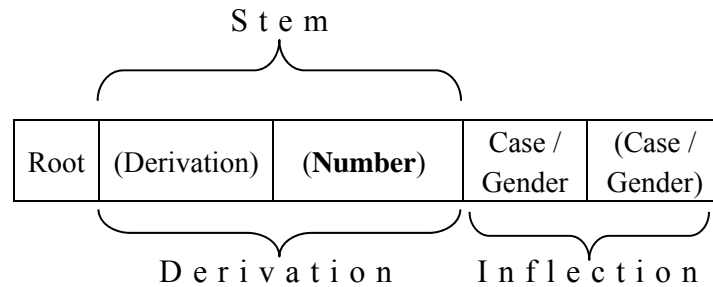
<sup>2</sup> Conjunctions and adverbs are two negligible word classes in Kambaata.

<sup>3</sup> Lexical means of encoding numerosity, i.e. numerals and quantifiers, will not be considered. Cf. Treis (2007) and Treis (2008: 290-295; 303-309).

<sup>4</sup> The accusative is also the citation form.

of the shape  $-tV$ .<sup>5</sup> As shown in Figure 1, number morphemes are located between derivational morphemes (e.g. agentive derivation) and inflectional morphemes.

**Figure 1. Morphological structure of nouns**



Kambaata has a marked nominative case system. Segmentally, case is marked by suffixes, suprasegmentally by a specific stress position. Eight case forms are distinguished: nominative (NOM), accusative (ACC), genitive (GEN), dative (DAT), ablative (ABL), instrumental-comitative-perlative (ICP), locative (LOC) and oblique (OBL). The case endings of a feminine noun and a masculine noun of two selected declensions are given in Table 1.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1. Two exemplary nominal declensions**

Declension	ACC	NOM	GEN	DAT	ABL	ICP	LOC	OBL
F1a	-á-ta	'-a-t	-á	-áa(-ha)	-áchch	-áan	-áan	'-a
M1	-á	'-u	-í	-ii(-ha)	-íchch	-iin	-áan	'-a

Kambaata distinguishes two genders: masculine and feminine. While nouns denoting males are typically assigned to masculine gender and nouns denoting females to feminine gender,<sup>7</sup> nouns not denoting animate beings are evenly distributed across the two gender, as, e.g., in French. Gender-marking is, to a large extent, overt in Kambaata (see the portmanteau-morphemes of case and gender in Table 1).

## 2.1. Number terminology

In the following sections, a consistent terminological distinction is made between the terms referring to the *formal* aspects of number marking on nouns and the *notional* (semantic) number value of a noun (Table 2). In order not to confuse form and meaning, the terms “basic form”, “singulative”, and “plurative” are used with respect to the *form* of a noun. The “basic form” is the form of the noun which is devoid of number morphology. The singulative form is the basic form plus a singulative morpheme; the plurative form contains a plurative morpheme. In contrast to these formal terms, the terms “transnumeral”, “singular”, and “plural” refer to the *notional* categories of number, i.e. their number value. A transnumeral noun can refer to a singular as well as a plural referent; it is number-neutral (Biermann 1982). A singular noun refers exactly to one referent. A plural noun refers to multiple referents.

<sup>5</sup> Primary and secondary case/gender morphemes are not segmented in the examples.

<sup>6</sup> See Treis (2008: chapter 5.4) for the Kambaata orthographic conventions.

<sup>7</sup> The nouns *sa'-á* (M) ‘cow’ and *meent-ú* (M) ‘women’ are two exceptions to this rule.

**Table 2. Number terminology**

FORMAL DOMAIN	NOTIONAL DOMAIN
Basic form	Transnumeral
Singulative	Singular
Plurative	Plural

This terminological distinction is required because, as the following sections show, there is no one-to-one relation between form and function; the basic form of a noun, for instance, is not necessarily transnumeral.

## 2.2. Number morphology

### 2.2.1. Singulative

The singulative formative has three – predominantly phonologically determined allomorphs: *-ch-ú(-ta)*, *-i-chch-ú(-ta)* and *-ee-chch-ú(-ta)*. The formative is morphologically complex and consists of the stem extension *-(ch)ch* (i.e. the singulative morpheme in the narrow sense), which may be preceded by a vowel *-i* or *-ee*, the case vowel *-ú* and (if feminine) the case/gender marker *-ta*. The first formative is used after sonorants (1). After non-sonorant consonants, vowel epenthesis avoids illicit consonant clusters between root and number morphemes (2). The formative with a long vowel *-ee* is used if the basic form has a long case vowel in the accusative form (3).

- (1) Basic: *adan-í-ta* (f) > SG: *adan-ch-ú(-ta)* (m/f) ‘cat’
- (2) Basic: *buttu’ll-á-ta* (f) > SG: *buttu’ll-i-chch-ú(-ta)* (f) ‘puppy’
- (3) Basic: *od-éeta* (f) > SG: *od-ee-chch-ú(-ta)* (f) ‘type of tree (ficus sycomorus L.)’

Irregularities in the singulative formation are exceptional. Sometimes stem-final simple consonants merge with the singulative suffix (4)-(5) or final segments are lost. These mergers are lexically conditioned and unpredictable.

- (4) Basic: *zagib-á* (m) > SG: *zagishsh-ú* (b + ch > shsh) (m) ‘juniperus procera’
- (5) Basic: *nubaab-ú* (m) > SG: *nubaachch-ú(-ta)* (b + ch > chch) (m/f) ‘old person’
- (6) Basic: *fella(a)-ú* (m) > SG: *fellee-chch-ú(-ta)* (m/f) ‘goat’

In some cases, the stem on which a singulative form has been based does no longer exist in the modern language (7)-(8).

- (7) Basic: *\*hambarr-* > SG: *hambarr-i-chch-ú(-ta)* (f) (mountain in Kambaata)
- (8) Basic: *\*eemm-* > SG: *eemm-i-chch-ú* (m) ‘husband of wife’s sister’ / PL2: *eemm-aakk-á-ta* (f) ‘husbands of sisters’

In the majority of cases in which the base noun is a non-animate entity (plant, thing, abstract noun) or an animal whose sex is not distinguishable or of no importance, the singulative has the same gender as the base noun, i.e. the gender of the base is inherited (3).<sup>8</sup> Singulatives of human nouns or nouns of higher animals are bi-gender nouns, i.e. they have a masculine and a feminine form to differentiate male and female; cf. (1), (2) and (5).

<sup>8</sup> There are some exceptions, e.g. *ha’mm-í-ta* (f) > *ha’mm-ichch-ú* (m) ‘enset corm’, *bork-í-ta* (f) ‘area between enset pseudostem and leaves’ > *bork-ichch-ú* (m) ‘midrib of enset leaf’, *wees-í-ta* (f) > *weeshsh-ú* (m) ‘enset plant’, *miq-á-ta* (f) > *miq-ichch-ú* (m) ‘bone’.

