



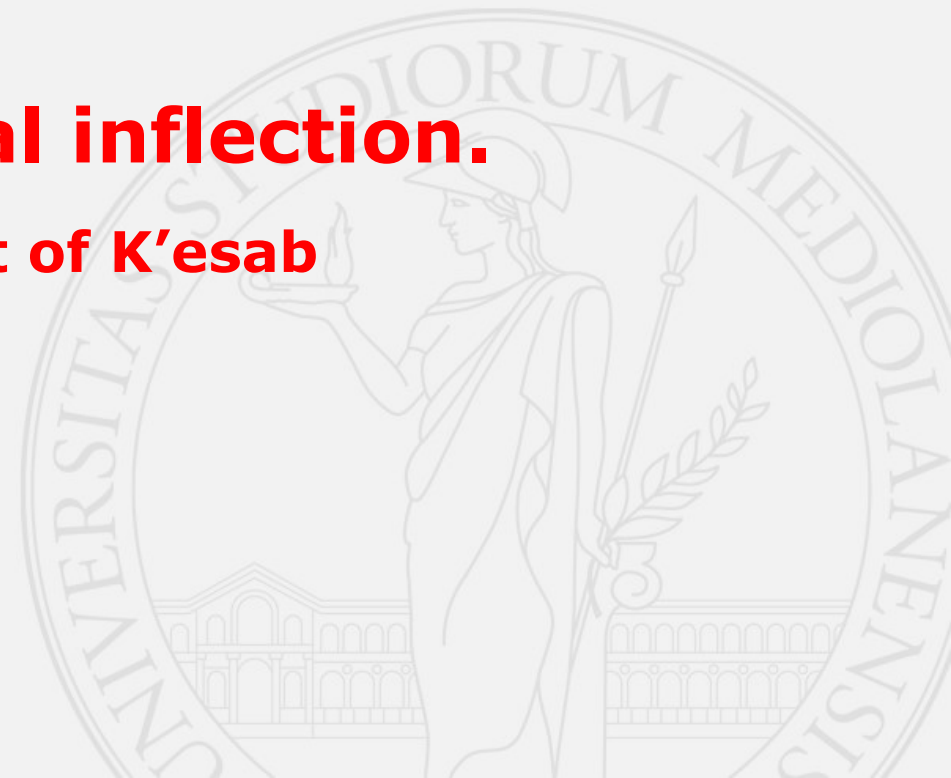
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

# **Lexical semantics and plural inflection.**

## **Data and reflections from the dialect of K'esab**

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# Classical Armenian 1

Great number of inflection classes but very weak link between lexical semantics and inflection. Derived nouns inflected according to formal features:

inflection of abstract nouns in *-owt'iwñ* = other nouns in *-iwñ* (*koriwn*, *ariwn* etc.)

	singular	plural
nom-(voc)	<i>džowarowt'iwñ</i> "difficulty" / <i>koriwn</i> "puppy dog"	<i>džowarowt'iwñk'</i> / <i>koriwnk'</i>
acc	<i>džowarowt'iwñ</i> / <i>koriwn</i>	<i>džowarowt'iwñs</i> / <i>koriwns</i>
loc	<i>džowarowt'ean</i> / <i>korean</i>	<i>džowarowt'iwñs</i> / <i>koriwns</i>
gen	<i>džowarowt'ean</i> / <i>korean</i>	<i>džowarowt'eanc'</i> / <i>koreanc'</i>
dat	<i>džowarowt'ean</i> / <i>korean</i>	<i>džowarowt'eanc'</i> / <i>koreanc'</i>
abl	<i>džowarowt'enē</i> / <i>korenē</i>	<i>džowarowt'eanc'</i> / <i>koreanc'</i>
strum	<i>džowarowt'eamb</i> / <i>koreamb</i>	<i>džowarowt'eambk'</i> / <i>koreambk'</i>

## Classical Armenian 2

Inflection of abstract nouns in *-owmn* = other nouns in *-mn* (atamn, himn etc.)

