The historical reality of the plural of paucity and the plural diminutive in Classical Arabic
Evidence from kalām al-ʿarab
(Part One)
Francesco Grande

This study investigates the semantics of the plural of paucity and the plural diminutive, based on their attestations in the non-literary source of Classical Arabic traditionally known as kalām al-ʿarab. In noun plural marking, the meaning of the diminutive is as elusive as that of the plural of paucity. What is known of both kinds of meanings is mainly derived from the indirect description of early lexicographers and grammarians. To assess the historical reality of this traditional semantic description, attestations from the kalām al-ʿarab are collected, then compared to data from Arabic dialects, and finally subjected to a distributional analysis. The grammatical categories of the collective, inherent plural, and the pseudo-dual are also considered in this assessment.

Keywords: plural of paucity, diminutive, kalām al-ʿarab, collective, inherent plural

1. Aims and introduction

This study pursues two related aims: on the one hand, a better understanding of the plural of paucity in Classical Arabic and, on the other, a better understanding of its diminutive in noun plural marking.

The two aims are related, in the sense that a better understanding of the plural of paucity leads to a better understanding of the diminutive in noun plural marking, and vice versa, as will become clear in due course.

The present study investigates the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking based mainly on the description of Classical Arabic provided by early grammarians and lexicographers, who drew their citations not only from well-known primary sources such as the Koran and pre-Islamic poetry, but also from another primary source, namely, the living speech of the Arabs of their time, during the second half of the eighth century and the first half of the ninth century CE.
In grammatical and lexicographical work, this kind of primary source is referred to as kalām al-'arab, and is usually signaled by a textual descriptor alluding to living usage: an ethnonym (e.g., ahl al-hijāz), a verbum dicendi (e.g., yuqāl ‘it is said’), or a verbum audiendi (e.g., samīnā ‘we heard’).

The focus here is on attestations of kalām al-‘arab rather than on the theoretical framework in which early grammarians and lexicographers couched them. Likewise, attestations of kalām al-‘arab are given precedence over attestations from Classical Arabic as a whole (al-‘arabiyya). Therefore, in this study, the formal and semantic features of the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking will be derived mainly from the description of kalām al-‘arab.

This is the first of two articles. It provides background information concerning the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking, collects and describes the available attestations from kalām al-‘arab, and compares such attestations to similar data in modern Arabic dialects. The second installment will offer a distributional study of the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking, with special attention to their semantics.

2. The object of study

In the domain of noun plural marking in Classical Arabic, the plural of paucity is usually identified with the circumfixal morphemes ‘a.u., ‘a.a., ‘a.i.a, i.a, as in ‘aqdām ‘feet’ (see, e.g., Ratcliffe 1998: 79-80; the

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1 Definitions of kalām al-‘arab found in literature and ultimately in the history of western Arabicist scholarship are apparently based on Arabic grammatical tradition, which abstracts linguistic features from the linguistic materials. For instance (see, e.g., Owens 2013), grammarians describe taltala (the i-vowel in the prefix of an imperfective verb) without reporting a stock of verbs including this feature. An alternative approach is adopted here, which privileges Arabic lexicographers and the linguistic materials of kalām al-‘arab as recorded by them in massive detail. The definition of kalām al-‘arab adopted in this study is therefore based on lexicographers’ conception of it. They distinguished kalām al-‘arab from the two other primary sources of Classical Arabic, the Koran and pre-Islamic poetry, on chronological and stylistic grounds. These two sources chronologically precede kalām al-‘arab and stand out for their degree of literary elaboration, as opposed to kalām al-‘arab, which represents a vernacular source: see Baalbaki (2014: 29). Literary elaboration involves metric structure not only in pre-Islamic poetry but also in the Koran. The issue of interpolation concerning kalām al-‘arab is discussed in Section 6, below. Guillaume (2007: 176) provides a different definition of kalām al-‘arab: ‘Although the expression kalām al-‘arab seems to refer to the living usage of the Bedouin Arabs, it should be taken in the restrictive sense of the literary variety of Arabic reflected in the Qur’ān and the ancient poetry.’ According to this definition, kalām al-‘arab is a sort of umbrella-term, which encompasses the Koran and pre-Islamic poetry. This definition is not followed here, since it somewhat obscures the features of kalām al-‘arab that distinguish it from the Koran and pre-Islamic poetry, namely, its non-literary nature and more recent attestations.

2 For instance, the same theoretical framework informs al-Khalīl’s (d. 175/791) and Sibawayhi’s (d. 180/796) description of number marking, as is shown by shared terms such as adnā l-‘adad ‘low number’ and taqlīl ‘diminution in number;’ cp. Fück (1936: 628).

3 In this study, initial hamza is transliterated only when relevant for linguistic description.
diminutive in noun plural marking is indicated by the infixal morpheme .u.ay. (the same form of diminutive is observed in noun singular marking as well).

Since Classical Arabic is partly derived from kalām al-ʿarab, a definition of the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking in Classical Arabic might also be valid as a first approximation for kalām al-ʿarab itself, for practical orientation.

If the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking are defined along the above lines, a clear distributional asymmetry is observed between them. While the plural of paucity can occur in isolation, the diminutive cannot. The latter must occur instead in certain environments, consisting of several kinds of collectives and plurals including the plural of paucity itself. For instance, in the diminutivized plural noun ʿuqaydām, the initial hamza and final ā show that the diminutive occurs within the environment .ā.ā already observed in the plural of paucity ʿaqdām.

This asymmetry influences the arrangement of linguistic materials in the present research: the diminutive will be presented and studied here in conjunction with the environments where it occurs, including the plural of paucity. With the exception of the plural of paucity, these environments are not an object of study in their own right in this article. Thus the plural of paucity plays a double conceptual role in the present research, to the extent that it is both an object of study in its own right and part of the object of study represented by the diminutive.

3. Status quaestionis

3.1. The plural of paucity

The plural of paucity has mainly been investigated in connection with the quantity of entities it may represent.

It is traditionally said to denote a set of few entities, ranging from three to ten in number, unlike the so-called plural of multitude, or of abundance, which denotes many entities, from ten onward (Fleisch 1961: 516, fn. 3; Ferrando 2006: 40).

Modern scholars, such as Ferrando (2006) and Waltisberg (2006), have assessed this traditional claim against statistical textual analyses, based on different sources, periods, and literary genres of Classical Arabic, as well as on different kinds of linguistic evidence, such as contextual meaning and agreement patterns. According to these statistical textual analyses, the traditional distinction between
the plurals of paucity and of multitude appears not to be empirically grounded. In texts, the few entities traditionally said to be denoted by the plural of paucity are also denoted by the plural of multitude; likewise, the many entities traditionally said to be denoted by the plural of multitude are also denoted by the plural of paucity. In particular, the two different quantitative values of few and many entities can be diagnosed through two different kinds of agreement patterns. A plural noun agrees with a plural adjective or verb when it refers to few entities, while it agrees with a feminine singular adjective or verb when referring to many entities. To judge from data reported by al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822), cited in Ferrando (2006: 55-6) and reproduced in 1. below, kalām al-ʿarab is among the primary sources of Classical Arabic that attest to both agreement patterns.

The same agreement patterns are also observed in modern Arabic dialects. The latter differ from Classical Arabic only in that, ceteris paribus, they attest an additional factor triggering the agreement of a plural noun with a plural adjective or verb. Such an agreement pattern in fact takes place not only when a plural noun refers to few entities, as in Classical Arabic, but also when a plural noun is combined with virtually any numeral from two onward. Because of space limitations, only the agreement pattern concerning a plural noun denoting few entities is exemplified here, for both kalām al-ʿarab and Arabic dialects:

1. Plural of paucity | thalāṭatuʿayyām | khalawna | (kalām al-ʿarab)⁶
| three days | remain.PL | ‘three days remain [to the end of the month]’

Dialectal parallel | māṭu-lḥa | ṛbʿa d l- ṭlād | (Moroccan Ar.)⁷
| died.PL-of-her | four of kids | ‘four of her kids died’

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⁴ Ratcliffe (1998) reaches the same results through a statistical analysis based on several Arabic dictionaries rather than on a corpus of texts.
⁵ In Blanc’s (1970: 52) own words: ‘The literature contains scattered observations stating that PC [scil. plural concord] is either mandatory or preferred in expressions involving a numeral or some other enumerating or quantifying device.’ By the latter term Blanc means a quantifier, including the quantifier denoting precisely a few entities (e.g., shwayyit ‘some’).
⁷ Data from Brustad (2000: 69).
In sum, in *kalām al-‘arab*, the plural of paucity, like the plural of multitude, may ambiguously denote few or many entities: in a componential notation (Table 1 in Section 3.3.), it conveys \[\text{SOME}\] in conjunction with \[\text{MANY}\]. For this linguistic reason, the plural of paucity \textit{cannot} be identified with the paucal plural known from language typology, which exclusively denotes few entities, i.e., conveys \[\text{SOME}\] to the exclusion of \[\text{MANY}\]; nor can the plural of multitude be identified with the so-called multal plural, which exclusively denotes many entities, i.e., conveys \[\text{MANY}\] to the exclusion of \[\text{SOME}\].

