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Number and Gender Convergence: The Arabic Plurative

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I describe and motivate a process of Number and Gender convergence in Arabic, whereby a feminine morpheme, - *at*, is used at various syntactic and semantic configurations to express *plurality*, in addition to *individuation* and gender, among other senses. Morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of this specific plural/collective, which I call the *plurative*, make it a third (complex) entity, which is distinct from both traditional sound or broken 'pure' plurals, and 'pure' genders. Plurative marking manifests in fact a *convergence* in derivation (in Chomsky's 1995 sense) of both Number and Gender (features and/or categories), resulting in a syntactically derived *group*, a distinct entity from both (normal) singular and (normal) plural individuals. While Number (as quantity) and Gender (as individuator) are generally viewed as separate categories, each having its own autonomous morpho-syntax and semantics, the idea of convergence in derivation stems from the fact that the two features (or categories) of the syntactic plurative are not interpreted as separate; they rather converge as a complex mixed entity, which is both 'many' and 'one'. As such, the plurative exhibits a dual behaviour, licensing plural/single predication, or anaphora, and it alternates feminine-singular with masculine-plural agreement. In its strict sense, the plurative denotes a *whole-unity*, but it also allows access to the (many) *parts*.

Convergence of a similar sort can be shown to operate also in the case of the *singulative*, although with a distinct outcome. It also operates in other kinds of collectives. Moreover, normal plurals (or numbers) can be turned to plurative in syntax, depending on interpretation (or perspectivization). Quite similar grouping (or collectivizing) phenomena are documented in various flavors in other languages (including Serbo-Croation, Polish, Chinese, Burmese, Italian, etc.), instantiating the vastness of crosslinguistic collectivization.

Because a group-collective cannot be adequately described as only an atomic individual (as in Barker 1992), nor as non-atomic individual (or set/sum) just like other plurals (as in Bennett 1974), being a sort of 'impure atom' (Link 1984, 1998, Landman 1989), I propose that it is characteristically a *unity* (as a whole), rather than an *atom* entity. More precisely, two number features are needed to account for the properties of the mixed group, [±unit] and [±atom], (tentatively) projecting atomP and unitP. The feature [±unit] stands for unitization (a specific form of individuation) found in singulatives and pluratives (as wholes), and [±atom] basically marks 'natural atoms' (in the parts), normally expressed as singulars and plurals. It is shown that Borer's DivP is too coarse to account for these two distinct ingredients of individuation, or other similar binary specifications, as amply argued in the literature (Svenonius 2008, Grimm 2012, Fassi Fehri 2003-4, 2012, 2018, Zhang 2013, Acquaviva 2017 & 2018, among many others).

Unlike 'lexical' groups, which may trigger a singular/plural alternation, without 'gender switch', Arabic (syntactic) pluratives/groups typically involve unitization through Gender in syntax. While Number as a grammatical category is normally conceived as essentially expressing a specified *quantity*, distinguishing *atoms* and *sums*, morphologically identified as *singulars* or *plurals*, the more complex picture reflects the ways entities are 'classified' or 'qualified' (as objects, kinds, masses, groups, etc.), in addition to how Number interacts with numerosity, mereological relations among sets, etc.

Some references. Chomsky, N. 1995. *The minimalist Program*. MIT Press. Fassi Fehri, A. 2018. *Constructing the Feminine to Mean*. Lexington Books. Roberts, I. & A. Holmberg. 2010. Parameters in Minimalist Theory. Introduction. In *Parametric Variation: Null Subjects in Minimalist Theory*, eds. T. Biberauer, A. Holmberg, I. Roberts, & M. Sheehan, 1-57. CUP.