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# The semantics of pluractionals and punctuals in Konso (Cushitic, Ethiopia)

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**Abstract:** Event number is an important grammatical category in Konso in addition to nominal number. Event number has two main values, singular and plural, which can be expressed by two distinct verbal morphological processes, punctual and pluractional. The interpretation of a sentence in terms of event number is arrived at through an intricate interplay of lexical meaning, the core meaning of the number marking morphology and the separate system of aspect. Each verb has its intrinsic values for event number associated with its systematic lexical distinctions in terms of event number. Event number includes both event internal and event external situations. The meaning of the markers of singular and plural event number has a primary and a secondary value. There are several situations in which the primary meaning is excluded and the secondary meaning is the only possible interpretation. The pluractional is fully productive while the punctual is not productive and has interesting structural morphological restrictions.

**Keywords:** pluractionality, punctual, semelfactive, event number, Cushitic, Konso, Ethiopia

## 1 Introduction

Konso (Cushitic, Ethiopia) has pluractional verbal marking. Pluractionals are very common in African languages and elsewhere (Newman 1990; Newman 2012; Dimmendaal 2014). Newman (2012: 186) provides a list of five common characteristics of pluractionals: “(a) plurality in the verb per se, (b) derivation rather than inflectional agreement, (c) ergativetype relations with other arguments in the sentence, (d) reduplication as a common means of formation, and (e) the common appearance of suppletive forms.” Except for (b) the other characteristics are valid for Konso too. While in many other languages, pluractional marking is the speaker’s choice to highlight the plural nature of the

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event<sup>1</sup> and plural events need not automatically be marked as such, in Konso a plural event requires a pluractional verb form. In addition, some underived verbs receive a singular event interpretation if there exists a pluractional for the same lexeme. Moreover, Konso has a second morphological marker in this system of event number: a derived singular which we term *punctual*. The *punctual* is not productive. Both morphological event markers on the verb operate on the root and have some derivational qualities such as lexicalisation but also inflectional qualities in the fact that every sentence is interpreted for event number. The interpretation of event number of a given utterance crucially depends on the lexical semantics of the root in terms of event number qualities, much like a stative/active lexical distinction interacts with aspect. Perfective/imperfective aspect distinction is marked additionally on the Konso verb. In some languages that have grammaticalised event number on verbs, the rationale of such a system may be seen in the absence of nominal number marking. Sandawe is an example, see Kießling (2010), Steeman (2012). This is not the case for Konso since in this language nouns too have two values of number: singular and plural, which can both be derived by singulative and pluralive derivations, see Ongaye (2013) for details. In this article, we concentrate on the event plurality marked on the verb and on how a semantic interpretation is arrived at.

Konso is spoken in southwest Ethiopia by about 250,000 people (Central Statistical Agency 2009). It belongs to the Lowland East Cushitic languages within the Afroasiatic phylum. The language has four dialects: Faashe, Karatte, Tuuro and *χolme*. Though we have made use of data from written stories (Daudey and Hellenthal 2005), most data for this article come from the Faashe dialect which the first author speaks.

We will show that the meaning of the verb form marked for plural event is in the first place repetition, plurality of subject or object (with plural meaning being high value of number) and in the second place distributivity in place and time (with plural meaning being a relative low number). These extended meanings come to the foreground if the primary meaning is not available either because the base lexical meaning of the verb does not allow it or because another form in the lexicon has the primary meaning of repetition. We will show that the pluractional, the *punctual* and the suppletive event number pairs influence the meaning of the base verbs in the lexicon. We use the term *repetition* to include both iteration and frequency. It has been claimed that pluractionals express internal event number and not external event, Cusic

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “event” or “occasion” for one recognizable unit that is anchored on the timeline.

(1981); external event number would be the domain of (imperfective) aspect. We show for Konso that the pluractional can be used to express external event number as well, and interacts with (imperfective) aspect which is expressed separately on the verb. We discuss this interaction in 2.6.

The interpretation of a verb in terms of event number depends crucially on the lexical semantics of the base verbs. We develop a system of the basic semantic subdivisions that have to be distinguished for both pluractional and punctual in 2.3 and 3.3. These lexical distinctions rely on boundedness and atomicity.

We provide proof of the following generalisations in Section 2 on the pluractional and Section 3 on the punctual: 1. Event number is a grammaticalised category in Konso and that has consequences for semantic interpretation; 2. Pluractional is primarily event internal but can refer to event external situations; 3. We need to distinguish primary and secondary meaning for both pluractional and punctual; 4. The pluractional has high plurality in its primary meaning and low plurality in its secondary meaning; 5. The use of a pluractional with plural objects or, for intransitive verbs, with plural subjects, is not an instance of agreement. We continue with the discussion of the semantic interplay of lexical base meaning and meaning of the morphological markers in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the suppletive paradigms. Section 6 discusses the double derivation of pluractional, of derived punctual. In Section 7, we position the Konso pluractional in the typology of pluractionals.

## 2 Pluractional

### 2.1 Form

While some languages have a series of markers that express pluractionality (e.g. Uncu, Comfort 2014), Konso has only one kind of pluractional and has only one formation of this pluractional. The pluractional in Konso is completely productive. It involves the reduplication of the verb root's initial  $C_1V(C_1)$ .<sup>2</sup> The shape of

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<sup>2</sup> For a limited number of monosyllabic verbs, the pluractional is formed by full reduplication of the  $C_1VC_2$  verb root as in (i).

- |     |                                 |  |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|
| (i) | <b>dam-</b> 'to eat'            | <b>damdam-</b> 'to chew a bit'                       |
|     | <b>pul-</b> 'to scatter'        | <b>pulpul-</b> 'to demolish (e.g., a house) rapidly' |
|     | <b>fap-</b> 'to rot, be soaked' | <b>fapfap-</b> 'to rot, decay. completely'           |
|     | <b>fur-</b> 'to untie'          | <b>furfur-</b> 'to untie, dismantle quickly'         |

Other monosyllabic verbs of this CVC shape such as **dot-** in (1a) can be considered full reduplication but with complete consonantal assimilation to the root-initial  $C_1$ . For heavier

the reduplicant is a closed syllable with a short vowel and with the root-initial consonant in the coda if the next consonant is single or a consonant cluster, (1a), and no coda if the next consonant in the root is geminate as in (1b). In the glossing, we enclose inherent lexical singularity and plurality in round parenthesis as (SG) and (PL), respectively. With verbs which may have a singular or plural interpretation, we use (SG/PL) in the glossing.<sup>3</sup>

(1a)	<b>dot-</b>	‘to stab (SG)’	<b>doddot-</b>	‘to stab:PL’
	<b>gid-</b>	‘to beat (SG)’	<b>gidgid-</b>	‘to beat:PL’
	<b>pi?</b>	‘to fall (SG)’	<b>pippi?</b>	‘to fall:PL’
	<b>toom-</b>	‘to hit with fist (SG)’	<b>totoom-</b>	‘to hit with fist:PL’
	<b>torp-</b>	‘to shoot with spear (SG)’	<b>tottorp-</b>	‘to shoot with spear:PL’
	<b>tarp-</b>	‘to pass, cross (SG)’	<b>tattarp-</b>	‘to pass, cross:PL’
	<b>kuti?</b>	‘to sit down (SG)’	<b>kukkuti?</b>	‘to sit down:PL’
(1b)	<b>daww-</b>	‘to herd (SG)’	<b>dadaww-</b>	‘to herd:PL’
	<b>kull-</b>	‘to enter (SG)’	<b>kukull-</b>	‘to enter:PL’
	<b>tugguur-</b>	‘to push (SG)’	<b>tutugguur-</b>	‘to push:PL’
	<b>faggal-</b>	‘to stick to (SG)’	<b>fafaggal-</b>	‘to stick to:PL’
	<b>moddoor-</b>	‘to be bent (SG)’	<b>momoddoor-</b>	‘to be bent:PL’

Konso has underived verbs with a plural event meaning that inherently refers to event plurality in the sense that the action is done more than once within the same event. For instance, the verb roots in (2a) are underived plural event verbs; they can be used as a base either to derive single actions (punctuals) by geminating the coda of the plural base verb (see Section 3 for details of punctuals) as in (2b), or to derive “double” pluractionals as in (2c) by reduplicating the verb’s initial  $C_1VC_1$ . There are no frozen pluractionals.<sup>4</sup>

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monosyllabic and for disyllabic roots the shape of the reduplicant is  $C_1V(C_1)$  and verbs like **dot-** can also be included in the general formulation above.

<sup>3</sup> A verb, or better one sense of meaning of a lexical verb, is considered to be SG if the verb always denotes a situation that involves a single action; for example, **dot-** ‘to stab’ is such a verb; it is called PL if the meaning always involves multiple actions, **tuug-** ‘to scratch’ is such a verb; a verb is ambivalent if both interpretations are possible; for example, **leb-** ‘kick forward’ can have either one or several objects. We used the following test to determine whether a verb is (PL) or (SG/PL): when “each” is added to the object (or the subject) and it necessarily leads to an interpretation of separate sub-events, the verb is labelled (PL). We use -PL or PL and SG- or SG to gloss the pluractional and the punctual *morphological* marker.

<sup>4</sup> Black and Shako’s (1973) dictionary contains roughly 3000 entries; those that contain initial reduplication are nouns with the exception of some verbs showing a different reduplication,  $C_1V$

- (2a) **ɕof-** ‘to pinch (PL)’  
**rak-** ‘to hang (PL)’  
**leḃ-** ‘to kick forward (PL)’  
**tuuk-** ‘to push (PL)’  
**moof-** ‘to break (PL)’
- (2b) **ɕoff-** ‘to pinch:SG’  
**rakk-** ‘to hang:SG’  
**leḃḃ-** ‘to kick:SG’  
**tuukk-** ‘to push:SG’  
**mooff-** ‘to break:SG’
- (2c) **ɕoɕɕof-** ‘to pinch:PL’  
**rarrak-** ‘to hang:PL’  
**lelleḃ-** ‘to kick:PL’  
**tuttuuk-** ‘to push:PL’  
**mommoof-** ‘to break:PL’

## 2.2 Semantics: Argument or action

The pluractional has a range of meanings in Konso. It may mean plurality of the action of the event, of the participants, or a combination of these. For example, the pluractional is used for plural subjects in intransitive clauses, (3a), for plural objects in transitive clauses, (3b), for repetitive or iterative action, (3c). In fact, the repetitive interpretation is induced if the pluractional is used with a singular object as in (3c).