	singular	plural
nom-(voc)	<i>lowcowmn</i> "solution" / <i>atamn</i> "tooth"	<i>lowcmownk'</i> / <i>atamownk'</i>
acc	<i>lowcowmn</i> / <i>atamn</i>	<i>lowcmowns</i> / <i>atamowns</i>
loc	<i>lowcman</i> / <i>ataman</i>	<i>lowcmowns</i> / <i>atamowns</i>
gen	<i>lowcman</i> / <i>ataman</i>	<i>lowcmanc'</i> / <i>atamanc'</i>
dat	<i>lowcman</i> / <i>ataman</i>	<i>lowcmanc'</i> / <i>atamanc'</i>
abl	<i>lowcmanē</i> / <i>atamanē</i>	<i>lowcmanc'</i> / <i>atamanc'</i>
strum	<i>lowcmamb</i> / <i>atamamb</i>	<i>lowcmambk'</i> / <i>atamambk'</i>

## Classical Armenian 3

**A semantically motivated micro-class:** *hayr* "father", *mayr* "mother" and *etbayr* "brother"

	singolare	plurale
nom- (voc)	<i>hayr, mayr, etbayr</i>	<i>hark', mark', etbark'</i>
acc	<i>hayr, mayr, etbayr</i>	<i>hars, mars, etbars</i>
loc	<i>hawr, mawr, etbawr</i>	<i>hars, mars, etbars</i>
gen	<i>hawr, mawr, etbawr</i>	<i>harc', marc', etbarc'</i>
dat	<i>hawr, mawr, etbawr</i>	<i>harc', marc', etbarc'</i>
abl	<i>hawrē, mawrē, etbawrē</i>	<i>harc', marc', etbarc'</i>
strum	<i>harb, marb, etbarb</i>	<i>harbk', marbk', etbarbk'</i>

Arm. *mayr* "cedar" has a different inflection (*mayri, mayrē, mayriw* etc.).

# A missing bridge between semantics and inflection: gender

- An inherent nominal category which can be partially semantically motivated and can interact in some languages with inflection-classes is gender.

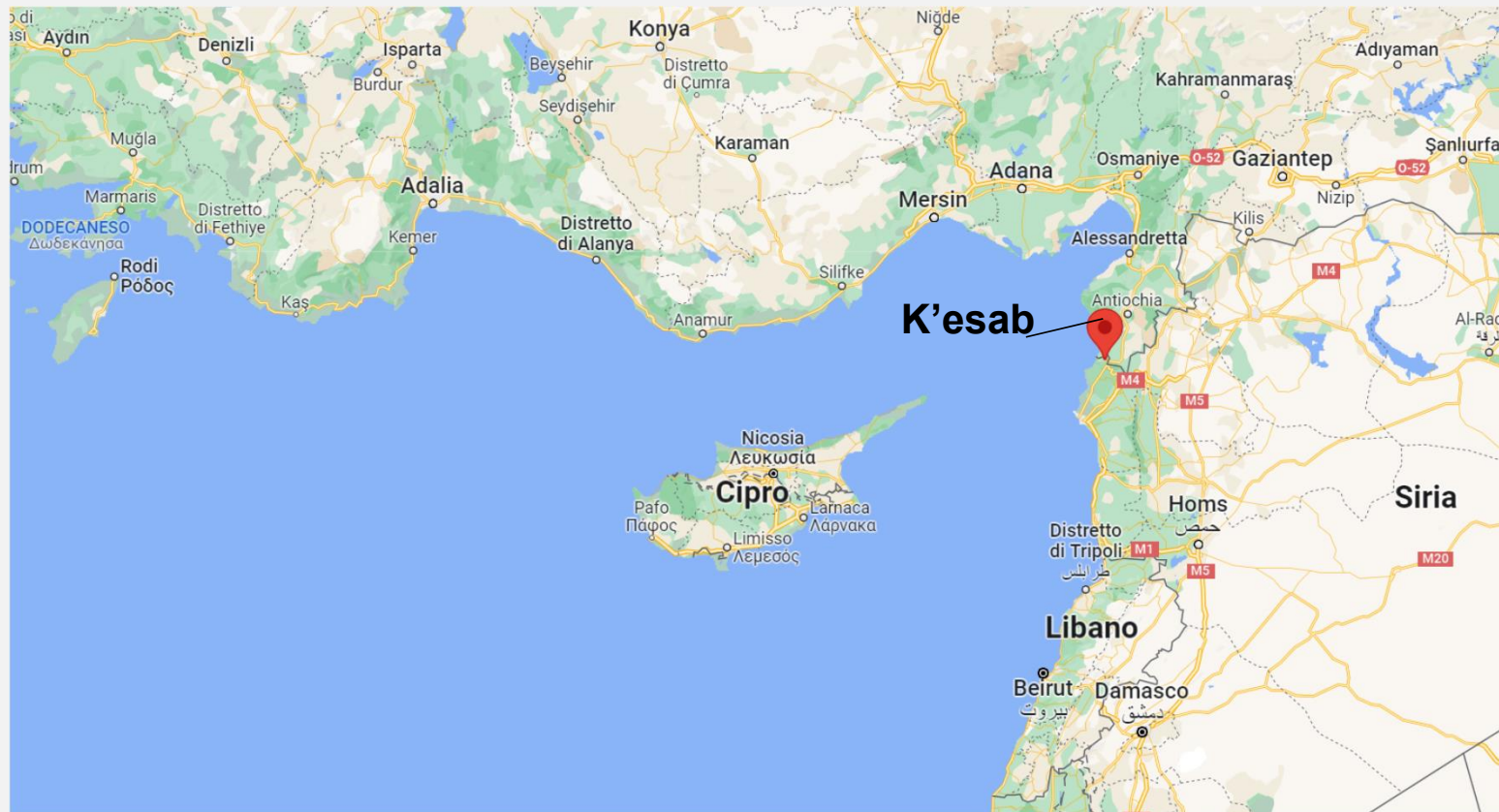
Cfr. in Classical Latin, Late Latin, Romance Languages female human beings belonged mostly to 1st declension (I.-E.  $\bar{a}$ -stem):