That said, the question remains \textit{why} Arabic linguistic tradition assumed the plural of paucity to exclusively denote few entities (i.e., to be genuinely paucal from a modern perspective), and the plural of multitude to exclusively denote many entities (i.e., to be genuinely multal).

The discussion so far gives a good idea of the considerable amount of attention scholars have devoted to the number value of the plural of paucity. By contrast, Fück (1936) seems to be the only scholar to have investigated another semantic facet of the plural of paucity: its capability to denote a collection of entities (\textit{kollektiven Grundbedeutung}). According to Fück (1936: 628), this is a corollary of the more general diachronic assumption that Classical Arabic broken plurals developed out of collectives (\textit{plurales paucitatis} [...] \textit{wie alle gebrochenen Plurale, alte Kollektiva sind}).

Remarkably, Fück’s collective interpretation of the plural of paucity implies that a plural nominal form can be associated with a collective meaning (collection), which is quite at odds with the received view of Western linguistics, which assigns to a plural nominal form member-semantics, and to a

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9 Data from Brustad (2000: 54).
10 Cross-linguistically, the paucal plural denotes a few entities through a synthetic strategy, i.e., through a bound morpheme within a word. In 1. above it appears that Arabic dialects denote few entities, alternatively, through an analytic strategy, i.e., through a word combined with another word (cp. shwayyit + noun ‘some’).
collective nominal form collection-semantics. However, Fück’s view cannot be dismissed so easily, for it is confirmed by recent semantic studies. A collective nominal form may convey member-in addition to collection-semantics (Corbett 2012: 102-104 and references therein), and likewise a plural nominal form may convey collection-in addition to member-semantics (Acquaviva 2008: 129). On this semantic level, collection is a multifactorial notion that includes, *inter alia*, cohesion and/or interchangeability. Cohesion defines entities linked together by a common source and/or space and/or function, which can be numerically low (a family) or high (a society) (Grimm 2018: 546-547, 650-651). Interchangeability defines entities perceived as lacking distinct identities, so that one can be replaced by another with no sensible difference, e.g., insects (Acquaviva 2008: 154, 177-178). Conversely, members are neither cohesive nor interchangeable.

Since a collective nominal form cannot be defined any longer through collection-semantics, nor can a plural nominal form be defined through member-semantics, the most straightforward manner of defining either kind of nominal form is mainly morphological, which is based on the cross-linguistic description of collectives and plurals proposed by Tiersma (1982). A collective nominal form is a stem denoting multiple entities; when expanded through a bound morpheme, it denotes a single entity. Conversely, a plural nominal form, *including the plural of paucity*, is a stem expanded through a bound morpheme to denote more entities. When not expanded by this morpheme, it denotes a single entity. Thus, collective and plural nominal forms tend to display opposite directions of markedness: from multiple entities to a single entity in a collective, and from a single entity to multiple entities in a plural (Grimm 2018: 530-531). In summary:

2. **Markedness:** stem + additional marker
   
   Collective: more entities > single entity
   
   Plural (of paucity): single entity > more entities

Cases in point in *kalām al-‘arab* are, respectively, the collective *tamr/a ‘date(s),’* where the bound morpheme *at* denotes a single entity; and the plural of paucity *qadam/aqdām ‘foot/feet,’* where the circumfixal bound morpheme *‘a.ā.* denotes more entities.

To determine the member- or collection-semantics of a collective or plural nominal form, some diagnostic criteria are required. Regarding the collective nominal form, in English its member- or

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11 The formally unmarked status of the collective is traditionally worded as ‘morphologically singular’ (see, e.g., Depraetere 2003: 86). More theoretically-oriented definitions describe it as displaying ‘local marking’ or ‘subtractive morphology.’
collection-semantics is diagnosed through the presence of plural or singular agreement as in, respectively, the aristocracy are... vs. the swarm is... 12

In the search for a similar diagnostic criterion for kalām al-ʿarab, particularly useful is Sibawayhi’s remark concerning the Koran (XXVII, 18), where the collective nominal form naml agrees with a verb bearing the ending ā in the clause ayyūhā l-namlu-dkhulū masākina-kum ‘Ants, enter your dwelling-places.’13 Sibawayhi (al-Kitāb, II, 47) explicitly states that this kind of agreement is possible only on the condition that naml stands for human beings (l-anāṣi).14 In this semantic context, the referent ‘ants’ is assimilated to the referent ‘human beings,’ who are loosely cohesive and not interchangeable, and so the referent ‘ants’ can be said in modern terms to convey member-semantics through the mediation of a metaphor, rather than the expected collection-semantics (typically ants are functionally cohesive and interchangeable):

3. l-namlu -dkhulū (ants intended as) human beings enter!PL15
   Correlation: member-semantics ↔ agreement-marker ā

Sibawayhi (al-Kitāb, II, 46ff) also reports many examples of kalām al-ʿarab in which the same referent of human beings is expressed through the collective nominal form qawm ‘people,’ which accordingly conveys member-semantics. In these examples, the referent in question agrees with an adjective bearing, again, the ending ā, as in qawmu-ka ḫasanūna ‘your people is handsome:

4. qawmu-ka ḫasanūna (people, i.e.,) human beings handsome.PL
   Correlation: member-semantics ↔ agreement-marker ā

It follows from Sibawayhi’s description that in kalām al-ʿarab (and perhaps in the Koran), member- and collection-semantics are diagnosed through the presence of agreement with a verb or adjective displaying the ending ā, or lack thereof.

12 See, e.g., Depraetere (2003: 101) and Corbett (2012: 102-104) and references therein.
13 The English translation of the Koran is Arberry’s.
14 wa-ṣāra l-namlu bi-tilka l-manzilati ḫina ẓaddathta ‘an-hu ka-mā tuḥaddithu ‘an-i l-anāṣi.
15 Abbreviations in morphemic glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules.
Turning to the plural nominal form (which in principle includes the plural of paucity), it conveys collection-semantics when displaying some diagnostic properties internal to the stem, in which case it may be labeled an inherent plural. These properties distinguish an inherent plural from its counterpart with member-semantics, i.e., the traditionally recognized plural (Acquaviva 2008: 129). An inherent plural is irregular in that (I) it displays gender inversion with respect to the singular; (II) it may alternate with a regular plural; and (III) its morpheme ‘is nowhere else in the language an exponent for plurality.’ Furthermore, (IV) it denotes inanimates (V) that occur as a homogeneous subgrouping, such as (paired) body parts and measurement units.

An example from Italian is *braccia* ‘arms,’ which displays the irregular feminine-like ending *a* with respect to the masculine pair *braccio* ‘arm’/*bracci* ‘armrests:’

5. *braccia* ‘arms.f’
   (I) gender inversion relative to the singular form: *braccio* ‘arms.m’
   (II) a regular plural: *bracci* ‘armrests.m’
   (III) not an exponent for plurality: *bracci-a* ‘arms.f,’ *cas-a* ‘house.f,’ *mel-a* ‘apple.f’
   (IV) inanimate: ‘arms’
   (V) (paired) body parts, measurements units: ‘arms’

Specifically for *kalām al-‘arab*, the inherent plural is still a virtually unexplored topic. The early lexicographer al-Khalil (Kitāb al-‘Ayn, I, 117) attests the following utterance of *kalām al-‘arab*: *inkhara‘at a‘ḍā‘u l-ba‘īr* ‘the limbs of the camel became displaced,’ in which the plural of paucity ‘a‘ḍā‘ ‘limbs’ qualifies as an inherent plural in a loose manner, given that it displays only some diagnostic properties defining this kind of plural, one of which is indeed uncertain:

   (I) gender inversion relative to singular?: *‘uḍw ‘arm.m* (a‘ḍā‘ ‘limbs’ displays syntactic but not inherent feminine gender: see its agreement with *inkhara‘at ‘becomes displaced.f’)
   (IV) inanimate: ‘limbs’
   (V) (paired) body parts, measurements units: ‘limbs’

The considerations concerning *a‘ḍā‘* in 6. also apply to some lexemes of *kalām al-‘arab* mentioned by Sibawayhi (al-Kitāb, III, 491), which accordingly qualify as loosely defined inherent plurals: *‘akuff ‘palms of the hands* – *‘ukayff, ‘arjul ‘feet* – *‘urayjil, ‘aqdām ‘feet* – *‘uqaydām, ‘afkhādh ‘thighs* – *‘ufaykhād.*
Interestingly, these loosely defined inherent plurals are all plurals of paucity like the lexeme ‘aḍā’ cited by al-Khalil and, what is more, they all undergo diminutivization.

Overall, this data clarifies the existence of nouns that partly behave as inherent plurals in kalām al-ʿarab. This data also shows that the study of the plural of paucity calls for a better understanding of the phenomenon of the inherent plural and that, generally speaking, a study of this sort should abandon the traditional conceptual pairs plural/member-semantics and collective/collection-semantics in favor of a more flexible conceptualization, in line with Fück’s (1936) insights.