- (3a) **talaasinit teepaa ɕaranne doḏḏoyin**  
**talaa-sini? teepaa ɕara-nn=i doḏ-ḏoy-i-n**  
 goats-DEF.P rope on-PATH=3 PL~jump(SG)-PF-P  
 ‘The goats jumped over the rope.’

- (3b) **kutasi? ?ikeeray ka hellaa-sini? ɕaɕɕaniinay**  
**kuta-si? ?i=keer-ay ka hellaa-sini? ɕaɕ-ɕaniin-ay**  
 dog-DEF.M/F 3=run(SG)-PF[3M] and children-DEF.P PL~bite(SG)-PF[3M]  
 ‘The dog ran and bit the children.’

(V)<sub>C</sub><sub>2</sub>-, and which still allow for a pluractional: **ḃeerḃeer** ‘become exceedingly thin’, PL: **ḃeḃḃeerḃeer** for many persons, **ereer-** ‘to dilute **ɕaɕaa** ‘beer with water’, PL: **?e??ereer-**; **ɕaɕaɕaar-** ‘to help’, PL: **ɕaɕɕaɕaɕaar-**, and the adjective **kokkook-** ‘strong; difficult; serious; main, important, essential; expensive’ PL: **kokkook-**.

- (3c) **kutasi? ?inantasi? ?iɕaɕɕaniinay**  
**kuta-si? ?inanta-si? ?i=ɕaɕ~ɕaniin-ay**  
 dog-DEF.M/F girl-DEF.M/F 3=PL~bite(SG)-PF[3M]  
 ‘The dog bit the girl (a few times).’

Argument number as part of event number is semantically different from the other sense of its meaning. If the pluractional indicates plurality of arguments (subjects or objects), then, any plurality counts 2, 3 or more, as in (4a).<sup>5</sup> If the pluractional indicates plurality of action, it must refer to many (high plurality), never just two or a few. This is not only true for the morphologically marked pluractional (4b) but also for the plural base verb, (4c).

- (4a) **pinaanaasini? ?ihirin ka ?oli ɕomin ka ?oli diddiikɕin**  
**pinaanaa-sini? ?i=hir-i-n ka ?oli ɕom-i-n ka**  
 animals-DEF.P 3=run(PL)-PF-P and each.other bite(PL)-PF-P and  
**?oli did~diik-f-i-n**  
 each.other PL~bleed-CAUS-PF-P  
 ‘The animals ran, bit each other and bled each other.’

- (4b) **hellaasinip patta ɕudaa ?oli diddiitin**  
**hella-sini? pattaɕudaa ?oli did~diit-i-n**  
 children-DEF.P without.reason each.other PL~kick-PF-P  
 ‘The children kicked each other [many times] without good reasons.’

- (4c) **kutasik karrattasi? ?iɕomay**  
**kuta-si? karratta-si? ?i=ɕom-ay**  
 dog-DEF.M/F squirrel-DEF.M/F 3=bite(PL)-PF:3M  
 ‘The dog bit the squirrel [many times].’

Beck (2012) poses the question whether it is possible to have a plural subject, a plural object, and a plural event verb referring to a situation in which there is a collection of individual subjects acting on individual objects within one event. This is possible. In (5a), we have two underived singular verbs, namely, **ɕep-** ‘to be broken (SG)’ and **ɕapt-** ‘to throw(SG)’, a plural subject **hellaasini?** ‘the children’, and a singular object **taamtasi?** ‘the branch’. The plural subject in the sentence shows that the participants acted together to accomplish two separate actions. The first action is that of breaking followed by the action of throwing the broken branch into fire. In

<sup>5</sup> In example (4a) the verbs are not derived pluractionals but suppletive pluractionals; these are discussed in Section 5.

(5b), we have two plural verbs, one derived, **ḡḡḡep-** ‘to be broken(PL)’, and the other, **ḡakk-** ‘to throw(PL)’, a suppletive counterpart of the singular **ḡapt-** ‘to throw (SG)’. Moreover, both the subject and object are plural. With these arguments, the interpretation is that either the collection of the individual subjects acted collectively in the breaking of each branch because the size of the branches required the efforts of more than one individual or that each member of the subject acted separately in the breaking of only one branch. In both cases, there are sub-events within one event, and each sub-event is accomplished either collectively or individually.

- (5a) **hellaasini? ʔoo taamtasiḡ ḡepjin kammaayye ʔapittuppupaa katin**  
**hella-sini? ʔoo taamta-si? ḡep-j-i-n kammaayye**  
 children-DEF.P when branch-DEF.M/F be.broken-CAUS-PF-P after.that  
**ʔapitta-oppupa=i ḡapt-i-n**  
 fire-into=3 throw(SG)-PF-P  
 ‘After the children broke the branch, they threw it into the fire.’

- (5b) **hellaasini? ʔoo taammaasiniḡ ḡḡḡepjin kammaayye ʔapittuppupaa**  
**ḡakkin**  
**hella-sini? ʔoo taammaa-sini? ḡḡḡep-j-i-n kammaayye**  
 children-DEF.P when branches-DEF.P PL-be.broken-CAUS-PF-P after.that  
**ʔapitta-oppupa=i ḡakk-i-n**  
 fire-into=3 throw(PL)-PF-P  
 ‘After the children broke the branches, they threw them into the fire.’

## 2.3 Semantics: Lexical number

The interpretation of the pluractional depends on the lexical semantics of the base verb. Součková (2011: 140) works with a basic distinction of naturally atomic versus not naturally atomic (see also Rothstein 2008); naturally atomic are those verbs that, from their lexical meaning, denote one unit of action independent of context. In Konso, we distinguish the natural atomic verbs between (i) verbs that are inherently repeated within one and the same event (e.g. ‘shave’, ‘scratch’), (ii) verbs for which it is possible to repeat the action within one event (‘step’, ‘kick’), and our third category, (iii) verbs for which repetition means different events, corresponds to non-natural atomic verbs. The examples we have seen above are of the first type; an example of the third type is **muk-** ‘to sleep’. If the subject is plural then that does not result in an interpretation of separate sub-events; the event is still considered to be one, and the singular verb is used. A repetition of ‘sleep’ in category (iii) cannot be realised within one and the same event.

A pluractional of ‘sleep’ has to refer to a number of individual separate events. The plurality in a number of events leads to an interpretation of distributivity as in **mummuk-** ‘to sleep sporadically at different places’, an instance of the secondary distributed time and/or place meaning of the pluractional. The person may spend the nights sporadically at the same place or spend nights at separate places. In addition to distributivity, there is the flavour of “sporadic” which we consider an instance of (negative) evaluation and which we pick up in Section 7.3.

The senses of plurality of event include some shades of meaning that are not immediately obvious as an instance of plural. For example, the pluractionals of the verbs of sunset and sunrise express a time that deviates from their norm: **pippiir-** ‘to rise earlier than usual’ from **piir-** ‘to rise (of sun)’ and **duddum-** ‘to set later than usual’ from **dum-** ‘to set (of sun)’. These verbs do not allow plurality of the subject as there is only one sun, and cannot be repeated within one event and hence the pluractional value cannot refer to participant number nor to the repetition. These are other instances of not naturally atomic verbs. However, for these two verbs, the interpretation does not shift to plural events and distributivity in place or time because that is inconceivable for these verbs in Konso cosmology. We suggest that in these cases the pluractional pluralizes the boundary norm as an instance of Cusic’s (1981: 80–96) parameter of relative prominence of bounds. We have not found other similar half-bounded verbs with the restriction of only one participant allowed, with the possible exception of a pluractional weather verb such as **?o??oraarood-** ‘to be cloudier than usual’, which is formed from the verb **?oraarood-** ‘to be cloudy’, (6), and with god as uniquely understood subject, receives degree of intensity as interpretation of plurality readily because ‘being cloudy’ is less easily quantified over different events; moreover, plurality and intensity are very close in the case of clouds; the interpretation of cloudy in several separate events is available as well.

- (6) **waaga yensi i?o??oraaroonni**  
**waaga yensi ?i=?o?~?ooraarood-ni**  
 God these.days 3=PL~be.cloudy.INCH-IPF.PRES  
 ‘These days, it becomes cloudy more often.’  
 ‘These days the clouds are heavier.’  
 (lit.: These days, God becomes cloudy more often.)

## 2.4 Semantics: Intensity

In several languages, the pluractional includes intensity in its semantic range. This is only marginally the case in Konso. Wood (2007: 255) argues that the pluractional may pluralize the upper or lower bound of a gradable predicate



rather than an event argument to explain the intensification sense of the iterative [pluractional] in Yurok. Gradable verbs in Konso do not show this behaviour. For example, a verb like **maaffood-** ‘to get drunk’ has a pluractional **mamaaffood-** which means ‘to get drunk again and again’, but not ‘to get nearly drunk’ or ‘to get plastered’. Similarly, intensity of a verb **maayannum-** ‘to be brave’ requires the intensity adverb such as **?akata** ‘very’ and cannot be expressed with a pluractional. Adjectives form their plural in the same way as the pluractional but have a separate expression for intensity for some of the adjectives, see Section 7.3.

## 2.5 Semantics: Low/high plurality

There is interplay between the lexical number class of the base and the semantic interpretation of the pluractional. For those verbs that have the value singular as their lexical meaning, the derived pluractional indicates a plural event with a high plural level; examples are **diit-** ‘to kick(SG)’ and **dot-** ‘to stab(SG)’. For verbs for which repetition leads to separate events, the pluractional indicates a low plural level, like ‘a few’ or ‘less than required’; examples are **muk-** ‘to sleep’, **roop-** ‘to rain’. For these latter verbs, the first meaning of repetition within one event is not available; the meaning of plurality of arguments is lexically impossible, the secondary meaning of distributed temporal units (and hence separate events) comes to the foreground and implies low plurality level (a few) and evaluation (less than required).