*Lat. nurus* "daughter-in-law" (f. *u*-stem, originally I.-E. -*o* stem, cfr. Greek  $\nu\omicron\acute{o}\varsigma$  and Arm.  $\text{նւր} now$ , gen.  $\text{նւրնյ} nowoy$ ), but Romance outcomes suppose *nura* or *nora* (cfr. also Old Indic *snuṣā*,  $\bar{a}$ -stem ).

- In Armenian gender disappeared already in the prehistory of the language

# The dialect of K'esab

Still spoken in North-Western Syria close to the border with Turkey; the dialect of K'esab, described by Č'olak'ean (2009<sup>2</sup>), is a possible continuer of Cilician Middle Armenian.



## 29 plural markers

The dialect of K'esab is very rich in plural markers (29) and there is often overabundance in nominative plural-cell. Formal criteria represents the most common strategy, for example:

Some plural markers are selected on prosodic grounds

- monosyllabic words → *-ir, -onk<sup>h</sup>, -va, -vəna, -vənnir, -vonk<sup>h</sup>, -irk<sup>h</sup>, -irk<sup>h</sup>vun, -vəda, -vədak<sup>h</sup>, -usda, -udak<sup>h</sup>, -ənnæ, -ek, -ek<sup>h</sup>*
- polysyllabic words → *-dun, -vun, -ənnir, -nir, -da, -dak<sup>h</sup>, -əsdun, -na, -ina, -k<sup>h</sup>, -əts<sup>h</sup>vir, -æk<sup>h</sup>, -ink<sup>h</sup>, -un*

Polysyllabic words often are inserted in different inflection classes on the basis of segmental criteria: e. g. plurals in *-əsdun* are restricted to nouns originally ending in *-i*,

cfr. գաւտի *gawti* "belt", K'esab *kydæ*, pl. *kydəsdun*,

մատանի *matani* "ring", K. *mænnæ*, pl. *mənnəsdun*

## Semantic-based (micro-)classes (1): pl. **-vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)**

This plural marker attaches only to 4 words.