3.2. The diminutive in noun plural marking

The form and meaning of the diminutive in noun plural marking have been extensively studied in Arabic dialects, while its Classical Arabic counterpart has been almost exclusively investigated on the level of form, with the notable exception of Fück (1936), who discusses its semantics with particular reference to collective and plural nouns.

It is also noteworthy that Fück (1936) includes kalām al-ʿarab among the sources of Classical Arabic that are the object of his study. Central to Fück’s study is the observation that the Classical Arabic diminutive in noun plural marking seemingly oscillates between the meaning of ‘small’ and ‘some.’ On the one hand, Sībawayhi (d. 170/796) generally describes the diminutive in noun plural marking, e.g., the diminutivized broken plural ʿubayya (from ʿibya ‘boys’), as referring to some boys. The relevant locus probans is the following: ‘One makes the diminutive [...] since one means only to assign paucity to a plural [taqlīl al-jam’]’ (see Section 4.1., Text 3).

On the other hand, texts do not necessarily confirm Sībawayhi’s description: for instance, in a poetic line cited by Sībawayhi himself (al-Kitāb, III, 486), the semantic context, notably the elative asgharu-hum ‘littlest of them,’ forces instead the reading ‘little boys’ for the same lexeme. This example shows that Fück (1936: 630ff.) derives his observations partly from traditional medieval scholars (grammarians, lexicographers, Koranic commentators, polymaths) and partly from texts.

Reference works on Arabic grammar usually provide no translation for the diminutive in noun plural marking, i.e., for diminutivized plurals, which clearly points to their difficult semantic interpretation. Recently, Lancioni (2011) has provided a critical translation of the ample section of al-Kitāb that Sībawayhi (d. 170/796) devoted to the diminutive, including its occurrence in noun plural

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16 The literature concerning Arabic dialects is cited in Section 6. below.

marking. Interestingly, kalām al-‘arab is among the sources of Classical Arabic of which Sibawayhi avails himself to describe the diminutive in noun plural marking in that section.

In sum, Fück’s (1936) study and Lancioni’s (2011) translation bring to light a poorly explored topic, the semantics of the diminutive in noun plural marking in Classical Arabic, and especially in kalām al-‘arab, which requires further investigation.

3.3. Terminology

From the foregoing review of current opinions on the subject of the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking, it emerges that these terms imply no clear indication for the semantics of the linguistic entities they describe, when they are applied to Classical Arabic and especially to kalām al-‘arab. Actually, in the current state of knowledge, the term ‘plural of paucity’ describes no effectively attested paucal meaning in the case of kalām al-‘arab (Section 3.1.). Likewise, the term ‘diminutive in noun plural marking’ refers to a linguistic entity whose meaning ambiguously denotes smallness or paucity (Section 3.2.). It follows that these terms are intended here to describe only formal features of the lexical attestations of kalām al-‘arab under scrutiny, such as the vocalism ‘a.ā., etc. (the plural of paucity), or the vocalism u.ay. (the diminutive in noun plural marking).¹⁸

Accordingly, in this study the terms ‘plural of paucity’ and ‘diminutive in noun plural marking’ are non-committal with respect to the actual semantics of the formal features in question. Rather, the semantics of ‘plural of paucity’ and ‘diminutive in noun plural marking’ are expected to emerge from a preliminary description of attestations of kalām al-‘arab, as well as from a distributional analysis of them; they do not constitute an assumption guiding the preliminary description and distributional analysis.

The terms ‘plural’ and ‘collective’ warrant attention as well. Albeit with different semantic nuances, in the scholarly literature ‘collective,’ just like ‘plural,’ basically describes plurality, i.e., entities numbering more than one (Corbett 2004, Acquaviva 2008). Thus, in spite of the obvious etymological connection, the very term ‘plurality’ may become misleading, if understood as describing ‘plural’ alone. Again, ‘plural’ and ‘collective’ are intended here to describe formal features of a noun: in practice, in this study these terms are shorthand for ‘plural nominal form’ and ‘collective nominal form.’

¹⁸ As is well-known, the vocalism u.ay. also occurs in noun singular marking.
To avoid conceptual misunderstandings, the componential notation [MORE] is adopted here to describe the semantic feature (component) of plurality, which occurs in both plural and collective nominal forms. However, due to its wide currency, the term ‘plural marking’ is retained here, with the caveat that it describes [MORE], i.e., plurality as a whole, thereby encompassing ‘collectives’ in addition to ‘plurals.’ Componential notation is used in place of traditional terminology in this study for other semantic features as well, which are listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic feature</th>
<th>Traditional terminology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ONE]</td>
<td>singular, singulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SOME]</td>
<td>few, some, little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[MANY]</td>
<td>many, much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY]</td>
<td>paucal, paucity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[MANY] to the exclusion of [SOME]</td>
<td>multal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Componential notation

Finally, the fine-grained terminological distinction between ‘derivational’ and ‘lexical’ morphemes is followed in this study, to stress the capability of noun plural marking to manifest itself, respectively, through bound morphemes or through a stem (Acquaviva 2008). To the extent that broken plurals resort to bound morphemes, notably infixal and circumfixal morphemes to express [MORE], and may but need not involve semantic specialization, they can be regarded as derivational plurals (Acquaviva 2008: 212).

4. Sources

*Kalām al-ʿarab* is a primary source of Classical Arabic that, unlike its other primary sources, namely the Koran and pre-Islamic poetry, has been transmitted only indirectly – encapsulated, so to speak, in grammatical or lexicographical sources.

Attestations of *kalām al-ʿarab* concerning the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking will be drawn here from these indirect sources of grammatical or lexicographical nature, especially when such sources are coeval to the period of attestation of the primary source, *kalām al-ʿarab*.

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19 Because of the occurrence of dual marking in *kalām al-ʿarab* and, generally speaking, in Classical Arabic and Arabic dialects, the componential notation [MORE THAN TWO] would be more accurate, but more cumbersome as well.
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This kind of indirect source is generally referred to as an early (indirect) source. An important early source is Sibawayhi (Section 2.1), which is presented here in the English translation by Lancioni (2011), with some modifications. Unless otherwise stated, the remaining early sources are lexicographical. In some cases, attestations of kalām al-‘arab are drawn from indirect sources dating after the first half of the ninth century, usually referred to as late sources. They are all lexicographical, except for Ibn Ya‘ish (d. 643/1245), a grammarian, and al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333), a polymath. Early and late sources are arranged here by genre (grammar, lexicography, erudite works) and in chronological order.

4.1. Sibawayhi (d. 180/796)

al-Kitāb, III, 335-6 (Text 1):

Regarding the irregular change of apophony, they say hudhayl/hudhaliyy [...], banū ‘abīda/’ubadiyy, with u after ‘ and a after b: they said precisely ‘ubadiyy.’

al-Kitāb, III, 378 (Text 2):

You say nafariyy, raḥṭyy expanding nafar, raḥṭ through iyy.

al-Kitāb, III, 489-91 (Text 3):

One makes the diminutive of each scheme of paucity [adnà l-‘adad], without going beyond to another [of multitude] since one means only to assign paucity to a plural [taqlīl al-gam’]. [...] The plural of paucity has specific schemes that belong to it in principle [fī l-aṣl], but the [plural of multitude] [al-akthar] can share them. [...] They are four schemes: all other schemes in principle are for multitude, even if they can be shared by paucity. [...] This happens, for example, in the diminutive of ‘aklub – ‘ukaylib [...]. So we heard them from the Arabs. [...]
I asked al-Khalil about the diminutive of dūr ‘dwellings’ and he answered: I restore it to the scheme for paucity, since I want to diminish its number. [...] if you do not like this, the diminutive will be according to the singular, by adding the t of the plural to it. [...] if you made the diminutive of jafanāt ‘bowls’ when their number is beyond ten, you would say jufaynāt without going beyond the number, because it is a scheme for paucity. [...] In fact [the Arabs] say darāhim ‘dirhams’ – durayhimāt of fityān ‘young men’ or futayya – futayyūna.25

al-Kitāb, III, 494 (Text 4):

For instance, you say qawm – quwaym [...] Analogously nafar, raḥt.26

4.2. Ibn Ya’ish (d. 643/1245)

Sharh al-Mufaṣṣal, III, 323:

Had it been a broken plural, it would have been restored to the singular, with the plural āt added to it [scil. tamarāt], so as to make the diminutive, e.g., tumayrāt.27

**Notes:**

23 This lexeme exemplifies a plural of multitude, as it displays none of the four circumfixal morphemes typical of the plural of paucity.

24 I.e., the ending āt, as is exemplified by durayhimāt immediately below.


26 wa-dhalika qawlu-ka fi qawmin quwaymin [...] wa-kadhalika l-nafspu wa-l-raḥt.