## 2.6 Semantics: Lexicalisation

The pluractional allows for specialisation of meaning and lexicalisation. For instance, the pluractional verb **sassak-** ‘to bless various people’ is derived from **sak-** ‘to bless’ but also has the meaning of ‘making a will’. This specialised meaning of the pluractional of **sak-** does not exclude the regular pluractional meaning ‘to bless various people’. These specialised meanings are extra to the regular meaning that these pluractional verbs also retain. The fact that the “lexicalised” verbs retain their regular meaning shows the productive nature of pluractional marking and interpretation. This also shows that meaning is calculated separately for each meaning sense.

## 2.7 Internal/external event

While the interpretation of plurality in the examples in (4) remained within one event, it is perfectly possible that a sentence with the pluractional refers to a

multiplicity of events each with plurality of action. For example, when the subject of a derived pluractional verb is singular (e.g. **harreeta** ‘a donkey’) and its object plural (e.g., **kaharraa** ‘sheep’) as in (7a), then, the plurality interpretation is that each object is affected once during one event or a couple of times or many times during different events. When a derived pluractional verb occurs with a plural subject (donkeys) and a singular object (ewe) as in (7b), the interpretation is that each subject (donkey) affects the object (ewe) once during an event or that each subject (donkey) affects the object (ewe) a couple of times or many times during different events.

(7a) **harreetasik kaharraasini? ʔididfiitti**

**harreeta-si? kaharraa-sini? i=did-dfiit-t-i**

donkey-DEF.M/F sheep-DEF.P 3=PL~kick(SG)-3F-PF

‘The donkey kicked the sheep.’

(7b) **harreewwaasinik kahartasi? ʔididfiitin**

**harreewwaa-sini? kaharta-si? ʔi=did-dfiit-i-n**

donkeys-DEF.P ewe-DEF.M/F 3=PL~kick(SG)-PF-P

‘The donkeys kicked the ewe.’

It has been claimed that pluractionals refer to event-internal plurality rather than event-external plurality, for example, Cusic (1981). Konso shows that it is possible that the event-internal plurality is valid for a series of events. If the event is one, the pluractionality comes either from the number of arguments (implying multiple actions) or from the (high) plurality of the action if the arguments are singular. If there are several events, then, the plurality refers to arguments and action in each of the events. But if the semantics of the verb is such that repetition by necessity implies several events, then, the pluractional expresses several events but not if that is impossible in the specific lexical verb (‘to sleep’). External-event plurality, which is the secondary meaning of the pluractional (distributivity), is always with low degree of plurality, and, interestingly, always has evaluative overtones. The external-event plurality of this specific verb (to sleep) comes from the fact that the sleeper spends nights here and there but there is also the sense that the speaker does not approve of the actions of the sleeper (evaluative).

## 2.8 Aspect

Aspect plays a significant role in the interpretation of number of events. For example, the verb **hat**- ‘to steal’ has a single event interpretation with the Perfect

(8a) and the Future Imperfective (8b) but with the Present Imperfective, it has the iterative interpretation while the action is also done at the moment of conversation (8c). Adverbs like **?awtapiisa** ‘always’, **kuttumta?** ‘mostly’ and **lekaytan** ‘many times’ are often used in the Present Imperfective to make the iterative event interpretation clearer. The Present Imperfective aspect can still render the repetitive interpretation even when the adverb **?awtapiisa** ‘always’ in (8c) is left out, as in (8d).

(8a) **keraasiχ χormasi? ?ihatay**

**keraa-si? χorma-si? ?i=hat-ay**

thief-DEF.M/F ox-DEF.M/F 3=steal-PF:3M

‘The thief stole the ox.’

(8b) **keraasiχ χormasi? ?ihata**

**keraa-si? χorma-si? ?i=hat-a**

thief-DEF.M/F ox-DEF.M/F 3=steal-IPF.FUT

‘The thief will steal the ox.’

(8c) **keraasiχ χormadaa awtapiisa ?ihanni**

**keraa-si? χormadaa awtapiisa ?i=hat-ni**

thief-DEF.M/F oxen always 3=steal-IPF.PRES

‘The thief always steals oxen.’

(8d) **keraasiχ χormadaa ?ihanni**

**keraa-si? χormadaa ?i=hat-ni**

thief-DEF.M/F oxen 3=steal-IPF.PRES

‘The thief steals oxen.’

Pluractional verbs allow for a range of plural interpretations which overlap with the expressive power of aspect marking. The plural interpretation of a pluractional verb can refer to several events in addition to plurality within one event. The sentence in (9a) contains the pluractional verb **rorroop-** ‘to rain quite often’ from **roop-** ‘to rain’, an intransitive verb which cannot have a plural subject because the subject is God; the interpretation of plurality within one event is not possible because sub-events cannot be constructed for raining in Konso. The pluractional does not entail intensity of rain; the expression of intensity requires the addition of the adverb **?akata** or **feyyaa?i** ‘very, a lot, intensely’ (9b). As a consequence, the repetitive interpretation with plurality of events comes to mind first in (9a), the secondary meaning of pluractional. Sentence (9a) also entails an element of ‘quite often (but not by necessity heavily)’. Plurality of events is possible in the

interpretation of a non-pluractional verb form with imperfective aspect in (9b), but not in the perfective aspect in (9c). In the perfective aspect, the pluractional form is required to express plural events, (9d).

- (9a) **waaga yensi ?i=rór-roop-ni**  
 God these.days 3=PL~rain-IPF.PRES  
 ‘These days, it rains more often.’  
 (lit.: These days, God rains more often.)

- (9b) **?akataa roopni**  
**?akata=i roop-ni**  
 a.lot=3 rain-IPF.PRES  
 ‘It is raining intensely right now or often.’

- (9c) **?i=roop-t-i**  
 3=rain-3F-PF  
 ‘It rained (once).’

- (9d) **?i=rór-roop-t-i**  
 3=PL~rain-3F-PF  
 ‘It rained a few times (less often than required).’

Both event internal and external plurality can be expressed by the imperfective, notably the Present Imperfective, also with a non-pluractional verb (9b). The same is true for pluractional verbs which can also express external event plurality, (9a), as well as, of course, event internal plurality. The difference between (9a) with a pluractional verb and (9b) with an imperfective non-pluractional verb is that the intensity adverb **?akata** ‘very, a lot’ can only refer to intensity if combined with the pluractional verb (10)<sup>6</sup>; similarly, if we add the intensifier **?akata** to sentence (9d) with a pluractional, it indicates that those showers were heavy. The sentence still has to refer to several events but the adverb cannot intensify the number of events in sentences with pluractional verbs. Thus, the secondary meaning of the pluractional implying event-plurality is not available for the intensity adverb. However, the intensity adverb **?akata** can refer both to frequency and intensity when combined with the non-pluractional verb marked for imperfective aspect.

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<sup>6</sup> The occurrence of the subject clitic with the adverb also shows that the adverb is focused.

- (10) **waaga yensi ?akataa rorroopni**  
**waaga yensi      ?akata=i ror~roop-ni**  
 God    these.days a.lot=3    PL~rain-IPF.PRES  
 ‘These days, it rains heavily and more often.’  
 (lit.: These days, God rains heavily and more often.)

## 3 Punctual

### 3.1 Form

Konso has a punctual, and shares this property with a number of languages in the area: Diraytata (Black 1974), Gawwada (Tosco 2010), Ts’amakko (Savà 2005), see Ongaye (2009) for the spread of this derivation in the area. Maba, a Nilo-Saharan language from Chad, is also reported to have a punctual (singulatif) in addition to a pluractional (pluratif) (Weiss (2009: 254–256), and also in Maba, this is combined with a rich system of number marking in the nominal system. The punctual in Konso is derived by geminating the final consonant of the underived verb root, (11).<sup>7</sup>

(11)	base form		punctual form	
	<b>ɕof-</b>	‘to pinch(PL)’	<b>ɕoff-</b>	‘to pinch:SG’
	<b>tit-</b>	‘to pull(PL)’	<b>titt-</b>	‘to pull:SG’
	<b>rak-</b>	‘to hang(PL)’	<b>rakk-</b>	‘to hang:SG’ <sup>8</sup>
	<b>leb-</b>	‘to kick(PL)’	<b>lebb-</b>	‘to kick:SG’
	<b>ɕud-</b>	‘to pierce(PL)’	<b>ɕudd-</b>	‘to pierce:SG’

#### 3.1.1 Formal constraints on productivity

Not all verbs can form a punctual. The punctual is far from productive and differs in that respect from the pluractional. No new punctuals can be formed

<sup>7</sup> In Ts’amakko, Savà (2005:186) reports the derivation of punctual from CVCVC verb root by geminating the second consonant of the verb root. Such examples in Konso are difficult to find. The verb **ɣossal** ‘to smile’ which is derived from **ɣosal-** ‘to laugh’ might be an example, and possibly also the verb **ɣaɕɕal-** ‘to stick to.SG’ if this is a lexicalised punctual from **ɣaɕal[i]-** ‘to sprout from the stalk’. In Gawwada, the punctual is formed by geminating all consonants in the verb root except for the initial one, **leppuyy-** from **lepuy-** ‘to kick’ (Tosco 2010:394).

<sup>8</sup> Savà (2005:186) reports that in Ts’amakko, **rakk-** ‘to hang’ does not allow a punctual reading.

creatively. In Black and Shako's (1973) dictionary with more than a thousand verb entries, over 400 pluractionals are indicated against about 60 punctuals. This is a result of several kinds of structural restrictions to forming a punctual. First of all, verbs that end in a geminate consonant, (12a), cannot form a punctual. Verb roots that end in a consonant cluster in their base form likewise do not allow a punctual derivation, (12b). Both restrictions are linked to the fact that the coda of a Konso syllable is maximally CC. Such verb roots that disallow the formation of punctual can have various values for event number; they are either singular or number ambivalent (SG/PL) in interpretation.