### 2.2.2. Plurative

For the formation of plurative nouns, Kambaata follows two partly phonologically conditioned strategies. Compared to Lowland East Cushitic languages, which often have rich and complex systems of plurative morphology,<sup>9</sup> we are dealing with a relatively simple system in Kambaata. The first formative, plurative 1, has the shape *-C-á-ta*. The stem-final consonant copy (C) is the plurative morpheme in the narrow sense. It is followed by a primary case suffix *-a* and a secondary feminine case/gender suffix *-ta*. The plurative 1 has the gender value “feminine”, irrespective of the gender of the basic form. Only nouns with a simplex stem-final consonant can be the input of the plurative 1 formation (9)-(10).

(9) Basic: *min-í* (m) > Plurative 1: *min-n-á-ta* (f) ‘houses’

(10) Basic: *ciil-á(-ta)* (m/f) > Plurative 1: *ciil-l-á-ta* (f) ‘infants’

If the stem of the base noun ends in a consonant cluster, only plurative 2-formation is possible (11). The stem is extended with the plurative 2 morpheme *-aakk*, to which the case vowel *-a* and the feminine gender suffix *-ta* are added. Like plurative 1 nouns, plurative 2 nouns are grammatically feminine. Or said differently, plurative marking (unlike singulative marking) imposes a gender restriction on nouns.

(11) Basic: *lankaann-á* (m) > Plurative 2: *lankaann-aakk-á-ta* (f) ‘paternal uncles’

The plurative 2 formative is not restricted to nouns with a stem-final consonant cluster but also applicable to some nouns ending in a simplex consonant, e.g. (12)-(13). These nouns would in principle be phonologically eligible for the plurative 1 formation but only plurative forms with *-aakk-á-ta* (PL2) are acceptable. The exceptions are not restricted to the field of kinship terminology but especially prominent in this semantic field.

(12) Basic: *am-á-ta* (f) > PL2: *am-aakk-á-ta* (f) ‘mothers’ (PL1: *\*am-m-á-ta*)

(13) Basic: *hiz-óo(-ta)* (m/f) > PL2: *hiz-aakk-á-ta* (f) ‘siblings’ (PL2: *\*hiz-z-á-ta*)

Some nouns cannot be plurativised at all: *beet-ú* ‘son’, *beet-ú-ta* ‘daughter’, *sa’-á* ‘cow’.

### **2.3. Functions of number morphemes**

There is no one-to-one relation between the formal and semantic/functional number values, i.e. not all basic forms are transnumeral, not only singulatives mark singular number and not only pluratives mark plural number. Instead, an adequate description of number in Kambaata has to take the *interaction* between noun class and number marking into account.

Nouns can be roughly classified according to the number value of their underived basic form and (at least) the following noun classes are to be distinguished:

---

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the plurative marking system of Borana Oromo (Andrzejewski 1960) or Rendille (Oomen 1981), to name but two examples.

(i) Inherently singular nouns (N<sub>ISG</sub>)

- e.g. *mesel-ée-ta* ‘girl’, *adab-áa* ‘boy’, *jaal-á(-ta)* ‘friend’, *baajaam-í-ta* ‘teenage girl, unmarried woman’, *am-á-ta* ‘mother’, *ann-á* ‘father; owner’, *hiz-óo(-ta)* ‘sibling’, *ciil-á(-ta)* ‘infant’, *ball-ú(-ta)* ‘father-in-law / mother-in-law’, *wom-á* ‘king’, *boor-á* ‘bull, ox’, *sulum-ú-ta* ‘heifer’, *boot-ú* ‘young bull’, *buul-á(-ta)* ‘mule’, *maaxaan-á-ta* ‘mare’, *min-í* ‘house’ etc.
- Lexemes exempt from plurativisation: *sa’-á* ‘cow’, *beet-ú(-ta)* ‘son / daughter’

(ii) Inherently plural nouns (N<sub>IPL</sub>)

- e.g. *meent-ú* ‘women’, *mann-á* ‘men, people’, *nubaab-ú* ‘elders’, *ilam-ú* ‘relatives’, *koh-á* ‘guests’, *goon-á* ‘males’, *wodall-á-ta* ‘youngsters’, *hard-í-ta* ‘youngsters’, *qacal-í-ta* ‘young married people’, *Kambaat-á* ‘Kambaata people’ and other ethnonyms, *islaam-ú* ‘Muslims’, *harr-í-ta* ‘donkeys’, *faars-ú* ‘horses’, *fella(a)-ú* ‘goats’, *adan-í-ta* ‘cats’, *wosh-á-ta* ‘dogs’, *samag-áa* ‘leopards’, *got-á* ‘hyenas’, *wees-í-ta* ‘enset plants’, *ha’mm-í-ta* ‘enset corms’, etc.
- Lexemes exempt from singulativisation: *oos-ú-ta* ‘children’, *lal-ú* ‘cattle; cows’

(iii) Inherently transnumeral nouns (N<sub>ITN</sub>)

- Examples: *haqq-á* ‘tree(s)’, *kin-ú* ‘stone(s)’, *fooor-ú-ta* ‘rope(s)’, *burtukaan-á* ‘orange(s)’, *bar-í* ‘day(s)’, *ang-á-ta* ‘hand(s)’, *lokk-á-ta* ‘foot(s)’, *gog-á* ‘skin(s), hide(s)’, *hanx-á* ‘teat(s)’, *barcum-á* ‘chair(s), stool(s)’, *zaraar-ú-ta* ‘flower(s)’, *can-á* ‘sack(s)’, *kaashsh-á* ‘plant(s)’, *shiincaar-á* ‘splinter(s)’, *bonx-á* ‘leaf / leaves’, *od-áa-ta* ‘thing(s)’, *dikk-ú-ta* ‘market(s)’, *agan-á* ‘month(s)’, *haww-á* ‘problem(s)’, *ca’mm-á* ‘shoe(s)’, etc.

(iv) Mass nouns (N<sub>M</sub>)

- e.g. *wo’-á* ‘water’, *az-ú-ta* ‘milk’, *seel-ú* ‘beer’, *geeshsh-á* ‘type of local beer’, *haraq-í-ta* ‘local brandy’, *huggaat-í* ‘whey’, *ge’in-ú* ‘yogurt’, *maal-á* ‘meat’, *maxini-í-ta* ‘salt’, *qam-á* ‘flour’, *shukkaar-á* ‘sugar’, *qeg-ú* ‘blood’, *orc-á* ‘mud’, *hix-í-ta* ‘grass’, *omol-á* ‘bark’ etc.

(v) Abstract nouns

- e.g. *iitt-á-ta* ‘love’, *qishixx-ú* ‘mercy, pity’, *gar-í-ta* ‘truth’, *qophphan-á* ‘lie’ etc.

The functions of singulative and plurative morphemes are dependent on the class of the noun to which they are attached. Abstract nouns will not be considered further, as they are not attested to combine with number morphology.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.3.1. The functions of singulative marking

The class of inherently singular nouns consists predominantly (but not exclusively) of nouns referring to humans and higher animals. The basic form of these nouns is used to

---

<sup>10</sup> A native speaker who was consulted could not think of any possible context for plurative forms of abstract nouns (e.g. *baamb-í-ta* ‘fear’ > \**baamb-aakk-á-ta*). Singulative marking on abstract nouns was also rejected except for *qophphan-á* ‘lie’, whose singulative form *qophphan-ch-ú* was interpreted as ‘small lie’ (compare with ex. (22) below).

refer to an individual referent; cf. the basic (BC) form of *sa'-á* 'cow' in (14), which may only be interpreted as referring to an individual cow but not to several cows.