27 wa-law kāna mukassaran la-rudda fi l-taṣṣhirī ilā l-wāḥidī wa-jumīa bi-alīṣī wa-l-tā’ī nahwa tumayrāt.
4.3. Al-Khalil (d. 175/791)

Kitāb al-’Ayn, II, 188 (Text 1):

l-’ashiyya is the end of the day, and when you say l-’ashiyya, this is [referred] to the single day, as you say I have met you today in the ‘ashiyya of some day or in a ‘ashiyya. If they make the diminutive of l-’ashiyya, they say ‘ushayshyān. [They say so] in the shafā, that is the last hour of the day, at the mughayribān of the sun.28

Kitāb al-’Ayn, IV, 19 (Text 2):

l-raḥt is a number [of people],29 from three to ten, who are put together.30 Someone says: from seven to ten, whereas from seven down to three is nafar.31

Kitāb al-’Ayn, IV, 40 (Text 3):

The people of Hijaz say ‘this.f is dhahab’ [...] and [call] dhahaba a piece of it; whereas people who are not from Hijaz say ‘this.m is dhahab.’32

Kitāb al-’Ayn, IV, 104 (Text 4):

In the diminutive muwayh and in the plural miyāh. Among the Arabs someone says ‘this.f is a mā’a,’ like the Banū Tamīm, meaning a well with its water.33

Kitāb al-’Ayn, VIII, 55 (Text 5):

l-dhawd is from three to ten [taken] out of a camel herd.34

28 al-’ashiyya ākhiru l-nahār fa-īdhā qulta ‘ashiyya fa-hiya li-yawmin wāhiδin tasqūlu laṣṭu-hu ‘ashiyyata yawmin kadhā wa-’ashiyyata min a l-’ashiyyūt wa-īdhā ʂaghghara l-’ashiyya qalā l-’ushayshyān wa-dhaliika ‘inda l-shafā wa-huwā ākhiru sā’atīn min a l-nahārī ‘inda mughayribān l-shams.

29 This integration is inferred from the following comparison between raḥt and nafar.

30 A more uncertain interpretation, which considers ‘adad and yujma’u as technical terms, would be: ‘l-raḥt is a [low?] number [of people], which is employed as a plural [to refer to entities] from three to ten.’

31 al-raḥṭu ‘adadan yujma’u min thalāṭathatīn ilā ‘ashratīn wa-yuqūlu min sab’atīn ilā ‘ashratīn wa-mā dānā l-sab’atī lāl l-thalāṭathati nafar.

32 wa-aḥlu l-ḥijāzi yaqūlu hiyya l-dhahab […] wa-l-qif’atu min-hā dhahaba wa-ḥayru-hum yaqūlu huwa l-dhahab.

33 fī l-tasqūhī muwayh wa-fī l-jamī‘i miyāh wa-min a l-‘arabi man yaqūlu hadhihi mā’ā ka-bani tamīmīn ya’nūn l-rākiyya.

34 al-dhawdū min a l-īblī min a l-thalāṭhī ilā l-‘ashār.
4.4. Abū ‘Ubayda (d. 209/824)

*Tahdhib al-Lugha*, VI, 118 (by al-Azhari, d. 370/981):

Ibn al-Sikkit ascribes the following words to Abū ‘Ubayda: if the bucket almost reached its maximum capacity, this [condition] is its *nahd*, so they say: *nahidat* the maximum capacity. He also said: if the bucket is below its maximum capacity, they say: ‘*arradtu* [...] He also said: *waḍakhtu* or *awḍakhtu*, if you put *muwayha* at its bottom.\(^{35}\)

4.5. al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869)

al-Mudhakkar wa-l-Mu’annaθ, 145-146:

*l-dhawd* is a feminine [noun taken] out of a camel herd, is said only of she-camels, and its diminutive is *dhuwayd*. [...] They say irregularly: *he has three, four, ten dhawd* for three etc. [she-camels taken] out of a camel herd.\(^{36}\)

4.6. Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 282/895)

Al-Nabāt, 162:

They are *tīnānī*, two high mountains far north in the land of the Ghaṣafān, at the feet of which is *muwayha*, called al-tīna.\(^{37}\)

4.7. Al-Azhari (d. 370/981)

*Tahdhib al-Lugha*, VI, 195 (by al-Azhari, d. 370/981) (Text 1):

*suhaybatun* of water, that is some *muwayha*.\(^{38}\)

*Tāj al-‘Arūs*, XIX, 312 (by al-Zabīdī, d. 1205/1791) (Text 2):

\(^{35}\) rawâ bru l-sikkîti li-abî ‘ubaydata amma-hu qāla iḍhā qârabat-i l-dalwet l-mal’-a fa-huwa nahdu-hâ yuqālū nahidat l-mal’ qāla fa-iḍhâ kâna dâna mal’i-hâ qîla ‘*arradtu* fi l-dalw [...] wa-qâla waḍakhtu wa-awḍakhtu iḍhâ ja’alatu fi asfâl-hâ muwayha.

\(^{36}\) wa-l-dhawed min-a l-ibli mu’annathwa wa-lā yuqālū illâ min-a l-niâqî wa-l-tasghiru dhaweddan [...] wa-yuqālū ‘alâ ghayri qiyyâs la-hu thalâthu dhawad li-thalâthih min-a l-ibli wa-arba’u dhawad wa’-ashâru dhawad.

\(^{37}\) humâ tînânî jabalînî tawilânî fi mahabbî l-shimâli min dâri ghatafâna fi uṣâlî-himî muwayhatun yuqâlū la-hâ l-tîna.

\(^{38}\) suḥaybatun min mā’tîn, ay muwayhatun qâlīlā.
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Al-Azhari reported from Tha’lab: the meaning of raḥt is plural, but no singular can be derived from its stem.\(^{39}\)

4.8. Nashwān al-Ḥimyārī (d. 573/1178)

Shams al-‘Ulām, VII, 466:

\(l^{-}\)uqrubān is masculine singular [?] with respect to \(l^{-}\)aqārib.\(^{40}\)

4.9. Al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791)

Tāj al-‘Arūs, III, 424:

\(l^{-}\)aqrāb is a collective. So it is heard [among the Arabs].\(^{41}\)

4.10. Al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333)

Nihāyat al-Arab, II, 285:

The tenth layer [of tribal organization] is the raḥt, that is a man’s raḥt, and his usra, having the status of the toes. The raḥt is below ten, while the usra is more.\(^{42}\)

5. Form-oriented description

The attestations of kalām al-‘arab collected in Section 4. bring to light a stock of plurals of paucity richer than that usually assumed for Classical Arabic (Section 2.): in Sibawayhi’s description a plural of paucity is any stem that, to express nuances of [MORE], is morphologically expanded not only through the circumfixal morphemes ‘a..u., ‘a..ā., ‘a..i.a, .i..a (broken plural), but also through masculine and feminine sound plural endings (Section 4.1., Text 3).

Furthermore, the collected attestations of kalām al-‘arab confirm for this primary source the basic distributional asymmetry, assumed in Section 2 for practical orientation, between the plural of paucity, which can occur without the diminutive; and the diminutive in noun plural marking, which cannot

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39 rawā l-azhariyyu ‘an abī l-‘abbās al-raḥṭu ma’nā-hu l-jam’u wa-lā wāhidā la-hu min lafḍī-h.
40 al-‘uqrubān dhakaru l-‘aqārib.
41 wa-qad sumi’ā l-‘aqrābū fr-smī l-jins.
42 al-ṭabaqatu l-‘āshiratu l-raḥṭu wa-hum raḥṭu l-rajuli wa-usrātī l-qādam wa-l-raḥṭu dūnā l-’ashrāti wa-l-usrātī akhtharu min dhālīka.
occurs without the plural of paucity and, generally speaking, without a nominal form denoting [MORE]. Specifically for kalām al-ʿarab, the nominal forms in question are, in addition to the aforesaid kinds of plural of paucity, also the plural of multitude and three kinds of collective, notably mono-stem, multi-stem, and optional collective. To the extent that in noun plural marking the diminutive must co-occur with these forms, they can be seen as environments of it (Harris 1951).

Plurals of paucity have been formally described immediately above. The plural of multitude is, following Sībawayhi (Section 4.1., Text 3), any stem that is morphologically expanded through any infixal or circumfixal morpheme other than ʿa..u., ʿa..ā, ʿa..i.a, i..a, to express nuances of [MORE]. Interestingly, in Sībawayhi’s description, this kind of plural is not an environment for the diminutive, i.e., no diminutivized noun is directly derived from a plural of multitude, which resorts to suppletion instead, as is exemplified, inter alia, by the lexical pair fīṭyān, futayyūna (instead of the expected *futayyān).

Finally, a collective is a stem that undergoes no morphological expansion to express [MORE] or nuances of it: e.g., ibl ‘camel herd,’ dhawd ‘herd of she-camels (from three to ten)’ (Section 4.3., Text 5 and Section 4.5.).

However, the same stem can be morphologically expanded through the endings at, īyy, and perhaps ān, to express [ONE]. The latter ending is uncertainly attested in late sources, through the zoomyn ‘aqrubān ‘scorpion’ (Section 4.8.), as opposed to the collective ‘aqrāb ‘scorpions’ (Section 4.9.). The morphological expansion through at, īyy, and perhaps ān defines a mono-stem collective.