- (12a) **mitt-** 'to sever, pick (a fruit)(SG)'  
**kull-** 'to enter(SG)'  
**kaaḅḅ-** 'to be jealous(SG/PL)'  
**needḏf-** 'to hate(SG/PL)'  
**paayy-** 'to start(SG)'
- (12b) **tarp-** 'to cross, bypass(SG)'  
**teym-** 'to forget(SG/PL)'  
**kirp-** 'to sing, dance(SG/PL)'  
**?erk-** 'to send(SG)'  
**ḏink-** 'to kiss(SG)'  
**hawl-** 'to bury(SG)'

Some verbs may contain a frozen punctual. For such verbs, there is no underived plural counterpart with a single consonant, (13a). The pluractionals of such lexicalised punctuals are formed by reduplicating the initial CV as shown in (13b).

- (13a) \***kus-** (intended: to scoop soil, powder (PL)) **kuss-** 'to scoop soil, etc.(SG)'  
\***laaḅ-** (intended: to pace, make stride (PL)) **laaḅḅ-** 'to pace, make stride(SG)'  
\***pid-** (intended: to buy(PL)) **pidḏf-** 'to buy(SG)'
- (13b) **kuss-** 'to scoop soil, etc.(SG)' **kukuss-** 'to scoop soil, etc.:PL'  
**laaḅḅ-** 'to pace, make stride (SG)' **lalaḅḅ-** 'to pace, make stride:PL'  
**pidḏf-** 'to buy (SG)' **pipidḏf-** 'to buy:PL'

The punctual is also disallowed with a special limited set of verb roots that end in a vowel when the third person feminine subject marker is added, (14), see Ongaye (2013: 40). The rationale for the impossibility of a punctual derivation for these verbs is that these verb roots are vowel final and do not have a consonant that is final and that can be geminated.

(14)	<b>as[i]-</b>	‘to wait’	<b>*ass[i]</b>
	<b>pir[i]</b>	‘to finish’	<b>*pirr[i]</b>
	<b>pal[i]-</b>	‘to ripen; ready to eat’	<b>*pall[i]</b>
	<b>ker[i]-</b>	‘to grow old’	<b>*kerr[i]</b>
	<b>par[i]-</b>	‘to sunrise; day break’	<b>*parr[i]</b>
	<b>raaʔ[i]-</b>	‘to hang down’	<b>*raaʔʔ[i]</b>

The largest structural set of limitations of the punctual is for those verbs that have a derivational suffix (causative **-f**, 15a, passive **-am**, 15b, middle **-ad**, 15c, inchoative, 15d, and denumeral derivation **-aaw**, 15e). Also, a verb derived for punctual cannot further expand with the otherwise regular verbal derivations such as the causative and the passive. This restriction shows that the gemination for punctual has to involve a *root* consonant and cannot apply to the consonant of a derivational suffix. Apparently, once a verb is derived by a causative, middle or passive derivational suffix, its root is no longer accessible and the language does not allow for an “infixated” gemination of the penultimate and root-final consonant marking the punctual, and the other way around, a punctual derived verb cannot receive such a causative or passive derivation since the result would look exactly like such an excluded case.

(15a)	<b>harm-if-</b>	‘to fix, maintain’	<b>*harmiiff-</b>
	<b>kal-f-</b>	‘to bring home’	<b>*kaljff-</b>
	<b>kok-f-</b>	‘to cause to dry’	<b>*kokjff-</b>
	<b>koll-if-</b>	‘to teach’	<b>*kollijff-</b>
(15b)	<b>dot-am-</b>	‘to be stabbed’	<b>*dotamm-</b>
	<b>kayy-am-</b>	‘to be touched by jumping’	<b>*kayyamm-</b>
	<b>mur-am-</b>	‘to be cut(SG)’	<b>*muramm-</b>
(15c)	<b>got-ad-</b>	‘to dig(PL) for one’s benefit’	<b>*gotaddf-</b>
	<b>pan-ad-</b>	‘to open(SG) for one’s benefit’	<b>*panaddf-</b>
	<b>pidd-ad-</b>	‘to buy(SG) for one’s benefit’	<b>*piddaddf-</b>
(15d)	<b>poorn-aad<sup>9</sup>-</b>	‘to become black’	<b>*poornaaddf-</b>
	<b>ʔatt-aadf-</b>	‘to become white’	<b>*ʔattaaddf-</b>
	<b>dfer-aadf-</b>	‘to become tall, long’	<b>*dferaaddf-</b>

<sup>9</sup> The inchoative also has other markers such as **-ad**, **-naad**, **-oodf** and **-um** (see Ongay 2013:149-151)

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| (15e) <b>lamm-aaw-</b> ‘to happen twice’ | <b>*lammaaww-</b>     |
| <b>halkeet-taaw-</b> ‘to become dusk’    | <b>*halkeettaaww-</b> |
| <b>kuyyaʔt-aaw-</b> ‘to dawn’            | <b>*kuyyaʔtaaww-</b>  |

The restriction expands to those underived verb roots that end in a consonant that is identical to one of these derivations, (16).

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| (16) <b>ɗaaf-</b> ‘to give’                        | <b>*ɗaaff</b>     |
| <b>loʃloʃ</b> ‘to swell on body with a lot of pus’ | <b>*loʃloʃf</b>   |
| <b>ɕayyaaw-</b> ‘to smoke’                         | <b>*ɕayyaaww-</b> |
| <b>sindaaw-</b> ‘to urinate’                       | <b>*sindaaww-</b> |
| <b>ɕaʔad-</b> ‘to stand up’                        | <b>*ɕaʔadd-</b>   |
| <b>ɕeedf-</b> ‘to take’                            | <b>*ɕeeddf-</b>   |
| <b>ɗam-</b> ‘to eat’                               | <b>*ɗamm-</b>     |
| <b>hedɗaam-</b> ‘to become hard (for fresh grain)’ | <b>*hedɗaamm-</b> |

This expansion is really linked to derivational shape and not a pure phonological restriction because underived basic verbs are allowed to terminate in geminate **ff**, such as **kolmaff-** ‘to become hard and yellow (of leaves)’ (**\*kolmaf-**). A second indication for the morphological nature of the restriction is that it does not hold for monosyllabic stems ending in **f** or **d** since such forms cannot be mistaken for a causative or middle, (17).<sup>10</sup>

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (17) <i>base form</i> <i>punctual form</i> |                                       |
| <b>koof-</b> ‘to shave(PL)’                | <b>kooff-</b> ‘to shave a bit’        |
| <b>xoof-</b> ‘to scratch(PL)’              | <b>xooff-</b> ‘to scratch(SG)’        |
| <b>haadf-</b> ‘to carry(PL)’               | <b>haadff-</b> ‘to carry mass(SG)’    |
| <b>fidf-</b> ‘to spray, scatter(PL)’       | <b>fiddf-</b> ‘to spray, scatter(SG)’ |

In addition to these structural restrictions to the formation of a punctual, there are some verbs that simply do not allow a punctual derivation. The verb root for drinking can be **ʔik-** or **ʔikk-**, and one would expect the former to be a pluractional and the latter a punctual. However, the verb forms do not distinguish pluractional from punctual. They both refer to a general act of drinking. The punctual is expressed by the suppletive verb root **xoobɓ-** ‘to take a sip’. The verb root for ‘looking for’ can also be **fadf-** or **fadff-**, without distinguishing the pluractional from the punctual. They both refer to a general act of looking for something. Unlike the verb root **ʔik(k)-**, the

<sup>10</sup> But this restriction is not strict but weak as there are exceptions such as **ɗaaf-**, **ɕeedf-** and **ɗam-**.



verb root for looking for something (**fad-** or **fadf-**) does not have a suppletive verb root. The verb root **kod-** ‘to do, work’ geminates its final consonant, and yields **kodf-**. However, the latter does not display regular punctual meaning like ‘to do something at one go’; rather, it produces an inchoative meaning ‘to become’.

There are a number of suppletive pairs of verb roots for pluractional and punctual in addition to the pair **ik(k)-** /**χooḅḅ-** ‘to take a sip’, see Section 6 for details.

### 3.2 Semantics

A punctual usually involves single subject, single object, and single event, (18a). The subject of a punctual verb may involve plural participants but that is possible only when the object requires the efforts of multiple participants who must act as a team. In (18b), for example, the subject is plural implying that the pushing of the stone requires the effort of more than one individual. The example in (18c) is unacceptable because it has a singular subject and plural object. Likewise, the example in (18d) is unacceptable because it has a plural subject and a singular object for an action that does not require the efforts of more than one individual. Furthermore, the example in (18e) is unacceptable because multiple participants in the subject and object are used in the context of an activity that is done only once and at one time.

- (18a) **namasi? ʔinantasi? ʔiḡoffa**  
**nama-si? ʔinanta-si? ʔi=ḡof-f-a**  
 man-DEF.M/F girl-DEF.M/F 3=pinch-SG-IPF.FUT  
 ‘The man will pinch the girl once.’
- (18b) **ʔorrasid dakaasi? ʔituukkay**  
**ʔorra-si? dakaa-si? ʔi=tuukk-ay**  
 people-DEF.M/F stone-DEF.M/F 3=push:SG-PF[3M]  
 ‘The people pushed the stone once.’
- (18c) \***namasi? hellasini? ʔiḡoffa**  
 \***nama-si? hellaa-sini? ʔi=ḡof-f-a**  
 person-DEF.M/F children-DEF.P 3=pinch-SG-IPF.FUT  
 (Intended: The person will pinch the children once.)
- (18d) \***ʔorrasid ʔinnaasini? ʔiḡoffay**  
 \***ʔorra-si? ʔinnaa-sini? ʔi=ḡoff-ay**  
 people-DEF.M/F child-DEF.P 3=pinch.SG-PF[3M]  
 (Intended: The people pinched the child once.)

- (18e) \*ʔorrasiʔ hellaa-siniʔ ʔiɕoffa  
 \*ʔorra-siʔ        hellaa-siniʔ        ʔi=ɕoff-a  
 people-DEF.M/F   children-DEF.P   3=pinch.SG-IPF.FUT  
 (Intended: The people will pinch the children once.)<sup>11</sup>

We have already mentioned that not all Konso verbs allow for a punctual derivation. The majority of the Konso verbs that do allow such a derivation denote a physical action manipulating material by hand or an instrument; either the action allows for repetition or is in itself commonly repetitive. The punctual verb renders the event quantifiable and limits it to one instance of the action. One instance of action is often synonymous with one object; this is, for example, the case with the verb **ɕoot-** ‘to share, divide among people’ for which the punctual **ɕoott-** refers to one action, to one person or a group of people counting as one.