- (14) *háww-u*                      *báashshi-yan*                      *az-ó*                      *sa'-á*  
 problem-mNOM deteriorate.3mPCO-DS      milk-fGEN      cow-mACC  
*dikk-úta*                      *mass-éemm*  
 market-fACC go.CS-3mPVE  
 'When the [financial] problems had deteriorated, I took the dairy cow [\*cows] (BC of N<sub>ISG</sub>) to the market.'

Inherently singular nouns do not occur with the singulative marker for the purpose of individuation but the singulative expresses empathy or tininess, as elaborated below.

The class of inherently plural nouns is predominantly (but not exclusively) made up of nouns referring to groups or collectives of humans and higher animals. These nouns are obligatorily singulative-marked when they refer to a singular referent. The noun *meent-ú* 'women', for instance, belongs to the class of inherently plural nouns. If one refers to a single woman, the singulative form of the noun, *meent-ichch-ú-ta* 'woman', is required. The same is true of other collectives such as *koh-á* 'guests' and ethnonyms (e.g. *Kambaatá* 'Kambaata people; Kambaata land').

Ex. (15) illustrates that the singulative form of an inherently plural noun (*wodall-á-ta* 'youngsters') is notionally equivalent to the basic form of an inherently singular noun (*baajaam-í-ta* 'young woman').

- (15) *wodall-ichch-ú-ndo*                      *baajaam-íta*                      *xúud-d?*  
 youngsters-SG-mACC-Q      young\_woman-fACC      see-2sPCO  
 'Did you see a young man (SG of N<sub>IPL</sub>) or a young woman (BC of N<sub>ISG</sub>)?'

In the group of inherently plural nouns, some lexemes have no access to singulative-marking: *oos-ú-ta* 'children' and *lal-ú* 'cattle, cows'. Instead, semantically equivalent singular-inherent nouns have to be used: *beet-ú(ta)* 'son, daughter', *adab-óo* 'boy', *mesel-ée-ta* 'girl'; *sa'-á* 'cow'.

The basic form of transnumeral nouns can refer to a single referent or to plural referents. Examples (16) and (17) show the two possible, context-dependent interpretations of the transnumeral noun *lokk-á-ta* 'foot'. In (16), *lokk-á-ta* refers to multiple referents; in (17), it refers to a single referent. The number interpretation is provided by the linguistic and extra-linguistic context and cannot be deduced from the form of the noun.

- (16) *lokk-á-s*                      *godab-i-í*                      *aaz-éen*  
 foot-fGEN-3mPOSS      belly-mGEN-1sPOSS      interior-mLOC  
*aag-íshsh*                      *uurr-ée'u*  
 enter-CS.3mPCO      stand\_up-3mPVE  
 [A pair of shoes speaking about his two-legged owner:] 'He put his feet (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>) into my bellies and stood up.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.38)
- (17) *shiincáar-u*                      *lokk-áachchi-'*                      *ful-im-bá'a*  
 splinter-mNOM      foot-fABL-1sPOSS      go\_out-1sNIPV-NEG  
 'The splinter did not come out of my foot (BC OF N<sub>ITR</sub>).'

The function of singulative marking on transnumeral nouns is pragmatically determined. In my corpus, there are many examples in which the basic form is used but the singulative form regarded as equally appropriate. The sentences in (16) were produced by two native speakers describing the same picture, independently from each other. The picture showed a rope wrapped around a stone. In (a) the basic form of ‘stone’ occurs, in (b) the singulative form.

(18)

- (a) *foxóor-ut kin-óon xaax-án-tee*  
 rope-fNOM stone-mLOC wrap-PS-3fPVE  
 ‘The rope is wrapped around the stone (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>).’
- (b) *wodár-ch-u kin-**ch**-óon xaax-ámm-ee’u*  
 cord-SG-mNOM stone-**SG**-mLOC wrap-PS-3mPVE  
 ‘The cord is wrapped around the stone (SG of N<sub>ITR</sub>).’

Presumably, speaker (b) intended to express explicitly that only one stone is shown on the picture. Like with plural-inherent nouns, the singulative morpheme can have an individuating function with transnumeral nouns but unlike with plural-inherent nouns, the use of the singulative morpheme is not obligatory with singular reference.

Apart from the individuating function, the singulative may also indicate that the speaker has an affectionate relationship to the referent of a noun. The singulative in (19)-(21) expresses ‘dear X’, ‘beloved X’. In this function, it is found on inherently singular nouns, such as *adab-áa* ‘boy’ (19) or *mesel-ée-ta* ‘girl’ (20), and on inherently transnumeral nouns (21).

- (19) *adab-áa* ‘boy’ (m) > *adab-éechch-o* (mOBL) ‘O dear boy’  
 (20) *mesel-ée-ta* ‘girl’ (f) > *mesel-éechch-o* (fOBL) ‘O dear girl’

The speaker of utterance (21) is proud that he managed to produce his first pot all by himself. The affectionate relationship to the product of his hands is expressed by the singulative marker on the transnumeral noun ‘pot’, while in all remaining sentences of the text from which this example originates, single and multiple pots are referred to by the transnumeral basic form of the noun.

- (21) *áchche zakkaanchóon ti xuud-deenantá dist-íchch-ut*  
 so finally DDEM1.fNOM see-3fIPV.REL pot-**SG**-fNOM  
*dag-an-tóo’u*  
 find-PS-3fPVO

‘So finally, this (dearly loved) pot (SG of N<sub>ITR</sub>) that you see (here) came into being.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.60)

The empathy function and the diminutive function are difficult to tell apart. In (22) the singulative morpheme on the inherently singular noun *wotar-á-ta* (f) ‘foal (of equines)’ can be interpreted as a sign of the speaker’s empathy with the animal to be sacrificed but also as a sign of the victim’s tininess.



- (22) *mat-íta ánn-uhuu ám-atii yoo-ba'í*  
 one-fACC father-mNOM.CRD mother-fNOM.CRD COP1.3-NEG.REL  
*wotar-**ch**-íta aass-íi iitt-an-tóo'u*  
 foal-**SG**-fACC give-mDAT decide-PS-3fPVO  
 ‘It was decided to give (them) a (tiny) donkey foal (SG of N<sub>ISG</sub>) which had no father and no mother.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.34)

A married woman who has to avoid the word *shaat-í-ta* (f) ‘*shaate*-dish’ out of respect to her in-laws can replace it by the singulative noun *mad-ichch-ú-ta* (f) ‘small *mada*-dish’ in the avoidance register; the substitute term is derived from *mad-á* (m), the name of a dish type which is bigger than *shaat-í-ta*.