In certain nouns, this kind of morphological expansion is subject to dialectal variation: al-Khalīl reports that dhāhaba and māʿa are confined to the usage of a given speakers’ community (ahl al-Ḥijāz and Banū Tamīm, respectively: Section 4.3., Texts 3, 4). Similarly, raḥtiyy seems to be possible only for the (unknown) informants consulted by Sībawayhi (Section 4.1., Text 2 and Section 4.7., Text 2). A stem of this sort is an optional collective.

Finally, morphological expansion of the stem through at, īyy, and perhaps ān to express [ONE] may not be allowed at all, in which case a totally different (technically speaking, suppletive) stem is used instead. In this case a multi-stem collective obtains. This is exemplified by lexical sets such as ibl ‘camel herd,’ jamal ‘camel,’ and nāqa ‘she-camel’ (Section 4.3., Text 5 and Section 4.5.).

In particular, in the collected attestations of kalām al-ʿarab the mono-stem collective stands out as a unique environment for the diminutive. In Sībawayhi’s description (Section 4.1., Text 1), for a mono-stem collective referring to a tribal unit, the morphological expansion through īyy may be not be

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43 According to a more traditional terminology, ism al-jins and ism al-jam’, respectively. These terms, however, raise many interpretive issues (Dror 2016 for an up-to-date discussion and references).
sufficient to express [ONE]: it may also require the diminutive. The latter, however, in this specific environment changes its form from *u.ay. to *u.a., undergoing y-deletion: e.g., ‘abīda ‘Abīda’ – ‘ubadīyy ’a man from ‘Abīda.’

Such a definition of the collective in terms of morphological expansion through at, īyy, and perhaps ān purposely avoids any allusion to its meaning, apart from the basic feature [ONE]. As is shown by traditional terms such as ism al-wahda and nomen unitatis, reference grammars of Classical Arabic semantically characterize at and īyy as denoting a unitizer, i.e., as an item taken from a collection; yet, in the collected attestations of kalām al-‘arab, the ending at does not necessarily qualify as a unitizer when co-occurring with an optional collective, as is shown by al-Khalil's gloss of mā‘a as ‘water well,’ which does not refer to an item taken from a collection but rather points to an unpredictable (lexicalized) meaning instead (Section 4.3., Text 4).

Overall, the collected attestations of kalām al-‘arab can be couched in a form-oriented description centered on the notions of stem and morphological expansion through a marker, along the lines of Tiersma's (1982) cross-linguistic description, discussed in Section 3.1. and schematized in 1. above. Such a description allows for a first practical classification of the two intermingled objects of study, the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking, regardless of their exact meaning. As schematized in the white cells of Table 2 below, this classification includes the diminutive in all of its environments, illustrating any environment both in isolation and in conjunction with the diminutive itself. The two forms of environment are referred to here as the basic and diminutivized collective or plural. This classification includes three kinds of plural of paucity, intended both as environments of the diminutive and as a separate object of study (Section 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Semantic structure</th>
<th>Diminutivized</th>
<th>Semantic structure</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>màqīsa ‘water’</td>
<td>[one]</td>
<td>màqīṣīliḥ</td>
<td>[six]</td>
<td>* in uncertain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Classification of instances of the plural of paucity and the diminutive
6. Semantic description

In the collected attestations of kalām al-ʿarab, form and meaning are not on the same footing.

While the formal features of a basic/diminutivized collective or plural attested in kalām al-ʿarab are directly observable, at least with respect to the consonantal dactus, its semantic features are not. Rather, they must be inferred from two kinds of linguistic environments, namely the lexemes that surround such a noun within an utterance or a lexical field (Harris 1951: 190-191). Alternatively, its semantic features are indirectly observable within a metalinguistic description, usually labeled as a gloss in lexicographical work.

Because of their indirect nature, an utterance, a lexical field, or a metalinguistic description raise problems of authenticity, so they can serve as semantic evidence but must be treated with caution. In fact, such kinds of evidence might have been subject to selection bias, not to speak of interpolation: an early grammarian or lexicographer might have selected certain utterances, lexical fields, or metalinguistic descriptions from the universe of discourse of kalām al-ʿarab to the exclusion of others, or even modified them, for some theoretical or ideological reasons. To overcome these problems, for any basic/diminutivized collective or plural of kalām al-ʿarab, a parallel with modern living usage, i.e., with a modern Arabic dialect, will be provided here whenever available.

A semantic description of the collected attestations of kalām al-ʿarab arranges them into entries, each including:

- a basic collective or plural
- its diminutivized counterpart
- their meaning, derived from the semantic evidence available in early sources
- a dialectal parallel

The meaning derived from early sources is enclosed in apostrophes if recorded by them in the form of metalinguistic description, including glosses. If not enclosed in apostrophes, the meaning derived from early sources is a contextual meaning inferred from an utterance or a lexical field. Sometimes, further semantic evidence is adduced, especially for the meaning of a basic/diminutivized collective or plural derived from a late source. The resulting entries are illustrated in the following.
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7. mā’ – muwayḥ; muwayha\(^{44}\) (Section 4.3., Text 3; Section 4.4.)

‘water’ ‘some water’ (muwayhatun qalila)

’sal – ‘silā (Moroccan Arabic)\(^{45}\)

‘miel’ ‘du miel’

The meaning ‘some water’ (muwayhatun qalila) in 7. reflects a gloss drawn from a late source. However, further semantic evidence for this meaning from an early source is provided by the following locus probans (Section 4.4.):

If the bucket almost reached its maximum capacity, this [condition] is its nahd […]. If the bucket is below its maximum capacity, they say: ‘arraḍtu […] He also said: waḍakhtu or awḍakhtu, if you put muwayha [some/*much water] at its bottom.

This evidence is a lexical field denoting decreasing capacity, forcing precisely the reading ‘some water’ for muwayha:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEXICAL FIELD: [DECREASING CAPACITY]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nahd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another contextual meaning is available for muwayha in early sources such as Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 282/895), in whose description this noun is modified by a proper noun: ‘at the feet of which is muwayha, called al-tīna’ (Section 4.6.). In this case, the proper noun itself rules out the mass reading ‘some water,’ forcing the reading ‘little well’ instead, i.e., a diminutivized form of mā’a ‘water well’ (Section 4.3., Text 4).

\(^{44}\) No dialectal parallel has been found for the form muwayḥ attested in Section 4.3., Text 4. Muwayḥ is also attested in a ḥadīth, but no contextual meaning can be inferred for it. The ḥadīth reads as follows: kāna mūsā ‘alay-hi l-salām yaqhtasīlū ‘inda muwayḥ ‘Moses – peace be upon him – was washing himself at a little bath (?)’ (Tāj al-‘Arūs, XXXVI: 508). The conjectural English translation is based on Exodus XL, 30-31, which this ḥadīth probably echoes.

\(^{45}\) Caubet et al. (1989: 51). Lane (1863, s. v. ‘SL) based on late lexicographers, also records the lexeme ‘usayla, formally and perhaps semantically akin to ‘silā. In this Moroccan lexeme, the diminutive is phonologically realized as ī (diachronically deriving from ay of u.ay.).
8. ‘āshiyy/(a) – ‘ushayshyān? (Section 4.3., Text 1)
‘end of the day’ ‘last hour of the day’

maghraḥ – mghērāb (Ḩassāniyya Arabic)⁶⁶
‘sunset’ ‘immediate approach of sunset’

9. raḥt/(iyy) – ruḥayt (Sections 4.1., Texts 2, 4; 4.3., Text 2; 4.7.; 4.10.)
‘number [of people], from three to ten’ ?
‘toes’ ?

The meaning ‘toes’ (ašābi’i l-qadam) in 9. reflects a gloss drawn from al-Nuwayrī’s work (Section 4.10.). Further semantic evidence for this meaning is a lexical field attested with slight variations in al-Nuwayrī’s work itself and in the sources studied by Varisco (1995). Space limitations prevent a full illustration of the lexical field in question in these sources; it will suffice here to say that in this lexical field, any kind of tribal unit corresponds to a body part. The less populated the tribal unit, the lower the corresponding body part:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEXICAL FIELD: [TRIBAL ORGANIZATION AS A BODY]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sha’b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. hudhayl, ‘abida – hudhaliyy, ‘ubadiyy (Section 4.1., Text 1)
H., ‘A. (ethnonym) a man/*a little man from H., ‘A
masā’īd – msē’īdi (Southern Tunisian Arabic)⁶⁷
‘Masā’īd (ethnonym)’ ‘de la tribu des Masā’īd’

The early lexicographer al-Shaybānī (d. 206/821) records a related lexical pair:

⁶⁶ Taine-Cheikh (2018: 108). In the diminutivized noun mghērāb, the diminutive is phonologically realized as ē (diachronically deriving from ay of u.ay.). Cp. also the lexical pair maghraḥ ‘sunset’ – mughayribān ‘last hour of the day’ attested in the locus probans under scrutiny. See also the diminutivized plural mughirbiyyāt in ḥiksāli Arabic, a dialect spoken in Lower Galilee (Nevo 2006: 46).