The punctual refers to one sub-activity for activities that are usually done in a series of sub-activities during one occasion. An example is **tuuɕɕ-** ‘to scratch: SG’ from **tuuɕ-** ‘to scratch(PL)’. The base verb **tuuɕ-** has a meaning that naturally involves repetition of action (19a). Its punctual **tuuɕɕ-**, (19b), denotes one sub-activity of the series of activities of scratching. The punctual **tuuɕɕ-** can also be used to denote a single activity in which a bunch of something (for example, coffee beans) is harvested at one go.

- (19a) ʔan muruppaa desa tarpiniyooyyeeɕoyraasiniʔ ʔanaa tuuɕin  
 ʔa=n    mura-oppaa    desa                    tarp-ni-y-ooyyee  
 when=1 forest-in       horizontal.plane    pass-IPF.PRES-1SG-DP  
**ɕoyraa-siniʔ ʔana=i tuuɕ-i-n**  
 trees-DEF.P    me=3    scratch(PL)-PF-P  
 ‘The trees scratched me when I was passing through the forest.’
- (19b) ʔan muruppaa desa tarpiniyooyyee ɕoyra-siʔ ʔanaa tuuɕɕay  
 ʔa=n    mura-oppaa    desa                    tarp-ni-y-ooyyee  
 when=1 forest-in       horizontal.plane    pass-IPF.PRES-1SG-DP  
**ɕoyra-siʔ ʔana=i tuuɕɕ-ay**  
 tree-DEF.M/F    me=3    scratch(SG)-PF[3M]  
 ‘When I was passing through the forest, the tree scratched me.’

<sup>11</sup> The example remains ungrammatical in the other imperfective form in **-ni**.

In some verbs, the punctual indicates that the action is done only for a little while, only partly. An example is the verb **mukk-** ‘to take a nap, lie on something’ from the verb **muk-** ‘to sleep’.

- (20) **ʔamma ʔinkakkafanneɣ lamaytam mukkina ka dettow ʧaʔna ka kal-  
taa paayyina**  
**ʔamma ʔin=kak-kafad-n-i-y lamayta-ʔ mukk-n-a**  
 now 1=PL~be.tired-1PL-PF-ATT medium-dat take.nap-1PL-IMP.PL  
**ka dettow ʧaʔ-n-a kaltaa paayy-n-a**  
 and on.time rise-1PL-IMP.PL returning.home start-1PL-IMP.PL  
 ‘Since we are tired now, let’s take a nap and wake up on time and begin to return home.’

Many punctual verb stems imply intensity compared to their underived counterparts. Both meanings, 1. once or a bit, and 2. intensively/quickly are available. For instance, the punctual verb stems **ʧoff-** ‘to pinch:SG’, **lebb-** ‘to kick forward:SG’, **titt-** ‘to pull:SG’, **ʧudd-** ‘to pierce:SG’ imply the use of more force to accomplish the activity than their corresponding underived counterparts require.

- (21a) **raaka-siʔ ʔinanta-siʔ ʔi=ʧoff-t-i**  
 old.woman-DEF.M/F girl-DEF.M/F 3=pinch.SG-3F-PF  
 ‘The old woman pinched the girl once.’

- (21b) **raaka-siʔ ʔinanta-siʔ ʔi=ʧof-t-i**  
 old.woman-DEF.M/F girl-DEF.M/F 3=pinch(PL)-3F-PF  
 ‘The old woman pinched the girl many times.’

A derived punctual like **ʧoff-** ‘pinch:SG’ from **ʧof-** ‘to pinch(PL) (many times)’ is used to express ‘to pinch once’ as in (21a) but it also expresses an additional sense of intensity. This additional sense is always available and becomes central in meaning if the base verb is already singular in event meaning, see Section 4 for details. The intensity for underived pluractionals is expressed with adverbs such as **ʔakata** ‘very’, (22), see also 2.8. The use of this adverb with derived punctuals (e.g. **ʧoff-** ‘to pinch:SG’) expresses extra intensity because the derived punctual implies a sense of more intensity than the underived pluractional.

- (22) **raakasiʔ ʔakataa ʔinantasiʔ ʧofti**  
**raaka-siʔ ʔakata=i ʔinanta-siʔ ʧof-t-i**  
 old.woman-DEF.M/F very=3 girl-DEF.M/F pinch(PL)-3F-PF  
 ‘The old woman pinched the girl very hard many times.’

In a verb root like **maç-** ‘to stop by, pay a visit’ which is always about a single event with singular or plural participants, the punctual **maçç-** is used when one intends to express an emphatic single stop by/visit and a short one. We consider this example as an instance of intensity.

We have seen that a pluractional verb can also express intensity. The intensive punctual derives its intensity from extra force used in the singular action, as in the case of pinching. The intensity reading of the pluractional has a different origin compared to the intensity reading of the punctual. The intensive pluractional derives its intensity not from extra force and for the verbs in question the subject has no control and, thus, cannot control the intensity, as is the case of ‘to be cloudy’ and ‘to be wise’.

Suddenness and quick action are also common semantic features of derived punctuals in their secondary meaning. An example of this feature is the verb **hatt-** ‘steal quickly, snatch away’ from **hat-** ‘to steal’. This is typical for verbs like ‘to steal’ that cannot be interpreted as consisting of a series of sub-events of the same nature, and that also cannot be done partly or for a short period of time.

In sum, the punctual derivation expresses that the activity is done 1 once, partly, intensively, or 2. suddenly and quickly. It is important to recognize the values in terms of event number in the lexical semantics of the base. These can have four different values: (i) the action is naturally repetitive – the punctual denotes one of those repetitions, (ii) the action is dividable in natural units – the punctual denotes one of those, (iii) the action is continuous (non-automatic), i.e. cannot be seen as consisting of concrete sub-events but it is possible to envisage the action partly done or for a short time – the punctual is partitive; (iv) it is not possible to divide the action up in parts (mainly telic verbs) (non-automatic) – the punctual means intensity, suddenness, quickness. This extended meaning of intensity, suddenness, quickness is prominent in verbs of class (iv) but an option of interpretation in all other classes. This meaning also becomes prominent if the base of verb is already singular in meaning.

### 3.3 Lexicalisations and frozen punctuals

With certain verbs, the punctual forms may sometimes have a slightly different meaning from the base, (23). The forms with geminated consonants are truly lexicalised and do not allow for an additional regular interpretation (punctual of

the base); in this respect, the lexicalised punctuals differ from the lexicalised pluractionals. In other cases, the lexical pairs may be coincidental and not an example of a frozen punctual derivation, as we expect it to be for **daw-** ‘to build (e.g. fence, stonewall), hit, weave’ and **daww-** ‘to herd’.

- (23) *base form*                      *punctual*  
**od-** ‘to work, do’    **kodd-** ‘to become’  
**tuf-** ‘to spit’            **tuff-** ‘to bless a victim for reconciliation, to avert an  
evil spirit’

### 3.4 Aspect and terminology

The term *semelfactive* is used for the semantic function of doing something once when it functions in the area of aspect, or *Aktionsart*, for example, in Slavic languages, Finnish, and Hungarian (Kiss 2011). The Konso punctual functions in the system of event number that is expressed independently of aspect. The Konso punctual can be used in Perfect as well as Imperfective Future, see (18) and (19) above. Indeed, not all semelfactive verbs in Konso are derived punctuals. We prefer the term *punctual* over *semelfactive* for the Konso derivation to emphasize that it operates within the domain of event number and not of aspect.

We can combine the punctual derivation with the various imperfective aspects including the Present Imperfective. The pluractional (24a) in the Present Imperfective means a habitual, regular or occasional action (these senses can be well clarified with adverbs); the punctual (24b) also in the Present Imperfective, a habitual, regular or occasional action means doing the action once during each event.

- (24a) **raakasi? ?inantasi? ?iɕofni**  
**raaka-si?                      ?inanta-si?    ?i=ɕof-ni**  
old.woman-DEF.M/F    girl-DEF.M/F    3=pinch(PL)-IPF.PRES  
‘The old woman pinches/is pinching the girl many times.’

- (24b) **raakasi? ?inantasi? ?iɕoffini**  
**raaka-si?                      ?inanta-si?    ?i=ɕoff-ni**  
old.woman-DEF.M/F    girl-DEF.M/F    3=pinch:SG-IPF.PRES  
‘The old woman pinches/is pinching the girl once.’

## 4 Lexical event number classes and the semantics of punctual and pluractional

### 4.1 Lexical paradigm and lexical event number value

The interpretation of a verb form in terms of event number depends on the existence of other event number forms for the same root. In (18e) above, we saw that the punctual cannot be used when the subject or the object is plural because that would entail that the utterance is about several distinct occasions and the punctual implies that the action is once and hence involves only one occasion. The interpretation of the underived base of a punctual is pluractional as in (25a). Thus, the base will be used with plural objects, and if such a base verb which has a punctual is used with a single object, then, the action is iterative and within one event, (25b).

- (25a) **ǂimaytasih hellaasinil lakki ʔiǂofay**  
**ǂimayta-si? hellaa-sini? lakki ʔi=ǂof-ay**  
 old.man-DEF.M/F children-DEF.P two 3=pinch(PL)-PF[3M]  
 ‘The old man pinched the two children.’

- (25b) **ǂimaytasi? ʔinnaasini? ʔiǂofay**  
**ǂimayta-si? ʔinnaa-sini? ʔi=ǂof-ay**  
 old.man-DEF.M/F child-DEF.P 3=pinch(PL)-PF[3M]  
 ‘The old man pinched the child many times.’

Event number is expressed in every sentence. Konso verbs are singular or plural in event number and either the derived punctual or the base form is singular, and either the base form or the derived pluractional is plural. However, the system does not work neatly like that for all verbs as there are a number of verbs that are number ambivalent in terms of event number in their base (SG/PL) and the presence of a punctual or pluractional does not impose a number interpretation in the base form. Rather, within the lexicon, words can but need not adjust their meaning in function of competitive words.

