Varieties of Arabic Number

Number as a grammatical category could have been ideally conceived as expressing a distinction of *atoms* and *sums* in terms of the quantity they denote, morphologically identified with *singulars* or *plurals*. The picture is obviously more complex, since natural Number systems reflect the ways lexical, morphological, and syntactic nominal (or verbal) categories of the language are organized or classified, how Number interacts with exact or approximate numerosity, meorological relations among sets, and how singularities or pluralities are conceived or perceived. Arabic contributes a large variety of ingredients and patterns that can enrich our understanding of how natural Number is expressed. Arabic belongs to the class of *collective-singulative* languages, where a singular is formed out of a 'collective' by singulative morphology (Wiese 2010**)**. The collective base has a *general* number (Corbett 2000). Other collectives are *unities*, and cannot be thought of as naturally atomic (Fehri 2018). A sort of *plurative*, a third type, is constructing a unity over a plurality, by using a plurative suffix (homophonous with the feminine). When English appears to treat *dog*, *fish*, and *duck* as equally singular, and *dogs*, *ducks*, and *fishes* as equally plural, Arabic make more subtle distinctions across the board, comparable and as diverse as those found in Turkish, Persian, Welsh, Chinese, Thai, etc. The pronominal system partially mirrors the nominal system, but the verbal system is significantly different. Verbs cannot be selected by a functional DivP or or #P (Borer 2005). 'Verbal classifiers' never apply strictly to verbs, but to the event argument or event phrase. To the extent that 'times' can be seen as verbal classifiers, they apply only to the *n* 'argument'. Then number is not a 'verbal'affair (as in Doetjes 2012, and contra Zhang 2012).

An adequate inventory of empirically motivated semantic features is made available to natural number systems; they form their natural classes, and apply compositionally to (nominal) lattices, distribute to categories such as Num, n, Root, etc., and interface in e.g. a Probe-Goal Agree system such as Chomsky's (1995). In Link's atomic join semi-lattice model, the domain D_e of entities of type *e* contains atoms and sums, organized through the 'part-of' relation ≤, and the join operation ∪. In Harbour (2014), lattices are domains of variables, and number features are restrictors. 'Singular' restricts variables to lower level atoms, dual to medial level, and plural to supremum (and eventually medial). Fehri (2018) assumes the atom feature to be bivalent: [+ atom] for singulars, [- atom] for plurals, and [± atom] for general nouns. He also introduces a [± unit], feature, which differentiates traditional divisions of singularities and pluralities (sgv = singulative, plv = plurative):

	+ *atom*	– *atom*
+*unit*	sgv	plv
- *unit*	sing	pl

More features can be motivated, including [± additive], and [± minimal] (Harbour 2011).
References. Chomsky, N. 1995. *The minimalist Program*. MIT Press. Fassi Fehri, A. 2018. *Constructing the Feminine to Mean.* Lexington Books. Link, G. 1983. The logical analysis of plurals and mass terms. *Meaning, Use, and Interpretation of Language*, ed. R. Bauerle et al. Mouton de Gruyter.