On mass nouns, the singulative indicates ‘a small amount / piece of N’ as in (23), where *maal-á* (m) ‘meat’ is the input of the singulative derivation. Other examples are *omol-á* (m) ‘bark’ > *omol-**ch**-ú* (m) ‘a piece of bark’, *hix-í-ta* (f) ‘grass’ > *hix-ichch-ú-ta* (f) ‘blade of grass’, *seel-ú* (m) ‘beer’ > *seel-**ch**-ú* (m) ‘tiny amount of beer’, *az-ú-ta* (f) ‘milk’ > *az-ichch-ú-ta* (f) ‘tiny amount of milk’.

- (23) *mám-mát-e ma'nn-é máal-**ch**-u hor-íinka*  
 RED-one=fOBL place-fGEN meat-**SG**-mNOM all-mDAT<N>  
*iill-anó=g-a [...]*  
 reach-3mIPV.REL=like-mOBL  
 ‘[...] so that everybody receives a (small) piece of meat (SG of N<sub>M</sub>) from various parts (i.e. from the tongue, neck, etc.) [...].’

In exceptional cases, the singulative derivation leads to an unpredictable semantic shift between the basic form and singulative form (24)-(26). Such singulatives have to be listed in the lexicon.

- (24) Basic: *agan-á* (m) ‘month’ > SG: *agan-**ch**-ú* (m) ‘moon’  
 (25) Basic: *arr-ú* (m) ‘sunlight’ > SG: *arr-iichch-ú-ta* (f) ‘sun’  
 (26) Basic: *gur-á* (m) ‘left side’ > SG: *gur-**ch**-ú(-ta)* (m/f) ‘left-handed person’

### 2.3.2. The functions of plurative marking

Although plurative forms can easily be collected in elicitation sessions, the use of plurative forms is actually not common in spontaneously produced data, oral and written texts. Plurative morphemes are only obligatory on inherently singular nouns that have plural reference. In ex. (27), the plurative marker cannot be left out because one plows with two bulls.

- (27) [...] *mát-u nubáachch-u boor-**r**-áta*  
 one-mNOM old(.SG)-mNOM bull-**PL1**-fACC  
*hoga'-eenáyoomma=b-a iill-ée'u*  
 plow-3honPROG.REL=PLACE-mACC reach-3mPVE  
 ‘[...] he came to a place where an old man was plowing (with) bulls (PL1 of N<sub>ISG</sub>).’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.76)

Ex. (28) shows that the basic noun of an inherent plural noun, *wodall-á-ta* ‘youngsters, teenage boys’, is functionally equivalent to a plurative form of an inherently singular noun, *mesel-ée-ta* ‘girl’. The basic form of *wodall-á-ta* refers to multiple referents,

whereas the basic form of *mesel-ée-ta* ‘girl’ may only point to a singular referent. Therefore, *mesel-ée-ta* must receive a plurative morpheme in a context such as (28).

- (28) *géex-at*            *wodáll-atii*                            *masal-áakk-atii*  
 young-fNOM teenage\_boys-fNOM.CRD    girl-**PL2**-fNOM.CRD  
*masaal-áan*            *nugguss-an-táa’a*  
 masaala-mLOC    circumcise-PS-3fIPV  
 ‘Teenage boys (BC of N<sub>IPL</sub>) and girls (PL2 of N<sub>ISG</sub>) are circumcised on the *masaala*-feast.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 5.9)

Whereas plurative morphers mark an increase in the number of referents on inherently singular nouns, it marks multiple individuation or reference to individuals in a group with inherently plural and transnumeral nouns, as illustrated with text excerpt (29).

- (29) I saw that the old man released the cattle [*lal-ú* (BC of N<sub>IPL</sub>)] and brought them out of the house. After that he stroked the plough bull that he loved most of his cattle [*lal-l-a-sí* (**PL1** of N<sub>IPL</sub>) *aaz-éen* ‘inside his “cattle-s”’] with *masana*-leaves [*masan-í bonx-ín* (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>) ‘with masana-leaf’] from its head to its lower legs [*lokk-a-sí didibb-á* (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>) ‘his lower leg’] and rubbed its whole body, headed towards the feeding place and fed it.

In the first line, the cattle as a group are referred to by the basic form of the inherently plural noun *lal-ú* (m) ‘cattle, cows’. In the second line, however, the plurative form draws attention to the individual members that make up the group, i.e. the plurative on inherently plural nouns is used, among others, for the purpose of multiple individuation. The plurative marker can also have this function with transnumeral nouns, such as *dikk-ú-ta* (f) ‘market(s)’ > *dikk-aakk-á-ta* (f) ‘multiple individuated markets’ in (30). Apart from the plurative form, the text excerpt contains four basic forms of *dikk-ú-ta* (f), two of which have singular reference (e.g. *machchaar-í dikk-ú-ta* ‘the market of madness’). The remaining two basic forms have plural reference (e.g. *masaal-í dikk-ú-ta* ‘masaala-markets’).

- (30) ‘The ones called “masaala-markets” [*masaal-í dikk-ú-ta* (BC of of N<sub>ITR</sub>)] are the two or three markets [*dikk-u* (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>)] before the slaughtering day. Out of these markets [*tánn dikk-aakk-áachch* (**PL2** of N<sub>ITR</sub>)], the market [*dikk-ut* (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>)] held on the last day (before the *masaala*-feast) is called “market of madness” [*machchaar-í dikk-ú-ta* (BC of N<sub>ITR</sub>)].’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 5.9)

Conceptually related to the concept of multiple individuation is distributivity, i.e. reference to a group of entities each of which is located at a different place. Distributivity is another function of plurative forms of transnumeral (and possibly also plural-inherent) nouns (31)-(32).

- (31) *hor-íichchi-nne-n*            *al-í*                            *wud-í*                            *yabur-r-á-nne*  
 all-mABL-1pPOSS-N    upper-mGEN    side-mGEN    lip-**PL1**-fACC-1pPOSS  
*aaqq-ít*            *ilam-ú*                            *kohícc*  
 take-2sPCO    relatives-mACC    cater(.CS.MID).2sIMP  
 ‘Take from all of us the upper lip (PL1 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) and cater for your guests!’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.34)

- (32) *kiis-aakk-áta hund-ánta xúud*  
 pocket-**PL2**-fACC all-fACC<N> look.2sIMP  
 ‘Look into all the pockets (PL2 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) (of all the pieces of clothing that you intend to wash)!’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.10)

Plurative-marking on transnumeral and mass nouns can encode plurals of kinds (33)-(34).

- (33) *baarzáaf-u waal-íichchi-s bír-e*  
 eucalyptus-mNOM come-mABL-3mPOSS front-fOBL  
*hoolám-at haqq-áakk-at Adisaab-í gidan-óon yóo’u íkke*  
 many-fNOM tree-**PL2**-fNOM A.-mGEN area-mLOC COP1.3 INACT  
 ‘Before the arrival of the eucalyptus, many (types/species of) trees (PL2 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) (\*many (individual) trees) were found in the environs of Addis Ababa.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.59)

- (34) *wól-i-s gizz-áakk-at ammóo*  
 other-fNOM-DEF livestock-**PL2**-fNOM however  
*hog-ooháa ichch-aaháa tan-táa’u*  
 farming-fDAT.CRD food-fDAT.CRD be\_used-3fIPV  
 ‘The other (types) of domestic animals (PL1 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) are used for farming and for food.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.20)

Whereas the singulative signals affection and empathy, plurative forms can denote contempt, especially the pluratives of body parts, which belong to the class of transnumeral nouns. The use of contempt plurals is illustrated in (35). The example is taken from a game during which children try to insult each other in the most creative ways (Treis forthcoming). The ridiculed body part occurs in the plurative form, even if as in the case of ‘belly’ a person definitely possesses only one.<sup>11</sup>

- (35) *godáb-b-a-kkii átii fud-í*  
 belly-**PL1**-fNOM-2sPOSS.CRD 2sNOM.CRD equine\_dung-mGEN  
*qarcaat-á agud-dáant*  
 basket-mACC resemble-2sIPV  
 ‘Your belly (lit. “bellies”) (PL1 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) and you resemble a basket for equine dung.’