There are basically two possible constellations of event number forms, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Possible constellations of event number marking within a lexeme.

1	Punctual – Base – Pluractional
2	No Punctual – Base – Pluractional

The third logical option Punctual – Base – No Pluractional does not occur because the pluractional is productive. But also, because in cases of semantic specialisation of the pluractional, the regular pluractional meaning remains available. The fourth logical option, No Punctual – Base – No Pluractional does not occur either for the same reason of productivity of the pluractional.

The first option Punctual – Base – Pluractional has three subtypes depending on the lexical specification of the base verb in terms of event number:

In the second option of Base – Pluractional, there are two subtypes:

## 4.2 Primary and secondary meaning and constellation of the lexeme

Punctuals that are derived from a verb that is number ambivalent (SG/PL), or just singular in event number meaning, have a different interpretation: for them, the second sense of ‘emphasis, intensity, suddenness and speed’ is primary (Table 2 (a,c)). Event number is one coherent category in Konso and meaning is arrived at in a system of interpretation which depends on other forms within a<sup>12</sup> lexeme.

**Table 2:** Interpretation depending on lexical event number of lexemes of type 1.(the labels (SG), (PL), (SG/PL) and their definition are explained in footnote 3).

	Punctual	Base	Pluractional	
(a)	quickly	SG/PL	a few	<b>hat-</b> ‘to steal’ (non-atomic: iii)
(b)	once	PL	a few	<b>ɕof-</b> ‘to pinch’ (atomic: i)
(c)	intense <sup>12</sup>	SG	repetition	<b>dot-</b> ‘to stab’ (atomic: ii)

**12** It is used to express a sharp pain as in:

- (a) **ɕinda kelaa desaa ?ana dottini**  
 side under from me stab(SG):IPF.PRES  
 ‘It is giving me sharp pains from the side.’
- (b) **dottootaa ?ifa ?ikanni**  
 sharp.pain him kill:IPF.PRES  
 ‘He is having sharp pains.’ (lit.: Sharp pain is killing him.)

Pluractionals of plural verbs express the secondary meaning of the pluractional marker because of the requirement that the marker adds meaning. The base already has the possibility to refer to the primary meaning of the pluractional (repetition and plurality of subject/object) and hence the pluractional marker highlights the secondary meaning of the plural marking. Cases in point for such interpretations of pluractionals are in Table 2 (a), (b) and Table 3 (b).

It is possible to make predictions about which verbal form has which event number interpretation according to the following generalizations:

**Table 3:** Interpretation depending on lexical event number of lexemes of type 2.

	Base	Pluractional
(a)	SG	repetition
(b)	SG/PL	a few

1. If there exists a punctual derivation, then the underived verb is interpreted as plural. However, a number of verbs need to be marked as number ambivalent (SG/PL) in the lexicon as they show subject, object or event singularity or multiplicity depending on the context in which it is used. For these verbs, if there exists an additional pluractional, this pluractional verb form means that the action happens *a few times* and the underived form may mean that the action happens *many times*. We discuss the semantics of a second plural event number form in Section 6. An example is **hat-**(SG/PL) ‘to steal’, pluractional **hahhat-** and punctual **hatt-**. Since the underived verb can already refer to a singular event, the derived punctual **hatt-** concentrates on the second senses ‘to steal quickly’, ‘to snatch away’ rather than ‘steal once’; similarly, the pluractional **hahhat-** highlights the additional defocused sense, ‘to steal sporadically, not so often’.

2a. If there is no punctual derivation possible, then the underived verb form indicates a single event and the pluractional means that the action happens a high number of times event internally. The interpretation of the underived verb form in terms of number is thus dependent on what other event number forms exist in the lexical unit. Lexical meaning plays a role in the details of the semantic interpretation.

2b. If there is no punctual but the base form is number ambivalent (SG/PL), then the pluractional has a secondary, distributed meaning: for example, **diŋ-** ‘to plant’, **diŋdiŋ-** ‘to plant here and there’.

3. If the punctual exists but does not have a number meaning but rather an intensive (second) meaning because the lexical semantics of the base is a telic



verb (details in Section 3.3), then the pluractional is used for plural event number, like in **maġ-** ‘to stop by (SG)’, **maġġ-** emphasizing on the stopping by; the base form is used for a single action, and the pluractional **mammaġ-** for the fact when many people stop by (a single individual can also do this, but this would mean that he/she would do the stopping by very briefly in some or many places).

4. If a verb has various different senses and the punctual is possible for one of them, then the conditions mentioned in 1, 2 and 3 apply to each of the senses separately. For example, in (26) below the verb **diit-** ‘to kick’ refers to a singular event verb since there is no punctual. However, the same verb is used for ‘dancing’, too, in the combination **kirpa diit-** ‘to dance’ and in that sense there is a punctual form **diitt-** ‘to do the first, starting (big) step in a dance (once)’. The meaning of the punctual is intensive rather than event number in a strict sense and the base form is still used for singular event number. The subject can be either singular or plural, since in case it is plural, the event is constructed as “together” and the subject is semantically still singular. In the sense of dancing, the pluractional **diiddiit-** does exist but now individuated and referring to a step as part of the dance. The object of the verb is always the singular word **kirpa** ‘dance’ as a fixed expression. If we want to express a plural event for the sense of dancing, other strategies have to be used, see (26c) where the collocation with **pora** ‘road’ serves to express the endlessness of the dancing (and a negative evaluation is implied).

(26a) **Ongayik kirpa ?idiita**

**Ongaye-?**    **kirpa ?i=diit-a**

Ongaye-NOM dance 3=dance-IPF.FUT

‘Ongaye will dance.’

(26b) **samayya kirpaasit takkan diittadu**

**samayya kirpa-asi?**    **takka-n diitt-ad-u**

you.people dance-DEM.M/F one-INST dance.SG-MID-IMP.SG

‘(You people), Please, give abig step for this dance!’

(26c) **Ongayep poraa kirpa diinni**

**Ongaye-?**    **pora=?i kirpa diit-ni**

Ongaye-NOM road=3 dance dance-CONT

‘Ongaye is dancing time and again, here and there (implying that the speaker is not happy with Ongaye’s dancing)’<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The negative evaluation here comes from the addition of ‘road’ which suggests endlessness.

It is even possible that the same base verb is singular in one sense but plural in another sense. An example of such a verb is **ɲax-** ‘1. (PL) to dish out food, 2. (SG) to collect honey from a beehive’. In the first sense, the food in question should be “plural” or “mass” and the process of dishing out involves more than one sub-activity (like removing pot from the fire, discharging water from the pot, and then pouring the food onto a big wooden bowl) of the event, not an individuated item such as a piece of bread. The meaning of the underived verb is plural and its derived punctual **ɲaxx-** means ‘to dish out a bit’; a pluractional, **ɲaɲɲax-** is possible, meaning ‘to dish out a few times’. In fact, a pluractional of the punctual is also possible, **ɲaɲaxx**, meaning ‘to dish out bits a few times’. In the second sense, the underived verb is singular and its punctual has secondary meanings along the lines ‘take out honey quickly, with less care’ while its pluractional has the regular plural meaning of repeated action in one event.

5. A small number of verbs have a void punctual derivation: Both forms with single and with geminate final consonants exist with exactly the same meaning. Such pairs are **fad-** ~ **fadd-** ‘to look for (SG)’ and **ʔik-** ~ **ʔikk-** ‘to drink (PL)’. They have the same meaning. The pluractional **ʔiʔʔik-** exists for a situation in which many people are drinking but when used for an individual it is an expression of disapproval of the act of drinking.

In sum, the interpretation of a sentence in terms of event number depends on 1. the event number categorization of the lexical semantics of the root as SG, PL, or SG/PL and its lexical semantic subclassification, this again depends on the presence of other event number marked verbs in the same paradigm; 2. the presence of an event number grammatical marker (punctual or pluractional) ; 3. the number of the object/subject participants in the sentence; 4. the aspect expressed separately in the verb; 5. world knowledge and context.

We can rephrase these generalizations from a different perspective:

- If the verb has a derived punctual that has singular meaning, ‘once’, then, the base verb has plural meaning for each internal event.
- If the verb has a derived punctual that has the meaning ‘intensively’, ‘quickly’, ‘unexpectedly’, then that is because the verb base itself is already singular or ambivalent (SG/PL) in event number meaning.
- If the verb has a pluractional that has the core plural event meaning of repetition or plurality of object or subject, then the base refers to a single action.
- If the verb has a pluractional that has the meaning ‘a few times, not so many’, low plurality, then that is because the verb base itself is already plural or ambivalent in event number meaning.
- If the verb has a punctual derivation and the underived verb is number ambivalent (i.e., SG/PL), then the interpretation of number for the underived verb depends on the context in which the sentence is uttered.

The meaning of the punctual is doing something once, partly, suddenly/intensely/quickly. The latter meanings are central if the lexical meaning of the base is “telic”, or if the base is already singular. But all senses are always accessible.

The meaning of the pluractional is doing something many times, repetitively or because of many subjects/objects. Its meaning is rather defocused in time (a few times) or space (here and there) (i) if the pluractional is derived from a derived punctual, (ii) if the pluractional is derived from a PL or SG/PL base, or (iii) if the lexical meaning of the base is of type iii (“continuous”). The meaning is evaluative in those cases too, and its meaning is exclusively evaluative if the lexical meaning is (iv) telic and cannot have plural participants (sunrise, sunset).

The punctual derivation is not productive; if there is a lexicalised meaning, the regular meaning of the punctual is no longer present. The pluractional is productive and inflectional in nature in the sense that for specialised semantics the regular interpretation is still available.

## 5 Suppletive event number pairs

There are certain punctual and pluractional lexical pairs of verb roots. These suppletives occur for intransitive verbs (27a) as well as for transitive verbs (27b). We first discuss intransitive suppletives.