*k<sup>h</sup>woir* "sister" (քոյր), pl. *k<sup>h</sup>yr**vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)***

*njer* "brother's wife, sister-in-law" (ներ), pl. *nir**vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)***

*dwol* "husband's sister, sister-in-law" (ուսւլ), pl. *dal**vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)***

- High semantic homogeneity (kin-terms for female relatives, same generation of EGO)
- weak formal restriction (monosyllabic words)

The class attracted also *lɛ/leo* "sister", pl. *lɛ/**vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)***, a polysyllabic word

- In Cilician Armenian *k'owrvti* "sisters" and *-vedi* attached mostly to words ending in *-r*, in K'esab words ending in *-r* have *-dak<sup>h</sup>*, (CA *-tik'*), while the selection of *-vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)* is semantically motivated



## Semantic-based (micro-)classes (2): pl. *-i/yŋk<sup>h</sup>*

Only *mær* - *miryŋk<sup>h</sup>* "mother-s", *murk<sup>h</sup>woir* - *murk<sup>h</sup>əryŋk<sup>h</sup>* "mother's sister-s", *xənæmæ* - *xənɛmuŋk<sup>h</sup>* "father(s)-in-law" and *ævrær* - *avriyŋk<sup>h</sup>* "brother(s)"

- the starting points were probably *miryŋk<sup>h</sup>* e *avriyŋk<sup>h</sup>*, but the first, cognitively more salient attracted in this inflection class *murk<sup>h</sup>əryŋk<sup>h</sup>* "mother's sisters", (a compound of -*k<sup>h</sup>woir* that should have plural in *-vəda(k<sup>h</sup>)*, and *xənɛmuŋk<sup>h</sup>* "fathers-in-law " (which does not show any form similarity with the other terms)
- *xənæmæ* and *murk<sup>h</sup>woir* belong to the same generation of *miryŋk<sup>h</sup>* (one generation before EGO)
- Semantic homogeneity triggered analogy in inflection

## Semantic-based (micro-)classes (3): pl. -va

K'esab -va plural marker can be traced back to CA -vi and is used with a small group of words (minor plural? Cfr. Corbett 1996 and 2000, pp. 89-132):

- with double body-parts

*vid* "foot" (nʉnʉ), pl. *vidva*

*eos* "shoulder" (nʉʉnʉ), pl. *ysva*

*afk* "eye" (ʉzɕ), pl. *itʃva*

*pjesk* "shoulder" (ɕʉzɕ), pl. *pifva*

*mjetʃ* "flank" (ʉʉʉzɕ, ʉʉʉzɕ), pl. *mitʃva*

*gub* "flank" (ʉnʉ), pl. *gubva*

*tsar* "hand" (ʉʉnʉ), pl. *tsarva*

*dzedz* "breast" (ʉʉʉ), pl. *dzidzva*

*ʃort* "lip" (zʉʉʉʉʉ), pl. *ʃartva*

*værk<sup>h</sup>* "buttock" (nʉ), pl. *værk<sup>h</sup>va*

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## Semantic-based (micro-)classes (3.1): pl. *-va*

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- with few other words

*tor* "door" (դոռն), pl. *tərva* (two shutters?)

*բեօնց* "nail (of hands and feet)" (Եդոնլուզ), pl. *բեօնցվա* (inserted in this class as body-part?)

*tsæ*n "voice" (ծայն), pl. *tsinva*

*hid* "footstep" (հետ, հետք), pl. *hitva*

*hurt<sup>h</sup>* "calf" (հորթ), pl. *hurt<sup>h</sup>va*

*jef* "donkey" (էշ), *ifva*

All these words can form the plural also with *-ir* e *-irk<sup>h</sup>*, the most frequent suffixes of monosyllabic words, but only this words can receive the plural marker *-va* .

## Semantic-based (micro-)classes (3.2): pl. *-vāna*

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These same words can have a second plural in *-vāna* (< vi+ni), unknown to CA

This plural marker conveys a different meaning:

e.g. *vidvāna* "their feet", "feet not belonging to just one person"

*tsarvāna* "their hands", "hands not belonging to just one person"

## Some remarks about *-va* (< *-vi*)

- the first attestation of *-vi* is with an animal-name (շնւլի "dogs"), where it was pure plural marker and dates to Old Armenian (in the Armenian Translation of Eusebius' *Chronikon*, but cfr. Ačariyan 1957, LHLK 3, 709 who considers շնւլի a late insertion)
- in Cilician Armenian *-vi* was restricted to monosyllabic words mostly indicating double body-parts
- in the dialect of K'esab the semantic core of this inflection class remains the same, i.e. double body-parts, and the nouns belonging to this inflection class have increased and now it contains also non double body parts as "nails" (cfr. *ւեօնց* "nail", pl. *ւեօնցա*)
- new animal names have entered the class perhaps via analogy with շնւլի

## **-va and -vəna; why two plurals?**

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The primary semantic core might have been the starting point for the double inflection of these group of words.