Finally, plurative-marking can also express associative plurality.<sup>12</sup> So far, this function is attested on mass nouns only.

- (36) *án dikk-óochch buur-aakk-áta hi’rr-í wáall-eemm*  
 1sNOM market-fABL butter-**PL1**-fACC buy.MID-1sPCO come-1sPVE  
 ‘I bought butter and other things (associated with butter, e.g. butter spices) (PL2 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) from the market and came (home).’

<sup>11</sup> In example (16), the basic form *godab-á* ‘belly’ is used to refer to two bellies (each shoe of the pair has a belly).

<sup>12</sup> See section 3 below on associative plurals.

### 2.3.3. Combinations of number markers

Singulative and plurative markers can be applied cumulatively. If two singulative markers are attached to a base noun, the first one encodes singular reference, the second one encodes empathy. In the text excerpt of (37), simple and double singulative forms occur. The simple singulative form which is derived from the inherently plural noun *handar-í-ta* ‘doves’ refers to an individual dove, either the dove child (line 2) or the dove mother (line 7). The double singulative forms (lines 3 and 8) reflect the protagonist’s empathy for the individuated dove child, which he finds in a pitiful situation. Double singulative nouns can be translated as ‘individual beloved N’.<sup>13</sup>

- (37) One day, while he was thinking about how to meet his mother, that tiny dove (*qakkíchch-ut handár-ch-ut* tiny-fNOM dove-SG-fNOM) flapped towards him. Sabiro took the dove (*handar-ch-ichch-ú-s* dove-SG-SG-fACC-3mPOSS) carefully and said “Like you, I am separated from my mother.” Slowly he climbed down from the *kok*-tree and released her to join the doves (*handar-éen* dove-fICP) on the border trees at the end of their estate. In that moment a dove (*handár-ch-ut* dove-SG-fNOM) that had been on a high *suta*-tree approached happily and sat down beside the tiny dove (*qakkíchch-uta handar-ch-ichch-ó* tiny-fOBL dove-SG-SG-fGEN). (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.20f)

The function of double pluratives is not yet clear and requires further investigation. In Kambaata schoolbooks the form *jaal-l-aakk-áta* (friend-PL1-PL2-fACC) ‘friends’ is particularly common. The initial assumption that these double pluratives express plurals of abundance (Treis 2008: 145) could not be confirmed.

A noun which carries both a singulative and a plurative morpheme refers to a large amount of small/tiny Ns; cf. *suus-á* ‘worn out clothes’ (38). Other examples from texts are: *maalat-ichch-aakk-á-ta* (SG-PL2) ‘many small / tiny butterflies’ derived from *maalat-í-ta* ~ *maalat-é* ‘butterflies’<sup>14</sup> and *laal-ch-aakk-á-ta* (SG-PL2 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) ‘many / tiny small fruits’ derived from *laal-ú-ta* ‘fruit(s)’.

- (38) [...] *ub-bóo*            *suus-ichch-aakk-áta*    *mácc*                    *mat-ú*  
          fall-3fPVO        cloth-SG-PL2-fACC    collect.3mPVO        one-mACC  
*mat-íin*    *qaaf-an-s-í*                    *oddaq-ée’u*  
one-fICP    patch-PS-CS-3mPCO    wear.MID-3mPVE  
[Speaker describing a poor man who has no money to buy clothes:] ‘[...] he has collected many tiny pieces of cloth (SG-PL2 of N<sub>ITR</sub>) that have fallen down (to the ground), he has stitched them together and wears them.’

The reverse order (plurative plus singulative morpheme) is not attested in the corpus.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Possibly, the second singulative marker also serves to reinforce the dove child’s tininess, which is additionally indicated by the adjective *qakkíchch-ú-ta* ‘tiny’ in line 2 and 8.

<sup>14</sup> It is not safely known whether *maalet-í-ta* is inherently plural or transnumeral.

<sup>15</sup> A native speaker consultant asked about plurative-singulative combinations rejected them.

## 2.4. Summary

Noun class and number interact in the following ways:

In their basic form, *inherently singular nouns* can only be interpreted as referring to one individual referent. For multiple reference the plurative form is obligatory. Singulative forms of inherently singular nouns are rare and pragmatically conditioned. If they are used, they express empathy or tininess.

Depending on the context, the basic form of *transnumeral nouns* can be interpreted as referring to a single referent or to several referents. Singulative and plurative forms are pragmatically conditioned. Singulative forms are generated for the purpose of explicit individuation and to express empathy or to indicate that the referent is small. Plurative forms are not only derived to refer a plurality of individuals but also to express plurals of kinds, distributive plurals, plurals of contempt and exaggeration and to indicate that the referent is of big size.

In their basic form, *inherently plural nouns* refer to a collective, i.e. to more than one referent. For individual reference, the singulative form is obligatory. Plurative forms of inherently plural nouns are not common and pragmatically conditioned. If they are used, they refer to the individual members in a group (multiple individuation) and plurals of kinds.<sup>16</sup>

*Mass nouns* are hardly ever number-marked. In some cases, the singulative form is used in reference to a small piece or a small amount of a mass. Plurative marking on mass nouns is not attested in the corpus, but cannot be ruled out as ungrammatical.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from abstract nouns and some unexpected gaps in the group of inherently singular and inherently plural nouns (see, for instance, the ungrammaticality of the singulative form of *lal-ú* ‘cattle’), singulative and plurative forms can be derived from all nouns, regardless of the class the nouns belong to. But although singulatives and pluratives are usually possible and interpretable (given an appropriate context), their occurrence is not equally frequent in all classes. The frequency of singulatives and pluratives correlates with the membership of the base noun in certain classes. Pluratives of inherently singular nouns and singulatives of inherently plural nouns are definitely the most common number-marked forms, because their occurrence is grammatically determined.

---

<sup>16</sup> Plurative forms of inherently plural nouns that could be interpreted as distributive plurals or plurals of contempt are not yet attested. Until further research is conducted, these interpretations cannot be ruled out.

<sup>17</sup> In Somali, plural / plurative forms of mass nouns express ‘kinds of N’ (Serzisko 1992: 522).

### 3. Number marking on proper nouns

Kambaata proper nouns differ from common nouns in the absence of the secondary case/gender marker (cf. Figure 1). Address forms (oblique case) of proper nouns can be singulative-marked to signal an intimate relationship between speaker and addressee.