(27a) <b>keer-</b>	‘to run(SG)	<b>hir-</b>	‘to run(PL)’
<b>toy-</b>	‘to die(SG)’	<b>ley-</b>	‘to die(PL)’
<b>piʔ-</b>	‘to fall(SG)’	<b>seh-</b>	‘to fall(PL)’
<b>χaʔad-</b>	‘to fly(SG)’	<b>paʔad-</b>	‘to run/fly(PL)’
(27b) <b>ʔiff-</b>	‘to kill(SG)’	<b>leyf-</b>	‘to kill(PL)’
<b>mur-</b>	‘to cut(SG)’	<b>ɕuur-</b>	‘to cut(PL)’
<b>put-</b>	‘to uproot(SG)’	<b>huuβ-</b>	‘to uproot(PL)’
<b>ɕaniin-</b>	‘to bite(SG)’	<b>ɕom-</b>	‘to bite(PL)’
<b>pidɔf-</b>	‘to buy(SG)’	<b>heer-</b>	‘to buy(PL)’
<b>χapt-</b>	‘to throw’(SG)’	<b>ɔakk-</b>	‘to throw, to drop(PL)’
<b>kat-</b>	‘to drop(SG)’	<b>ɔakk-</b>	‘to throw, to drop(PL)’
<b>ɔay-</b>	‘to hit(SG)’	<b>ɕid-</b>	‘to beat(PL)’
<b>χooββ-</b>	‘to take a sip(SG)’	<b>ʔik(k)-</b>	‘to drink(PL)’

There is a correlation between the number of the subject and the number value of the suppletive verb root: singular verb roots of suppletives occur with singular

subjects, (28a), while the counterpart plural verb roots occur with plural subjects, (28b).

- (28a) **ʔinantasiʔ ʔikeerti**  
**ʔinanta-siʔ ʔi=keer-t-i**  
 girl-DEF.M/F 3=run(SG)-3F-PF  
 ‘The girl ran.’

- (28b) **ʔoorepinaanaasinip piisa ʔalliʔehirin**  
**ʔoore pinaanaa-siniʔ piisa ʔalliʔ=i hir-i-n**  
 and.then animals-DEF.P all away=3 run(PL)-PF-P  
 ‘And then, all the animals ran away.’

The plural event number verbs of the suppletive pairs can also be used as bases to derive a pluractional verb, that is, a second plural event number form. This is further discussed in Section 6.

The transitive singular suppletives require a single object but their subjects vary depending on the nature of the verb. For example, the singular suppletive verb **ʔaniin-** ‘to bite(SG)’ does occur only with a single subject and object as the verb refers to a quick action done at once (29a). Plural suppletives are always associated with a plural object and the events can be single or several. The suppletive pairs **ʔiff-** and **leyf-** refer to killing but they are different in their interpretation. The former involves only single subject and object, and refers to a single event, (29b). The latter, on the contrary, requires a plural object but the subject can be singular or plural. When the subject is singular, the plural object indicates plurality of actions where there are separate events or a single one with sub-events, (29c). The sentence in (29d) is unacceptable because the punctual verb **ʔiff-** has a plural object.

- (29a) **kutasil lahasiʔ ʔiʔaniina**  
**kuta-siʔ laha-siʔ ʔi=ʔaniin-a**  
 dog-DEF.M/F ram-DEF.M/F 3=bite(SG)-IPF.FUT  
 ‘The dog will bite the ram.’

- (29b) **ʔorrasik karmaa ʔiʔiffay**  
**ʔorra-siʔ karmaa ʔi=iff-ay**  
 people-DEF.M/F lion 3=kill(SG)-PF[3M]  
 ‘The people killed a lion.’

- (29c) **namasik karmadaa ?ileyfay**  
**nama-si? karmadaa ?i=leyf-ay**  
 man-DEF.M/F lions 3=kill(PL)-PF[3M]  
 ‘The man killed lions.’ (either in one event or in separate events)
- (29d) **\*namasik karmadaa lakki ?i?iffay**  
**\*nama-si? karmadaa lakki ?i=iff-ay**  
 man-DEF.M/F lions two 3=kill(SG)-PF[3M]  
 (Intended: The man killed two lions.)

The suppletive pairs differ in one important aspect from the morphologically marked singular-plural event forms. Transitive suppletive plural verbs are different from transitive pluractional verbs in that there is no dominant first reading that the action entails sub-events. Asking “how many lions did you kill?” using the plural verb **leyf-** does not ask about one event but generally, upto the present time in life. With a fair number of the suppletive pairs, the repetitive interpretation of a plural verb form with singular subject is not available, (30a), nor is the single occasion repetitive interpretation available with single object and suppletive plural event number form, (30b). One line of explanation for this difference is that the repetitive interpretation is only present with a pluractional that involves reduplication. We argue that the presence of the pluractional form of the other member of suppletive pair excludes the possibility of expressing repetition for the non-derived plural form.

- (30a) **\*?inantasih hamiyaayju? ʒadfaapiyaa? ?ihirta**  
**\*?inanta-si? hamiya-ayju? ʒadfaap-iyaa-? ?i=hir-t-a**  
 girl-DEF.M/F boy-3SG.POSS.SG catch.up-GERUND-DAT 3=run(PL)-3F-IPF.FUT  
 (Intended: The girl will run more than once in order to catch up her brother.)
- (30b) **\*namasik kappinuppupaa kutay ka karmaa leyfay**  
**nama-si? kappina-oppupa=i kut-ay ka karmaa=i**  
 man-DEF.M/F forest-into=3 hunt-PF[3M] and lion=3  
**leyf-ay**  
 kill(PL)-PF[3M]  
 (Intended: The man killed a lion intensively.)

Other underived (non-suppletive) plural verbs do not categorically exclude repetition if the subject/object is singular, an example is the verb **ʒof-** ‘to pinch(PL)’ in (21b). It is an issue of mutual influence of lexical semantics on

forms that are related in event number. In the lexicon items that are close in meaning may have effect on each other's lexical semantics. Repetition as interpretation does not depend on the presence of a (reduplicative) pluractional. Rather, it is the fact that a verb is a plural member of a suppletive event number pair that is significant.

There are a number of suppletive plural verbs that do allow repetition within one event: A verb like **gom-** 'to bite(PL)' or **gid-** 'to hit(PL)' can be used with singular objects but with a repetition of the action; **guur-** 'to cut(PL)' can be used for chopping; **huub-** 'to uproot(PL)' can be used for uprooting one by one in one place and one event; **dakk-** 'to throw, to drop(PL)' can refer to throwing many times. On the other hand, the exclusion of repetition in the semantics of the suppletive verbs for

'kill', 'die', 'fall', 'buy', 'drink' lies in their lexical semantics and not in the fact that they are members of a suppletive SG-PL pair.

(31a) **kuta-si?**      **?inanta-si?**    **?i=gom-ay**  
 dog-DEF.M/F    girl-DEF.M/F    3=bite(PL)-PF[3M]  
 'The dog bit the girl (many times)'

(31b) **gimayta-si?**      **?innaa-sini?**    **?i=gid-ay**  
 old.man-DEF.M/F    child-DEF.M/F    3=hit(PL)-PF[3M]  
 'The old man beat the child.'

In transitive verbs, singular suppletives always occur with singular subject and object while plural suppletives may occur with singular or plural subject but always with plural object. In intransitive verbs, it is the case that singular subjects always occur with singular suppletives and plural subjects always occur with plural suppletives.

In the next section, we argue that suppletive plural verbs have the option of a pluractional which specifically functions for the expression of repetition.

## 6 A second plural event number form

Pluractionals from derived punctual verb stems have the **C<sub>1</sub>V** and not the **C<sub>1</sub>VC<sub>1</sub>** allomorph of reduplication. The phonological restriction is that Konso does not allow **C<sub>1</sub>VC<sub>1</sub>** reduplication if the base's or stem's last consonant is geminate. Bases and stems with final geminate require the reduplication of **C<sub>1</sub>V**. And since the last consonants of all derived punctual verb stems are geminate, only **C<sub>1</sub>V**

reduplication is required. Pluractionals from punctual verb stems express the performance of an action more than once but less than many times. Examples:

(32a) **raakasi? ?inantasi? ?iɔɔɔffiti**

**raaka-si?                      ?inanta-si?    ?i=ɔɔ~ɔɔff-t-i**

old.woman-DEF.M/F    girl-DEF.M/F    3=PL~pinch:SG-3F-PF

‘The old woman pinched the girl a few times (in one occasion).’

(32b) **Kappooli? ?imiirooday ka ?inantasil lelebɔay**

**Kappooli-?            ?i=miirood-ay                      ka    ?inanta-si?**

Kappoole-NOM    3=become.angry-PF[3M]    and    girl-DEF.M/F

**le-lebɔ-ay**

PL~kick:SG-PF[3M]

‘Kappoole became angry and kicked the girl a few times (in one occasion).’

The second pluractional verb formation evokes the sense of ‘a few’, ‘less than normal, less than required’. We can relate this to the earlier examples such as **hat-** (SG/PL) ‘to steal’ with a pluractional **hahhat-** and a punctual **hatt-**. Since the underived verb can already refer to a singular event, the derived punctual concentrates on the additional senses ‘to steal quickly, snatch away’ rather than ‘steal once’; similarly, the pluractional highlights the additional defocused senses, ‘to steal sporadically, not so often’. The pluractional of a punctual, like the pluractional of a base that is already plural, highlights the secondary distributed meaning that implies a low degree of plurality. However, in this example of **hat-** (SG/PL) ‘to steal’ with the secondary meaning for its pluractional, there is an additional form **hahatt-** pluractional of the punctual which implies stealing part of a whole during each event.