Double body-parts are cognitively very important parts in human body and in the speech the use of a plural of body-parts indicates almost always a natural pair (of hands, of feet, of shoulders, of eyes), we could speak of a pairal semantics rather than a dual semantics.

These pairs of body parts belong of course to the same person. This is the most common situation in concrete speech acts. This frequent association between plural form and pairal semantics in the speech could have changed these plurals in *-vi* in restricted plurals or set-plurals (Gil 1996), i.e. plurals referring to a natural and stable quantity of items to be considered as an unity, as a set, in this case hands, feet, shoulders, breasts etc. belonging to the same individual (Corbett 2000, 117-120). Hence the extension of *-va* plural to the word for "nail".

## Restricted (set) vs non-restricted (analytical) plural (Budugh)

Something very similar can be observed for example in budugh, a North-Eastern Caucasian language spoken in Azerbaijan, In budugh we find:

*t'il-iber* "fingers of one hand" vs *t'il-imber* "fingers of several hands"  
*čül-über* "eyes (of one person)" vs *čül-ümber* "eyes (of several people)"  
*ibr-imer* "ears (of one person)" vs *ibr-imber* "ears (of several people)"  
*č'er-iber* "hair (of one person)" vs *č'er-imber* "hair (of several people)"  
*čärx-imer* "wheels (of one car)" vs *čärx-imber* "wheels (in general)"

## (More or less) Restricted plural vs non-restricted (analytical, individual) plural in Italian

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*pugno* "fist", pl. *pugna* (old Italian) "fists belonging to one person", *pugni* "fists belonging to many people"

*ginocchio* "knee", pl. *ginocchia* "knees belonging to one person", *ginocchi* "knees belonging to many persons"

*sopracciglio* "eyebrow", pl. *sopracciglia* "eyebrows belonging to one person", *sopraccigli* "eyebrows belonging to different persons"

*lenzuolo* "bed sheet", pl. *lenzuola* "bed sheets belonging to one bed", *lenzuoli* "bed sheets belonging to different beds"

*corno* "horn", pl. *corna* "horns belonging to one animal", *corni* "horns belonging to several animals"

-a < Latin plural marker -a specific for neuter nouns (Corbett 1996, about semantics cfr. Thornton 2010-2011)



# The plural marker *-vi* in Cilician Armenian

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with double body-parts

աչք / աչվի "eye/eyes ", ձեռ / ձեռվի "hand/hands ", ոտ / ոտվի "foot/feet", մեջք / միջվի "flank/flanks"

With some entities that sometimes are double:

դուռ/դռվի "door/doors" (the two shutters?)

But also with entities that are not double at all:

իր/իրվի "thing/things", միտ/մտվի "thought/thoughts", տուն/տնվի "house/houses",  
շուն/շնվի "dog/dogs"

## The CA plural marker *-vi*: an original dual marker?

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Karst (1901, 191-192) saw in this morpheme *-vi* a continuer of *-ow*, we find also in *erkow* "two" and regarded the *v* of *-vi* as a survival of an ancient I.-E. dual morpheme *\*-ō*. This hypothesis is rather problematic.

Pedersen (1906, p. 476) and Greppin (1975, 146) notice that *-vi* was not widespread until to Middle Armenian and resembles more an innovative feature than a conservative one.

More problematic seems the final *-i* that is very difficult to explain. Karst maintains that *-ow* would be a survival of dual that "durch nachträgliche Verbindung mit Suffix *-i* sich zum Kollektivsingular umgestaltete, welcher schließlich als neue Pluralform auch auf andere, meist einsilbige Nomina überging".

## The CA plural marker *-vi*: an original dual marker? (2)

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Pedersen (1906, 476) quotes the hypothesis of Karst about an origin of *-vi* < *-ow* + *-i* < *\*-ō* + *\*-ijā* (or *\*-ijō*), but evaluates it as untenable and prefers to trace back *v-* to the final *-ow* we find in adjectives like *arow* "male". This hypothesis results highly problematic as well and does not give a solution to the enigmatic final *-i*. The idea of Meillet (1903, 147-148) that *-vi* might have been generalized from an ancient plural *\*cnowi* "knees" (*-i* collective marker), is highly uncertain.