⁶⁷ The data is drawn from the dialect of Marāzîg (Nefzaoua region) studied by Denizeau (1957: 68), who explicitly states that in msē’iḍi ‘La fonction de la forme diminutive, doublant celle du suffixe i, paraît avoir là un rôle strictement singulatif.’
11. ‘abīd – ‘abidiyy (al-fím, III, 189)  
‘Abid (ethnonym) a man from ‘Abid

This pair minimally differs from the lexical pair ‘abida – ‘abadiyy in 10., in that its first member does not display at and its second member does not display the diminutive.

12. dhawd – dhuwayd (Sections 4.3., Text 5; 4.5.)  
‘three to ten [taken] out of a camel herd’ ?
‘said only of she-camels’
‘a number of camels from three to thirty’ (Lane 1863, s.v. DHWD)

dhawd-ak, zowd – dhuweyd
‘thy little herd (dhawd-ak)” ‘a little herd’ (Rwala Arabic)⁴⁹
‘a great herd of camel (zowd)” (Rwala Arabic)⁴⁹

To the extent that it is attested by Arabic lexicographers later than al-Khalil (cited in Lane 1863, s.v. DHWD), the meaning of dhawd ‘a number of camels from three to thirty’ is more recent than its meaning ‘three to ten [taken] out of a camel herd.’

13. ‘aklub – ‘ukaylib (Section 4.1., Text 3)
‘some, many dogs’ (adnà l-‘adad, l-akthar)¹⁰ ‘some dogs’ (taqil al-jam’)¹¹
wlād (Moroccan Arabic)¹²
‘(some, many) kids’

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⁴⁸ Data from Musil (1928: 336, 341). Shammari Arabic provides a further interesting parallel, attested in the following passage from an oral narrative: ‘ind ibl-thum dhōd-in gīl-in ‘near a camel herd, a small herd’ (Sowayan 2010: 74). This utterance is semantic evidence for assigning to dhōd-in, the Shammari Arabic cognate of dhawd, the contextual meaning ‘small herd,’ inferred from the adjective gīl-in that modifies this collective (cp. Classical Arabic qalīl).

⁴⁹ Data from Musil (1928: 364).

¹⁰ For convenience, the entire locus probans is reproduced here (Section 4.1., Text 3): ‘The plural of paucity [adnà l-‘adad] has specific schemes that belong to it in principle [fi l-‘ad], but the [plural of multitude] [al-akthar] can share them.’

¹¹ For convenience, the entire locus probans is reproduced here (Section 4.1., Text 3): ‘One makes the diminutive of each scheme of paucity, [adnà l-‘adad] [...] since one means only to assign paucity to a plural [taqil al-jam].’

¹² Data from Moroccan Arabic: see 1. above. This example can be replicated in many other Arabic dialects.
14.  
\textit{jafanāt}  
’some, many bowls’ \((bi\text{-}manzilati \ ‘af’ul)\)\(^{53}\)  
\textit{tmērāt}  
’some, many) dates’  
\textit{jufaynāt}  
‘some bowls’ \((l’\text{-}’ashar […] lā tujāwizu)\)\(^{54}\)  
\textit{fa-l-wāwu wa-l-nūnu bi\text{-}manzilati l-tā’)  
‘quelques dattes, de rare dattes’

15.  
\textit{N-ūna} \((N = \text{noum})\)  
’some, many’ \((bi\text{-}manzilati \ ‘af’ul)\)\(^{56}\)  
\textit{fallahīn}  
‘(some, many) peasants’  
\textit{futayyūna}  
‘some young men’ \((jufaynāt […] futayyūna\)  
\textit{tmērāt}  
(Southern Tunisian Arabic)\(^{55}\)

16.  
\textit{fityān}  
’some, many young men’  
\textit{fallahīn}  
‘(some, many) peasants’  
\textit{*futayyūn}  
No diminutivized plural of multitude.  
\textit{fa-l-wāwu wa-l-nūnu bi\text{-}manzilati l-tā’)  
(Suppletion instead: 17. below)

\(^{53}\) For convenience, the entire \textit{locus probans} is reproduced here (Section 4.1., Text 3): ‘\textit{a\text-}a\text-āt, has the status of ‘a\text-\text-u. in the masculine, of ‘a\text-\text-a. and similar forms [for paucity]. Analogously, forms whose plural is with \textit{īnā} and \textit{īnā}.’

\(^{54}\) For convenience, the entire \textit{locus probans} is reproduced here (Section 4.1., Text 3): ‘If you made the diminutive of \textit{jafanāt} ‘bowls’ when their number is beyond ten, you would say \textit{jufaynāt} without going beyond the number, because it is a scheme for paucity.’

\(^{55}\) The data is drawn from the dialect of Marâzîg (Nefzaoua region) studied by Denizeau (1957: 68), who explicitly states: ‘Les conditions d’emploi du pluriel des diminutifs méritent aussi une observation : au lieu de porter sur les objets désignés eux-mêmes, la dégradation peut porter sur leur nombre ; il est courant que \textit{tmērāt} désigne « quelques dattes, de rare dattes », « moins nombreuses » et non pas « plus petites ou plus mauvaises » que ne le ferait le pluriel \textit{tmērāt} du positif.’ The latter example can be replicated in many other Arabic dialects, where this kind of plural may denote either few or many entities; see 1. above and the related discussion.

\(^{56}\) See the end of the \textit{locus probans} cited in fn. 53. In that passage, Sibawayhi provides no example for the masculine plural of paucity, generically describing it as ‘something’ (\textit{mā}), i.e., a noun, whose plural endings are \textit{īnā} and \textit{īnā}.

\(^{57}\) This example can be replicated in many other Arabic dialects, where this kind of plural may denote either few or many entities: 1. above and the related discussion.

\(^{58}\) For convenience, the \textit{locus probans} is reproduced here (Section 4.1., Text 3): ‘They are four schemes: all other schemes in principle are for multitude, even if they can be shared by paucity.’
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17. fityān – futayyūna (Section 4.1., Text 3)

'some, many young men'

Suppletion by a diminutivized plural of paucity

(li-l-akthar wa-in sharika-hu l-aqall)\(^{59}\) (aruuddu-hu ilā binā'i l-aqalli li-taqālīl al-jam')

The whole semantic picture that emerges from the collected attestations of kalām al-ʿarab with regard to the second object of study is that the diminutive in noun plural marking, in its historical reality, possesses no meaning of its own: it rather doubles a meaning already observed in its environment. In more traditional terms, in a diminutivized collective or plural, the diminutive appears to convey a meaning already observed in the corresponding basic collective or plural. For the time being, this semantic behavior of the diminutive can be labeled as the ‘doubling function.’ This is illustrated in the white and grey cells of Table 2, under 10., 12., 14.

Thus, in 14. jufaynāt conveys, through the co-occurrence of .uay. and the derivational ending āt, the same feature [SOME] already observed in the derivational ending āt alone in jafanāt, with the caveat that jufaynāt conveys [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY] (paucal meaning: Section 3.1.), while jafanāt conveys [SOME] in conjunction with [MANY], as will be discussed in greater detail immediately below. Likewise in 12., based on dialectal parallels, dhuwayd conveys, through the co-occurrence of .uay. and the manipulated lexical stem dhawd (i.e., dh.w.d), the same feature [SOME] already observed in the lexical stem dhawd alone, again with the caveat that dhuwayd conveys [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY], while dhawd conveys [SOME] in conjunction with [MANY]. This can be schematized as follows (with the doubling function in bold):

18. jafanāt [SOME], [MANY] > .uay. > jufaynāt [SOME]

dhawd [SOME], [MANY] > .uay. > dhuwayd [SOME]

Turning to the first object of study, it appears that the collected attestations of kalām al-ʿarab add nothing new to the current knowledge of the basic plural of paucity. In fact, in reporting that the latter expresses both [SOME] and [MANY] in attestations such as ‘aklub, jafanāt, and N-ūna in 13., 14., 15., Sibawayhi’s description offers no crucial semantic evidence, since this kind of ‘oscillating’ meaning, as it were, is already known for the basic plural of paucity in kalām al-ʿarab and, generally speaking, in Classical Arabic, from the textual statistical study of its agreement patterns (Section 3.1.).

\(^{59}\) See fn. 58.
By contrast, Sibawayhi’s assertion (Section 4.1., Text 3) that ‘in principle’ (fī l-ʾaṣl) the basic plural of paucity conveys [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY], i.e., in modern terms, it is genuinely paucal (Section 3.1.), cannot be proven nor disproven, for two reasons. First and foremost, no dialectal parallel seems to confirm his assertion. Second, it is not clear from the context which language level his expression ‘in principle’ (fī l-ʾaṣl) refers to. If ʾaṣl refers to synchrony, the basic plural of paucity would convey [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY] at some deeper semantic level, in the language stage described by Sibawayhi, i.e., in kalâm al-ʿarab; if ʾaṣl refers to diachrony, the plural of paucity would do so at some earlier stage of the language, prior to kalâm al-ʿarab.60

However, the collected attestations of kalâm al-ʿarab shed new light on the meaning of the diminutivized plural of paucity. It was pointed out immediately above that in 14. jufaynāt expresses [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY]. It was also pointed out that from the perspective of the second object of study, this phenomenon is the doubling function of the diminutive in noun plural marking.