(39) *Worq-ú* (m) (male name) > SG: *Worq-íchch-o* (mOBL) ‘O dear Worqu’

Plurative morphology on proper nouns is not attested. However, proper nouns can combine with an associative plural morpheme -’VV in order to refer to more than one entity or, more precisely, to one focal referent and an associate or a group of associates centering around him/her (cf. Moravcsik 2003):

(40) *Hamaam-e-’ée*                      *ám-at*                      *hánn-u-ta-n*  
 H.-fACC-ASSOC.fGEN mother-fNOM    where-fPRED-fCOP2-N  
*mar-eemmáa?*  
 go-3honPVE.REL.NMZ1.mNOM  
 ‘Where has Hamaame *et al.*’s mother gone?’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.99)

The linguistic and extra-linguistic context of the utterance determines who the associates are. Often the associative derivation extends the reference from one person to a pair or groups including the focal person and his/her sibling(s), family member(s), friend(s), companion(s), follower(s) or other people in the same situation. In (40) above, the associate(s) is/are Hamame’s sibling(s).

The associative derivation is productive with personal names. Apart from this, it is attested – with unknown function – on plural demonstrative pronouns (Treis 2008: 364), on the interrogative pronoun *ay-é* ‘who?’ > *ay-e-’éet* ‘who (PL)?’ (Treis 2008: 383) and, historically, on personal pronouns (Treis 2008: 333 and section 4 below).

Unlike other Kambaata derivational morphemes, the associative morpheme is not attached to the stem but to a vowel-final case form (possibly the accusative case). The associative plural morpheme is inherently feminine and as such it inflects for case like underived feminine nouns; see, for instance, the genitive case form in (40). As subjects, associative plural nouns trigger feminine agreement on verbs (41).

(41) *Aachch-e-’éet*                      *m-á*                      *y-ítun-la?*  
 Mum-fACC-ASSOC.fNOM what-mACC    say-3fJUS-INDIG  
 ‘What should Mum *et al.* (here: and other women working as hard as she does) say?!’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.97)

## 4. Number marking on pronouns

Kambaata has nine independent personal pronouns, of which the nominative case forms are given in Table 3. Other case forms for which the pronouns can be marked are accusative, genitive, dative, ICP, locative and ablative (Treis 2008: 330). In the personal pronoun paradigm, three persons, two numbers (singular and plural) are distinguished. In the second and third person, a distinction is made between familiar and honorific forms. The 3hon pronoun also serves as an impersonal pronoun. Gender is only distinguished in the third person singular.

**Table 3. Personal pronouns**

		Nominative
Singular	1s	<i>án</i>
	2s	<i>át</i>
	2hon	<i>á'nnu</i>
	3m	<i>ís</i>
	3f	<i>íse</i>
	3hon	<i>íssa</i>
Plural	1p	<i>na'óot</i>
	2p	<i>a'nno'óot</i>
	3p	<i>isso'óot</i>

As far as the relation between number and honorificity is concerned, it is particularly noteworthy that Kambaata, unlike closely related languages (e.g. Alaaba, K'abeena, Sidaama), does not use the plural personal pronouns to address or refer to an individual respected person.<sup>18</sup> Instead, Kambaata has two dedicated second and third person honorific pronouns: *á'nnu* (2hon) and *íssa* (3hon). The honorific pronouns are cognate to the plural pronouns of related languages. The synchronic plural pronouns in Kambaata are the result of a recent contact-induced grammaticalisation process whereby the earlier second and third person plural pronouns (which are now used in honorific function) were extended by the associative morpheme -'VV (nominative form: -'VV-*t*) in (near) analogy to Amharic<sup>19</sup> plural pronouns: 2<sup>nd</sup> person *á'nnu* + ASSOC > *a'nno'óot* (2p) and 3<sup>rd</sup> person *íssa* + ASSOC > *isso'óot* (3p). Eventually, the associative morpheme -'VV was also added to the old 1p pronoun, even though no honorific use developed in the 1<sup>st</sup> person: 1<sup>st</sup> person *ná'u* + ASSOC > *na'óot* (1p). (See Treis 2008: 333ff for details.)

Kambaata personal pronouns usually have nouns referring to human beings as antecedents. In order to track non-human antecedents, demonstrative pronouns are preferred. Four types of demonstrative pronouns (proximal, medial, distal and contrastive) are distinguished, all of which inflect for two gender (masculine vs. feminine) and two number values (singular and plural). For reasons of space, only the paradigm of the proximal demonstrative pronoun is given below.

<sup>18</sup> Kambaata only uses the plural personal pronouns to address or refer to more than one respected person.

<sup>19</sup> As the national language of Ethiopia, Amharic is the most important contact language of Kambaata.

**Table 4. Proximal ('this') demonstrative pronouns**

	Masculine Singular	Feminine Singular	Masculine Plural	Feminine Plural
Accusative	<i>káan</i>	<i>táan</i>	<i>kará</i>	<i>tará</i>
Nominative	<i>kúun</i>	<i>tíin</i>	<i>kurú</i>	<i>tirú</i>
Genitive	<i>kanní</i>	<i>tanné</i>	<i>karrí</i>	<i>tarrí</i>
Dative	<i>kannú(ha)</i>	<i>tanné(ha)</i>	<i>karrú(ha)</i>	<i>tarrú(ha)</i>
Ablative	<i>kannúichch</i>	<i>tannéechch</i>	<i>karrúichch</i>	<i>tarrúichch</i>
ICP	<i>kannúin</i>	<i>tannéen</i>	<i>karrúin</i>	<i>tarrúin</i>
Locative	<i>kannéen</i>	<i>tannéen</i>	<i>karráan</i>	<i>tarráan</i>
Oblique	<i>kánne</i>	-	-	-

Demonstrative pronouns are the only part of speech in Kambaata in which the gender distinction is not neutralised in the plural. Historically, the plural demonstratives are the result of a merger of case and gender-agreeing demonstrative modifiers and a head noun *\*ra* ‘thing(s)’ (Treis 2008: 362), e.g. *kará* ‘these’ (mACC) < *\*ka* + *rá* and *karrí* (mGEN) ‘of these’ < *\*kan* + *rí*. In modern Kambaata, *\*ra* is no longer used as an independent noun but as a nominalising enclitic, =*r-a* (ACC) / =*r-u* (NOM) (42).

- (42) *godáb-u maacc-ó=r-u*  
 belly-mNOM hide-3mPVO.REL=NMZp-mNOM  
*dimb-í bar-í ful-áno*  
 become\_drunk-mGEN day-mACC come\_out-3mIPV  
 ‘What is hidden in the belly comes out on the day of drunkenness.’

## 5. Number agreement on nominal modifiers

Number-marking on (underived) adjectives follows the same formal rules as on nouns (Treis 2008: 264f). While modifying adjectives agree with their head noun in case and gender, there is usually no number agreement (and therefore no number marking) on modifying adjectives;<sup>20</sup> see the presence of case and gender agreement but the absence of number agreement on the adjectives *búshat* and *onáta*, which modify plurative-marked head nouns, in (43)-(44). See also (28) above.