Meillet considered *-vi* as an original plural marker and not as the outcome of an ancient dual marker, as proposed by Karst, Ačariyan (1957, LHLK 3, 454 and 709) and, although dubitatively, by Jahowkyan (1987, 375).

## Semantics-based (micro-)classes (4): pl. *-ənnir*

In the dialect of K'esab we find that diminutives formed with *-Vg* (*-eg, -eog/-og* < *-ik, -owk*) select a plural marker *-ənnir* (< *an+ni+ear*), while other words ending in *-Vg* without any diminutive suffix select *-ina/-əna* (< *-eni*), cfr.

*k<sup>h</sup>ereog* (բար-ուկ) "small stone" → pl. *k<sup>h</sup>ergənnir*

*təkɛlɛg* (դգալ-իկ) "little spoon" → pl. *təkɛlgənnir* etc.

but

*səndeog* (սնտուկ) "box" → pl. *səngina* (< *səndgina*)

*tɛnvog* (դա՛նակ) "knife" → pl. *tɛngəna*

*dzæʁeg* (ծաղիկ) "flower" → pl. *dzæʁgəna* etc.

## Diminutive plurals with and without –Vg–

A word like *hεv-eog* (hωL-nLϥ) "little chicken" pl. *hεv-g-ənnir* shows a clearly identifiable diminutive morpheme in the plural, while a word as *gyv-og* (ϥnϥ-nLϥ) "little cow" has a pl. *gyv-ənnir* which is diminutive as well but without a dedicate morpheme.

- more fusion: the derivational semantic feature [+diminutive] is fused together with an inflectional content as [plural] is.

The situation recalls the Bantu-class n. 13. Cfr. in Chindamba (Tanzania)

*li-piki* 'tree' (class 5) pl. *ma-piki* 'trees' (class 6)

*ka-piki* 'small tree' (class 12) pl. *tu-piki* 'small trees' (class 13)

- **tu-** cumulates the feature [+plural] and [+deminutive]

## A morphological change triggered by semantics?

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As for the diminutive plural marker *-ənnir* in K'esab we might simply think that the multiple expression of the same feature [+diminutive] may have triggered or tolerated a morphological restructuring of the plurals in *-ənnir*:

sing. <i>gyv-og</i>	>	pl. <i>gyv-g-ənnir</i>	>	<i>gyv-ənnir</i>
cow-[+small]		cow-[+small]-PL[+small]		cow-PL[+small]

## Diminutives without *-g-* in the plural

Lexical semantics can have played a role. In the dialect of K'esab some diminutives in *-eg*, *-eog* without diminutive morpheme *-g-* in the plural are nouns indicating small (and nice) animals such as *tɛkeog* (< δωq-ηΛq, δωq "chik") pl. *tɛkənnir*, *fʰəddeg* (< δʰu-ʰq, δʰu "sparrow"), *fʰəddennir*. Can we imagine an interplay between this plurals of "small (and nice) animals" and the deletion of *-g-*? Cfr.

sing. *tɛk-eog*

chik[+small (& nice)]-DIM[+small (& nice)]

pl. \**tɛk-(g)-ənnir*

chik[+small (& nice)]-DIM[+small (&nice)]- ənnir (→ noun [+small])

variant pl. *tɛk-ənnir*

chik[+small (& nice)] - ənnir (→ noun [+small])

## The morpheme *-ənnir* as an index

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- Plural in *-ənnir* in K'esab has become a strong index. Its indexicality consists in the fact that it attaches only to diminutives i.e. to stems having the feature [+small (& nice)]
- in nouns denoting small animals semantic, redundancy of the feature [+small] is very high and a plural formation without diminutive morpheme seems fully compatible with the indexical value of *-ənnir*,
- so *-ənnir* might have begun to attach to nouns having the feature [+small] irrespective of their being derived nouns or root nouns, as in the case of "chik" and "sparrow". Perhaps the innovative plural diminutives without *-g-* spread from here.





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**Thank you for your attention!**

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