Turning to the first object study, the same attestation shows that a diminutivized feminine sound plural of paucity like jufaynāt in its historical reality conveys a genuinely paucal meaning, rather than denoting smallness. This kind of meaning is inferred from the dialectal data in 14., namely tmērāt, which confirms Sibawayhi’s description. Strictly speaking, however, dialectal data confirms the historical reality of Sibawayhi’s description in terms of paucal meaning for the diminutivized feminine sound plural of paucity if and only if it ultimately derives from an inanimate collective (as in tmērāt). In this sense, the example tumayrāt provided by Ibn Yaʾish (Section 4.2.) seems more apt than jufaynāt as an illustration of the paucal meaning of this kind of diminutivized plural of paucity.

Semantically, the basic inanimate collective from which tumayrāt/ tmērāt ultimately derives, i.e., tamr, denotes cohesive and interchangeable entities, which amounts to saying that it conveys collection-semantics (Section 3.1.).

To summarize, it appears from a semantic description of the collected attestations of kalâm al-ʿarab, which also considers parallels from modern Arabic dialects, that the traditional term 'plural of paucity' can be intended literally only in the case of the diminutivized feminine sound plural of paucity. The two other kinds of the diminutivized plural of paucity remain semantically obscure, as schematized in 19. below:

60 On the synchronic and diachronic interpretations of the term ʾaṣl, see Baalbaki (2006).
19. The historical reality of plural of paucity

Feminine, sound:

\[ \text{tamr [COLLECTION]} > \text{tamar [SOME], [MANY]} > \text{tumayr [SOME]} \] \hspace{1cm} (tmērāt)

Masculine, sound:

\[ \text{N-ūna [COLLECTION? MEMBERS?] [SOME], [MANY]} > \text{futayyūna [x]} \]

Broken:

\[ \text{‘aklub [COLLECTION? MEMBERS?] [SOME], [MANY]} > \text{‘ukaylib [x]} \]

Key:

\begin{itemize}
\item [SEMANTIC FEATURE] doubling function
\item [x] unknown semantic feature
\end{itemize}

7. Revisiting the object of study

The collected attestations of kalām al-‘arab bring to light two kinds of linguistic materials that share semantic properties with the twofold object of study.

On the one hand, the diminutivized collective dhwayd in 12. shares a genuine paucal meaning with the diminutivized feminine sound plural of paucity jufaynāt (or tumayrāt) in 14. In this sense, dhwayd is part of the first object of study - the plural of paucity. On the other hand, the diminutive in noun singular marking, as attested by ‘ubadiyy in 10., shares the doubling function with its counterpart in noun plural marking. In this sense, ‘ubadiyy is part of the second object of study - the diminutive. Both kinds of linguistic materials are discussed in what follows.

7.1. From plural of paucity to collective of paucity

Based on the collected attestations of kalām al-‘arab, the kinds of plurals traditionally labeled ‘plural of paucity’ actually convey paucity (paucal meaning) only in the case of the diminutivized feminine sound plural, as schematized in 19. above.

However, in the same attestations a genuine paucal meaning is plausibly observed outside this traditional category, i.e., in several collectives, which can accordingly be subsumed into a new category of collective of paucity, where the term ‘paucity’ is to be taken literally. In fact, the collective of paucity genuinely conveys paucal meaning when diminutivized, as illustrated at the end of Section 6 and schematized in 18. above: the relevant attestation is dhwayd ‘little herd,’ whose paucal meaning is inferred from the dialectal parallel dhwayd in 12.
Upon closer scrutiny, also the basic collective of paucity effectively conveys paucal meaning in the attestations of *kalām al-‘arab* collected here. A case in point is *dhawd*, which is genuinely paucal in the earlier attestation reported by al-Khalil, according to whom it effectively denotes from three to ten she-camels (Section 4.3., Text 5), thereby expressing [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY]. By contrast, *dhawd* is not paucal according to late lexicographers, who report that it expresses [SOME] in conjunction with [MANY]. Dialectal parallels are found for both the paucal and non-paucal meaning of *dhawd*, but the relative chronology of the lexicographical descriptions plausibly shows that its paucal meaning is older, as illustrated in Section 7 in connection with the data in 12. This amounts to saying that *dhawd* originally encodes a number value ranging from three to ten in *its stem*, i.e., that it expresses [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY] lexically rather than derivationally (see also the end of Section 3.3.).

It also appears that *raḥṣ* in 9. conveys a lexical paucal meaning like *dhawd*, though the semantic evidence is less direct in this case. Al-Bustānī (1870 [2009], IV, 197) reports for Lebanese Arabic the lexical pair *ywrḥṣ* and *yḥlḥṣ* ‘he eats with vigor (*ya‘kulu shadīdan*), where the oscillation ṟ, Ṱ is observed.61 In this lexical pair, the identity of phonological environment in the root (*ḤṬ* of *RḤṬ*, *LḤṬ*) and the identity of meaning (*ya‘kulu shadīdan*) lead al-Bustānī (1870 [2009]: IV, 197) to describe *yḥlḥṣ* as a dialectal variant of *ywrḥṣ* (*ywrḥṣ* [...] *wa-l-‘āmmatu taqulu yḥlḥṣ bi-l-lām*). It is worth considering in this light a lexical pair of *kalām al-‘arab* where the same oscillation ṟ, Ṱ is observed. The pair consists of the collective *raḥṣ*, in the sense of ‘toes’ (9. above and Section 4.10.), and the abstract noun *laḥṣ* in the sense of ‘beating with the outstretched palm of the hand,’ as reported by Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215/830).62 In this case too, the identity of phonological environment in the root (*ḤṬ* of *RḤṬ*, *LḤṬ*) and the identity of meaning (both *raḥṣ* and *laḥṣ* refer to digits) make it possible to describe *raḥṣ* ‘toes’ and *laḥṣ* ‘palm of the hand’ as dialectal variants in *kalām al-‘arab*.63

This amounts to saying that *raḥṣ* encodes the number value of ten in *its stem*, i.e., that it expresses [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY] lexically rather than derivationally (see also the end of Section 3.3.). The alternative meaning of *raḥṣ*, namely ‘3-to-10 people,’ which is attested as early as the Koran (XXVII, 48) in the number phrase *ṭis‘atu rahṭīn* ‘nine people,’ is likely to be the result of a semantic shift ‘digits’ >

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61 Al-Bustānī’s dictionary, in Arabic script, provides no vocalization for the prefix ṟ of the prefix-conjugations *ywrḥṣ*, *yḥlḥṣ*. This does not affect the main point, namely, that this data attests to the oscillation ṟ, ṱ. The vocalization of both prefix-conjugations is inferred from similar data from Syrian Arabic, a dialect close to Lebanese Arabic: *laḥṣ yḥlḥṣ ‘manger tout (le plat)* in Barthélémy (1935: 767).


63 From a purely phonological perspective, it is not relevant whether the triconsonantal skeleton *RḤṬ* shared by *ywrḥṣ* and *raḥṣ* is one and the same root (polysemy) or two different roots (homophony). The same holds for the triconsonantal skeleton *LḤṬ* shared by *yḥlḥṣ* and *laḥṣ*. 

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number of people, from three to ten,’ along a pattern of metaphorical extension from inanimate to animate. External linguistic evidence to this effect is Latin manus ‘hand’ > ‘band, troop.’

Remarkably, in addition to paucal meaning, ṭīṣātī ruhāṭ shares with ḍhawd countability. This is shown by the Koranic number phrase tis’atū rahṭīn mentioned immediately above, and by the number phrase thalāṭatū ḍhawdīn attested in kalām al-ʿarab (Section 4.5.). The property of countability clearly distinguishes the collective of paucity from the traditionally recognized collective, which is neither paucal nor countable.

To summarize, the collective of paucity is still attested in its original paucal meaning both when basic and diminutivized:

20. The historical reality of the collective of paucity
Optional collective:
ruhāṭ [COUNTABLE] [SOME] > .u.ay. > ruhāyt [x] (cp. yarḥat, yalḥat)
Multi-stem collective:
ḍhawd [COUNTABLE] [SOME] (older), [MANY] (later) > .u.ay. > dhuwayd [SOME]
(cp. ḍhawd-ak, zowd, dhweyd)
Key:
[SEMANTIC FEATURE] doubling function
[x] unknown semantic feature

7.2. The diminutive from noun plural marking to noun singular marking

The considerations offered in Section 6., concerning the doubling function of the diminutive in noun plural marking, also apply to its occurrence in singular noun marking, especially when the diminutive co-occurs with an ending that morphologically expands a collective.