- (43) *Kambaat-í baad-óon yóo búsh-at bahíl-l-at [...]*  
 K.-mGEN country-mLOC COP1.3.REL bad-fNOM custom-PL1-fNOM  
*hatt-íta gen-táa=g-a [...]*  
 how-fACC harm-3fIPV.REL=SIM-mOBL  
 ‘[...] how bad costumes in the Kambaata country harm (people).’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.93)

<sup>20</sup> This is especially true for singulative agreement. It is also a very strong tendency in the case of plurative agreement, though not an absolute rule. For unknown reason, for instance, the adjective *wiim-á(ta)* ‘full’ is quite often plurative-marked before plurative nouns in the Kambaata schoolbooks.

Compared to modifying adjectives, number-marking is more common (though not obligatory) on predicative adjectives (Treis 2008: 2676).



- (44) [...] *on-áta*                    *ma'nn-aaakk-áan*    *aag-ís*  
           empty-fACC            space-PL2-fLOC    enter-CS.2sIMP  
 '[...] insert them into the empty spaces.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.14)

The agreement behaviour of agentive adjectives, which are mostly derived from verbs (Treis 2011), differs from that of underived adjectives. Agentive adjectives occur in singulative/plurative pairs (SG *-aan-ch-ú(ta)* / PL3 *-aan-n-ú*) and speakers must take a decision for or against a certain number-marked form when they use them as modifiers.<sup>21</sup> The decision is straightforward with overtly number-marked nouns; see ex. (45), in which the singulative-marked *mán-ch-u* 'person' is modified by a singulative-marked agentive adjective. The singulative form of the agentive adjectives also precedes unmarked, notionally singular (46) and transnumeral nouns.

- (45) *qeraa'rr-ú*    *woqq-áa*    *lokk-áan*    *mar-áan-ch-u*  
       far-mACC    road-mACC    foot-fICP    walk-AA-**SG**-mNOM  
*mán-ch-u*            *qaar-á*            *ih-áno*  
       person-**SG**-mNOM    strong-mACC    become-3mIPV  
 'A person who walks a long distance on foot becomes strong.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 7.91)

- (46) [...] *ros-áan-ch-u*                    *jáal-u-s*                    *ga''-ée-s*  
           learn-AA-**SG**-mNOM    friend-mNOM-3sPOSS    call-3mPVE-3mO  
 '[...] his school (lit. "learner") friend called him.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.21)

Instance of modifying agentive agentives are quite rare in the database, therefore it is not yet clear what determines the marking of agentive adjective when the modified noun is not overtly number-marked but notionally plural: surprisingly, both singulative and plurative agent adjectives are attested in that case; cf. (47) and (48).<sup>22</sup>

- (47) *moos-aan-ch-ú-s*                    *wees-íta*                    *ichch-ó*                    *lál-u* [...]  
       be\_sick-AA-**SG**-fACC-DEF    enset\_plants-fACC    eat-3mPVO.REL    cattle-mNOM  
 'Cattle which has eaten the sick enset plants [...].' (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.31)
- (48) *moos-áan-n-u*                    *mánn-u*                    *we'eesam-éen*                    *ag-áno*  
       be\_sick-AA-**PL3**-mNOM    people-mNOM    pot\_sp-fICP    drink-3mIPV  
 'Sick people drink from a *we'eesame*-pot.'

Demonstrative modifiers are not marked for number at all. They only agree with their head noun in case and gender; see the demonstrative *tánn* 'this (fOBL)' in (49), which agrees with the following head noun *sulum-ó* 'heifer (fGEN)'.<sup>23</sup> Since plurative-marked nouns are formally feminine, they are modified by feminine demonstratives (50).

<sup>21</sup> The use in modifying function is uncommon. Usually, agentive adjectives are used as NP heads.

<sup>22</sup> The modifying use of agentive adjectives definitely requires further investigation.

<sup>23</sup> The oblique case of modifiers signals agreement with non-ACC/non-NOM head nouns.

- (49) *na'óot tánn sulum-ó=g-a múi*  
 1pNOM DDEM1.fOBL heifer-fGEN=SIM-mOBL what.mDAT  
*qishixx-ináan-se-ba-i?*  
 pity-1pIPV-3fO-NEG-Q  
 'Why don't we pity her like this heifer (pities her)?' (Kambaatissata 1989: 2.71)
- (50) *heechch-a-nné shóoh-ut tánni-n hóol-l-a*  
 life-fGEN-1pPOSS basis-fNOM DDEM1.fOBL-N sheep-PL1-fPRED  
 'The basis of our life are these sheep.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.133)

Cardinal numerals and quantifiers cannot carry number morphology either.

## 6. Number agreement on verbs

Kambaata verbs (with the exception of verbal nouns) agree with their subjects in person, number, gender and honorificity. Affirmative indicative main verbs distinguish between seven subject agreement morphemes: 1s, 2s, 3m, 3f, 3hon, 1p and 2p; non-indicative and negative main verbs and most subordinate verbs have a reduced agreement potential. The discontinuous subject agreement morphology of verbs with the most elaborate inflectional potential, i.e. affirmative indicative main verbs, is given below.

**Table 5. Discontinuous subject agreement on affirmative indicative main verbs**

1s	VERB STEM	-∅	ASPECT MORPHOLOGY	-m(m)
2s (= 2hon)		-t		-nt
3m		-∅		(var.)
3f (= 3p)		-t		-'V
3hon		-een		(var.)
1p		-n		-m(m)
2p		-teen		-nta(a'u)

As Table 5 shows, number is distinguished in the first and second person but the number of third person subjects is not marked on verbs. Instead, only the gender (masculine vs. feminine) and the social status (honorific vs. non-honorific) of the subject are indicated. Since plurative 1 and plurative 2-marked nouns are of feminine gender, they trigger feminine agreement on verbs, in the same way as simple feminine subject do; see the 3f verbs agreeing with the subjects *yabúrrassa* 'their lips' and *inqáakkant* 'teeth' in (51).

- (51) [...] *al-í wud-í yabúr-r-a-ssa aaqq-án-t-iyán*  
 upper-mGEN side-mGEN lip-PL1-fNOM-3pPOSS take-PS-3fPCO-DS  
*hor-i-ssá inq-áakk-ant hínn y-itoo'u*  
 all-mGEN-3pPOSS teeth-PL2-fNOM<n> smirk say-3fPVO  
 '[...] the upper lips were grabbed (lit. "taken") and the teeth of all of them smirked.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.34)

As speakers associate pluratives, and therefore also plurality, with feminine agreement, masculine subject nouns with plural reference (but without plurative morphology) can sometimes trigger feminine agreement on verbs. Or said differently, in an attempt to

make verbs agree with the notional number of the subject, speakers may opt for feminine agreement, which they reinterpret as plural agreement. Thus the agreement behaviour of inherently plural nouns of masculine gender is inconclusive in my corpus and nouns like *nubaab-ú* (m) ‘elders’, for instance, are attested with masculine verbs (in agreement with the masculine gender of the noun) and feminine verbs (in “agreement” with the notional number of the noun).<sup>24</sup>

## 7. Number in Kambaata: Derivation vs. Inflection

Various features of the Kambaata number marking system which have been addressed in the previous sections reflect the derivational nature of singulative and plurative morphemes. The derivational or mixed inflectional and derivational nature of number marking has already been pointed out by other authors working on East Cushitic languages (e.g. Lecarme 2002 on Somali, Yri 2006 on Sidaama). The arguments put forward may differ from author to author, but the differences between number marking on the one hand and gender and case marking on the other hand can be clearly seen. Based on Haspelmath’s (2002: 70-83) discussion on the differences between inflection and derivation, it can be shown that number in Kambaata is a derivational category or a category that is *more* derivational/*less* inflectional than case and gender.