As schematized in 10.-11. in Table 2, ‘ubādiyy conveys, through the co-occurrence of .u.ay. and the derivational ending iyī, the same feature [ONE] already observed in the derivational ending iyī alone in ‘abīdiyy. This attestation, in conjunction with the attestations dhuwayd, jufaynāt (or tumayrīt) in 12., 14. allows drawing the following generalization for the diminutive in kalām al-ʿarab :

21. .u.ay (y). semantically performs a doubling function in both noun singular marking, for the feature [ONE], and noun plural marking, for the feature [SOME] (to the exclusion of [MANY]).
In this respect, the diminutive attested in kalām al-ʿarab performs the same semantic function that Denizeau (1957: 68) originally observed only for noun singular marking in the Southern Tunisian Arabic dialect of Marāzīg (cp. msêʿîdi in 10. in Section 6): ‘La fonction de la forme diminutive, doublant celle du suffixe i, paraît avoir là un rôle strictement singulatif.’ However, Denizeau does not explain why the diminutive performs such a semantic function.

The collected attestations of kalām al-ʿarab plausibly show that in both noun singular and plural marking, the diminutive occurs to remove a semantic ambiguity in its environment, i.e., a diminutivized noun arises to remove a semantic ambiguity found in its corresponding basic noun. Effectively, as schematized in 12., 14. in Table 2, in noun plural marking the basic nouns jafānāt and dhawd each ambiguously express [SOME] in conjunction with [MANY], while the corresponding diminutivized nouns jufaynāt and dhuwayd each unambiguously express only [SOME]. Likewise, as schematized in 10.-11. in Table 2, in noun singular marking the two basic ethnonyms ʿabīd and ʿabīda share a stem ʿabīd that ambiguously refers to two different tribal units (the ʿAbīd and the ʿAbida); while the corresponding diminutivized noun ʿubadiyy unambiguously refers to the ʿAbīd only. This is schematized in 22. below:

22. The historical reality of the diminutive

Plural marking:

\[ \text{jafānāt} \text{ [SOME], [MANY]} > \text{ju'ay.} \text{ > jufaynāt [SOME]} \text{[MANY]} \]
\[ \text{dhawd} \text{[SOME], [MANY]} > \text{ju'ay.} \text{ > dhuwayd [SOME]} \text{[MANY]} \]

 Singular marking:⁶⁴

\[ '\text{abīd}' \text{[ETHNONYM 1], [ETHNONYM 2] [MORE]} > '\text{abīdīyy}' \text{[ETHNONYM 1], [ETHNONYM 2]} \text{[ONE]} \]
\[ '\text{abīd}' \text{[ETHNO. 1], [ETHNO. 2] [MORE]} > \text{ju'ay.} > '\text{ubadiyy}' \text{[ETHNONYM 1], [ETHNONYM 2]} \text{[ONE]} \]

Key:

\[ \text{[SEMANTIC FEATURE]} \quad \text{doubling function} \]
\[ \text{[SEMANTIC FEATURE]} \quad \text{semantic ambiguity (removed)} \]
\[ '\text{abīd}' \quad \text{stem of 'abīd, 'abīda} \]

⁶⁴ Notice that the input form ʿabīda displays an additional marker, notably at, when compared to the input form ʿabīd. Similarly, the output form ʿubadiyy displays an additional marker, notably diminutive, when compared to the output form ʿabīdīyy. The distribution of the two additional markers at and diminutive is not accidental, since they both belong to the same derivational pair ʿabīda (input) – ʿubadiyy (output). It follows that the morphological complexity of the output form matches that of the input form. Matching in morphological complexity is thus a criterion that explains why, to remove semantic ambiguity, the diminutivized form ʿubadiyy is associated with ʿabīda, rather than with ʿabīd.
Notice that no doubling function is observed in the diminutivized noun *muwayha*, for the simple reason that its corresponding basic noun bears no semantic ambiguity, so no doubling function should be invoked to remove it.

In fact, when *muwayha* means ‘some water’ (7. above), it derives from an inanimate collective with collection-semantics, notably *mā’,* that cannot enter into two different agreement patterns to ambiguously express *[some]* or *[many]*, as discussed at the end of Section 3.1. Rather, this semantic behavior is typical of plurals (1. above), while inanimate collectives like *mā* convey unambiguously a different semantic feature, namely an undifferentiated *[more]*. Therefore, the diminutive, while occurring in the environment of *mā’,* conveys a meaning other than the doubling function, notably *[some]* (to the exclusion of *[many]*). Analogously, when *muwayha* means ‘little well,’ it derives from a singular *mā’a* that unambiguously refers to a ‘water well’ (see the discussion of 7. above). Therefore, the diminutive, while occurring in the environment of *mā’a*, conveys a meaning other than the doubling function, notably *[small]*.

Finally, the pervasiveness of the doubling function in 21. makes it plausible to describe it as a regular pattern that underlies the attestations of the diminutive (diminutivized nouns) in *kalām al-‘arab*, and that contributes to characterize such attestations as a full-fledged system within this primary source. In turn, the systemic nature of the attestations of the diminutive in *kalām al-‘arab* is internal evidence in favor of their authenticity, which can be coupled with the external evidence offered by the dialectal parallels.

8. Intermediate results

The description of the attestations collected from *kalām al-‘arab* carried out here assesses the historical reality of the plural of paucity and the diminutive in noun plural marking only in part.

Regarding the first object of study, as schematized in Table 2 above, such a description elucidates the form of the basic plural of paucity, offering a tripartite classification into broken, masculine, and feminine sound plurals of paucity: e.g., *‘aklub, jafanāt* (or *tamarāt*), *N-ūna* in 13., 14., 15. By contrast, this description does not contribute to a better understanding of the meaning of the basic plural of paucity. The latter is said by Sibawayhi (A) to express *[some]* in conjunction with *[many]* and (B), under certain conditions (*fi l-āṣl*), to express *[some]* to the exclusion of *[many]*, i.e., to be genuinely paucal. However, only Sibawayhi’s assertion in (A) finds confirmation in dialectal data.

Turning to the diminutivized plural of paucity, the description of the attestations collected from *kalām al-‘arab* carried out here partly clarifies its meaning, only in the case of the diminutivized
feminine sound plural of paucity, e.g., *jufaynāt* ‘some bowls.’ The latter is said by Sibawayhi to convey a genuinely paucal meaning (i.e., [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY]), rather than denoting smallness, and his assertion is confirmed by dialectal data, especially when this kind of diminutivized plural of paucity ultimately derives from a collective with collection-semantics, notably *tmērāt* in 14.

Regarding the second object of study, as schematized in 21., 22. above, the description of the attestations collected from *kalām al-‘arab* carried out here clarifies that the diminutive bears no intrinsic meaning, performing instead a doubling function: it doubles a meaning already observed in its environment, i.e., in the basic collective or plural to which it is added. Specifically for noun plural marking, the diminutive doubles and hence ‘indirectly’ conveys a paucal meaning, i.e., [SOME] to the exclusion of [MANY]. The diminutive, along with its doubling function, removes semantic ambiguity: e.g., while *jafanāt* semantically oscillates between [SOME] and [MANY], *jufaynāt* unambiguously expresses [SOME].

Finally, the description of the attestations collected from *kalām al-‘arab* carried out here brings to light two kinds of linguistic materials that are partly related to the two topics under study and have received little or no attention in Arab(ic) linguistics. The first kind of linguistic material is a diminutive performing a doubling function in noun singular marking, in ethnonyms such as *‘ubadiyy* ‘a man from ‘Abīda.’ In this data, *u.a(y)* effectively doubles the feature [ONE] already conveyed by *iyy*. The second kind of linguistic material is a collective conveying a genuinely paucal meaning, such as *dhawd* ‘3-to-10 she-camels’ and *rahṭ* ‘3-to-10 people’ (Section 7.1.). Interestingly, it is precisely the paucal meaning of *dhawd* and *rahṭ* that allows for their countability, which is not possible in traditionally recognized non-paucal collectives.

In sum, the description of the attestations of *kalām al-‘arab* collected here allows for a better understanding of the meaning of the diminutive in noun plural marking, but it is not particularly revealing regarding the meaning of the plural of paucity, except for the diminutivized feminine sound plural.

The remaining kinds of plural of paucity, namely the basic and diminutivized broken plural and the masculine sound plural, as well as the basic feminine sound plural, require further semantic investigation. In particular, dialectal data offers no semantic evidence to assess the historical reality of the paucal meaning that Sibawayhi ascribes to them under certain conditions: see his expression *fi l-aṣl* ‘in principle.’ In this regard, the question also remains why Sibawayhi assigned (under certain conditions) paucal meaning to the plural of paucity.

To assess the historical reality of the paucal meaning in the case of the plural of paucity, a different kind of semantic evidence should be adduced, deriving from a distributional study that also considers
poorly known features of the plural of paucity, such as its collection-semantics and the status of the inherent plural (Section 3.1.). To the extent that the diminutive is part of some kinds of plural of paucity whose meaning is unclear, namely the diminutivized broken and masculine sound plurals, it should be included in a distributional study of this sort.

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