### Position

Number morphemes are situated closer to the stem than case and gender morphemes. They follow other derivational morphemes, e.g. the agentive morpheme *-aan*. Case and gender morphemes are expressed at the right periphery of words.

### Morphosyntactic relevance

Number has little relevance for (morpho-)syntax. As the preceding sections have shown, number can hardly be considered a controller category in agreement relations, neither in NP-external agreement (i.e. the subject agreement) nor in NP-internal agreement. In the subject agreement system, number is only marked in the first and second person. In the third person, verbs agree obligatorily with the subject NP in gender (masculine vs. feminine) and honorificity (Table 5). Plurative nouns are always of feminine gender (irrespective of the gender of the base) and trigger feminine subject agreement on verbs.<sup>25</sup> NP-internally, modifiers agree obligatorily with the head noun in gender and case but number agreement is rarely considered possible.

### Obligatoriness

Case and gender marking is obligatory, whereas number marking is often (though not always) pragmatically conditioned. A noun of minimal complexity consists of a root and a case (and gender) marker. It needs not to be overtly specified for number, except

---

<sup>24</sup> Note that inside the NP, the agreement behaviour of inherently plural nouns of masculine gender is only with the gender of noun but not influenced by the notional number.

<sup>25</sup> Recall, that the agreement behavior of inherently plural nouns is notoriously fluid. Subject agreement may in some cases be influenced by the notional number and/or the sex of the subject.

if it belongs to the inherently singular or inherently plural class of nouns. Singulative and plurative morphemes do not only encode information about the number of the referents, they also transport the speakers' attitude (empathy, contempt) as well as qualitative statements (small / big size).

### **Semantic unpredictability**

The meaning of the singulative form is not always predictable on the basis of the meaning of the form it is derived from; recall ex. (24)-(26).

### **Cumulation / iteration**

Whereas markers of inflectional categories such as case and gender may not be iterated or be applied cumulatively, singulative and plurative morphemes can be attached to the same base twice or be combined; see ex. (37)-(38).

To conclude, number is a less canonical inflectional category than case and gender in Kambaata.

## **Abbreviations**

ABL = ablative; ACC = accusative; ASSOC = associative plural; BC = basic form of a noun (unmarked for number); COP1 = *yoo*-copula; COP2 = *-ha/-ta*-copula; CRD = coordination; CS = causative; DAT = dative; DDEM = determining demonstrative; DEF = definite; DS = different subject; f = feminine; GEN = genitive; hon = honorific, impersonal; ICP = instrumental-comitative-perlative; IMP = imperative; INACT = inactual (past, irrealis); INDIG = indignation; IPL = inherently plural; IPV = imperfective; ISG = inherently singular; ITR = inherently transnumeral; LOC = locative; m = masculine; M = mass noun; MID = middle; N = unanalysed pragmatically determined morpheme; NEG = negation; NIPV = non-imperfective; NMZ1 = nominalisation (by vowel lengthening); NMZp = plural nominalisation (with enclitic =*r*-); NOM = nominative; O = object; p = plural; OBL = oblique; PCO = perfective converb; PL1 = plurative *-C-á-ta*; PL2 = plurative *-aakk-á-ta*; PL3 = plurative *-n-ú* (of agentive adjectives); POSS = possessive; PRED = predicative; PROG = progressive; PS = passive; PVE = *e*-perfective; PVO = *o*-perfective; Q = question; REL = relative; s = singular; SG = singulative; VV = long vowel

## **References**

- Andrzejewski, B.W. 1960. The categories of number in noun forms in the Borana dialect of Galla. *Africa* 30: 62-75.
- Biermann, A. 1982. Die grammatische Kategorie Numerus. In: Seiler, H.-J. & C. Lehmann (eds.). *Apprehension. Das sprachliche Erfassen von Gegenständen*. Vol. 1: *Bereich und Ordnung der Phänomene*. Tübingen: Narr. Pp. 229-43.
- Corbett, G.G. & R.J. Hayward 1987. Gender and number in Bayso. *Lingua* 73: 1-28.

- Crass, J. 2005. *Das K'abeena. Deskriptive Grammatik einer hochlandostkuschitischen Sprache.* (Kuschitische Sprachstudien, 23.) Cologne: Köppe.
- Haspelmath, M. 2002. *Understanding morphology.* London: Arnold.
- Kambaatissata. Rosaanchi maxaafa. [Kambaata language. School book.] 1989 E.C. Grade 1-8. Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State: Education Bureau.
- Kawachi, K. 2007. A grammar of Sidaama (Sidamo), a Cushitic language of Ethiopia. PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Lecarme, J. 2002. Gender “polarity”. Theoretical aspects of Somali nominal morphology. In: Boucher, P. (ed.). *Many morphologies.* Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. Pp. 109-41.
- Moravcsik, E. A. 2003. A semantic analysis of associative plurals. *Studies in Language* 27, 3: 469-503.
- Oomen, A. 1981. Gender and plurality in Rendille. *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 8, 1: 35-75.
- Schneider-Blum, G. 2007. *A grammar of Alaaba. A Highland East Cushitic language of Ethiopia.* (Cushitic Language Studies, 25.) Cologne: Köppe.
- Serzisko, F. 1992. Collective and transnumeral in Somali. In: Adam, H.M. & C.L. Gesheker (eds.) 1992. *Proceedings of the First International Congress of Somali Studies.* (Scholars Press Occasional Papers and Proceedings, 2.) Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press. Pp. 513-25.
- Treis, Y. 2007. Cardinal numerals in Kambaata. In: Machalík, T. & J. Záhorský (eds.). *VIVA Africa 2007. Proceedings of the IInd International Conference on African Studies. Pilsen, 27-28 April.* Pilsen: Dryada. Pp. 55-70.
- Treis, Y. 2008. *A grammar of Kambaata. Part 1: Phonology, morphology, and non-verbal predication.* Cologne: Köppe.
- Treis, Y. 2011. Polysemous agent nominals in Kambaata (Cushitic). In: Luschützky, H.-C. & F. Rainer (eds.). *Agent-noun polysemy in a cross-linguistic perspective.* Special issue of *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* (STUF) 64, 4: 369-381.
- Treis, Y. forthcoming. Kambaata children’s songs and word games: Or what can we learn about the grammar of Kambaata by analysing “marginal” literature genres? *Afrikanistik Online*
- Yri, K.M. 2006. The singulative in Sidaamu Afö. *Folia Orientalia* 45: 157-67.