In Konso, it is not possible to form a pluractional from a pluractional verb. In other words, double inflection is not allowed for pluractionals (it is possible for the suffixal causative derivation (Mous 2004) and for nominal number derivation (Ongaye 2013); the restriction is, thus, not a general one for Konso and it is in line with the inflectional character of the pluractional). Other languages do allow double pluractional derivation; in Hausa, this is used for hyper-pluractionals (Newman 2012: 199). In Konso, strengthening of the pluractional is only possible using intensifying adverbs. The pluractional is sometimes formed from underived plural event verbs but these formations do not lead to strengthened interpretations. There are several patterns for pluractionals of PL verbs as shown in Table 4. One is the pluractional of a suppletive plural event form; another one is a pluractional from a base verb that is ambivalent for event

Table 4: Pluractionals of PL verbs.

base	example	pluractional	senses of pluractional
suppletive PL verb	<b>seh-</b> ‘to fall(PL)’ <b>paḡad-</b> ‘to run, fly (PL)’	<b>sesseh-</b> <b>pappaḡad-</b>	Distributed: ‘to fall here and there’ Distributed: ‘to run in small groups from a larger company, haphazardly’
SG/PL base verb	<b>roop-</b> ‘to rain’	<b>rorroop-</b>	Distributed: ‘to rain a few times (not often enough)’
PL verb with punctual	<b>ḡof-</b> ‘to pinch(PL)’	<b>ḡoḡoḡof-</b>	Low plurality: a few events but in each event a few times or in one event a number of objects each a few times; it implies shorter duration. <b>ḡof</b> longer duration, <b>ḡoḡoḡof</b> shorter duration of each pinch and number of pinching fewer.

number, SG/PL; a third one is a pluractional from a base verb that is PL in event number because a derived punctual exists.

The fact that plurality marking and reduplication express diminution and attenuation is not unheard of. Such senses are repeatedly reported for reduplicative verbs (Kouwenberg and La Charite 2005; Wood 2007). The attenuative sense of ‘a few’ is most directly available and foregrounded in the second pluractional, it can also be foregrounded in the first pluractional if the base is already plural or if the lexical semantics excludes primary meaning of repetition in one event or plurality of object/subject (see 4.2).

In Konso, the pluractional of punctual and the pluractional of a verb that is already plural both result in low plurality. Also, the secondary meaning of a pluractional consists of defocussed or distributed location or time and likewise low plurality. Such secondary meanings are arrived at if the lexical semantics does not allow for a primary plurality and result is separate events. This secondary meaning also often implies negative evaluation.

The semantics works differently with those suppletive plural forms that do not have the repetitive sense. It is this sense that is brought about by the pluractional of a suppletive plural verb. We have seen above that with some suppletive pairs, a plural verb root cannot be used when a singular subject does an action more than once, (30a). When a singular subject does the action of a singular suppletive verb more than once, the singular verb root has to reduplicate for the verbal plurality as in (33a). It is also possible to repeat the verb and say **?inantasi? ?ikeerti keerti ka kafatti** ‘The girl ran again and again and got tired’. Similarly, when a plural subject does the action of a plural suppletive verb more than once, the plural verb root reduplicates to show the verbal plurality as shown in (33b).



- (33a) **ʔinantasiʔ ʔikekkeerti**  
**ʔinanta-siʔ ʔi=kek-keer-t-i**  
 girl-DEF.M/F 3=PL~run(SG)-3F-PF  
 ‘The girl ran a few times.’

- (33b) **hellaasiniʔ ʔihihhirin**  
**hella-siniʔ ʔi=hih~hir-i-n**  
 children-DEF.P 3=PL~run(PL)-PF-P  
 ‘The children ran again and again.’

A second singular event number verb form is possible in rare instances. It is impossible to derive a punctual from a derived punctual verb; such a derivation is even difficult to imagine since it would lengthen the consonant further and there is only a two way length distinction in Konso consonants. It is, however, possible to derive a punctual from a suppletive singular event verb, and from a base verb that is ambivalent (SG/PL) in event number. In both situations, the semantic effect is the same, namely, one of intensification, speed, i.e. the secondary meaning of the punctual as in Table 5.

It is interesting to observe that the ambivalent verbs that are both SG and PL in event number behave like SG verbs for the interpretation of a further SG marker and like PL verbs for a further plural marker.

**Table 5:** Punctuals of singular bases and their interpretation.

base	example	punctual	senses of punctual
suppletive SG verb	<b>mur-</b> ‘to cut.SG’	<b>murr-</b>	‘to cut quickly, cut a portion off’
suppletive SG verb	<b>put-</b> ‘to uproot.SG’	<b>putt-</b>	‘to uproot with intensity’
SG/PL base verb	<b>hat-</b> ‘to steal’	<b>hatt-</b>	‘steal quickly’

The pluractional of a suppletive singular verb involves individuation, e.g. **ʔaxʔaxʔad** ‘to run one by one, or several events’, **pupput** ‘to uproot randomly, weed out randomly’. Moreover, the derived punctuals of suppletive singulars indicate extra force, e.g. **putt** ‘to uproot:SG with extra force’, **huuᵇ** ‘to uproot(PL): many’; **huuᵇᵇ** only one thing, **huhhuuᵇ**, **huhuuᵇᵇ** a few in a single event, here and there. In principle, 8 forms are possible for a suppletive pair, but most often some of those 8 are not attested: **put**, **\*putt**, **pupput**, **\*puputt**; **huuᵇ**, **huuᵇᵇ**, **huhhuuᵇ**, **huhuuᵇᵇ**.

It is impossible to derive a punctual from a marked pluractional. One reason is that the plural sense of the pluractional is dominant and any verb with initial reduplication must be interpreted as plural event in some sense. A second

reason may be that it would be hard to interpret how a plural from a pluractional would be different semantically from a singular base verb. Thirdly, there is a morphological constraint. The plural from a derived pluractional would result in consecutive geminates. While this is not totally excluded in Konso phonology,<sup>14</sup> we have seen in the morphophonology of the pluractional (Section 2) that this is avoided in stem formation.

## 7 Comparative perspective

Konso provides interesting morphological, syntactic and semantic materials that are of valuable contribution to comparative studies. Below, we discuss these features.

### 7.1 Suppletion

Suppletion is very common among pluractionals and ‘to fall’ is common among them (Newman 2012: 194). Suppletion refers to a form with a different etymology in one and the same paradigm. It presupposes a system that such a form should exist and in Konso that is valid. So, for Konso we can really speak of suppletion (cf. Newman 2012). Konso suppletive pairs are marginally different in their functioning in the interpretation system compared to derived pairs. For example, repeated action is often not expressed by a suppletive plural verb. This difference is due to the fact that the suppletive paradigm contains more forms than the regular paradigms; maximum eight against maximal four.

### 7.2 Internal and external event

As in many other languages with pluractionals, also in Konso the pluractional can refer to both internal and external event plurality. Internal event plurality can be shown to be the primary function of the Konso pluractional because the external event plurality becomes available as secondary distributive reading once the internal event plurality interpretation is ruled out due to other factors such the lexical meaning of the verb. Wood (2007) offers an analysis in which

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<sup>14</sup> Such examples would be **Kallappa** as a personal female name, or **fayyattaa** ‘climbing up’, **kokkonnaadu** ‘be strong!’.

both internal and external event plurality can be accounted for in which internal plurality is viewed as grouped plurality of events.

### 7.3 Low plurality

The pluractional expresses different degrees of plural number. First of all, when repetition is expressed, there is a high degree of plurality in the repetition of the subevents but the plurality of participants does not require high numbers. This difference in degree of plural number is present in the primary sense of the meaning of plurality of events. The number of sub-events needs to be high if the participants are singular and the sub-events are closely linked in time. These sub-events each become automatically shorter in time and higher in intensity. When distributed over several participants the sub-events are further apart in time and each of the sub-events can contain one action, or a few (low plurality) actions. These differences allow for the difference in degree of plurality when referring to repetition in the action only or also by distribution over participants. As soon as external event plurality comes into play, the plurality is low, ‘a few times’ and the mechanism is similar to the one just referred to. For example, **ḡḡḡḡof-** ‘pinch:PL’, the pluractional of **ḡof-**, can be used for a high number of pinches on one object and the pinching would be shorter when compared to **ḡof-**, but also for a number of objects each a few times, or a few events but in each event a few times

A “double” operation leads to secondary meaning for punctual when the first meaning of punctual is already the core of the meaning of the base verb. Similarly, a “double” operation for plural verbs leads to the secondary distributive meaning of the pluractional when the primary meaning of the pluractional is already the core meaning of the base verb. This secondary meaning involves distribution over time, separate events, and low plurality. The low plurality of the pluractional of punctuals can be explained by the fact that the punctual derivation implies the presence of a PL base form in the paradigm and hence within that paradigm the pluractional of the punctual is a second form denoting a pluractional and therefore highlighting the secondary meaning of the pluractional. An alternative explanation of the low plurality of the pluractional of the punctual lies in the combination of individuation and plurality.

The secondary meaning of the pluractional, but not of the punctual, expresses negative evaluation. We do not delve into this issue. Cusic (1981: 245) has conative senses as one of the many different manifestations of the pluractional. In a number of languages the effect of the pluractional on accomplishment verbs is to take the accomplishment out of the meaning which leads

to an atelic or conative process (Vincent 2013). However, in Konso the pluractional does not have that effect on accomplishment verbs and the negative evaluation interpretations cannot be attributed to such an analysis; moreover, not only because these effects are not limited to accomplishment verbs but associated mostly with the secondary meaning of the pluractional. Consequently, we cannot offer an analysis of where this negative evaluation comes from.

## 7.4 Syntactic status, no agreement

It has often been remarked that the pluractional has an “ergative” pattern because pluractionality entails plurality of objects for transitive verbs and plurality of subjects for intransitive verbs. This state of affairs is related to the fact that objects are usually more prominent than subjects when expressed. Nobody has used the term ergative pattern for the pluractional to suggest real ergative syntax. Some languages seem to show agreement with the number of participants in this “ergative” pattern (Newman 2012: 200). Superficially Konso too may suggest such an ergative pattern, however, careful analysis shows that the core meaning is with event number and not with participant number and the ergative pattern is nothing but a strong tendency. A singular object is not totally excluded with pluractional verbs as long as the event number can be construed as plural. We can construct sentences with multiple subjects and a single object with the focus of attention to the subject and leading to different events and a plural verb. In (34), the child is singular and a dative argument of the verb while the pluractional verb expresses that each of the women separately felt sorry; the sub-division of events into sub-events is arrived at by the multiplicity of the subject. In the earlier examples (3c and 4c) we already presented sentences with pluractional verbs and a singular object in which the pluractionality was confined to frequency of the action. These examples show that event number rather than number of participants is at the core of pluractional meaning.

- (34) **ʔiskatta-siʔ      ʔinnaa-sini-tiʔ      ʔi=na-parrah-ay**  
 women-DEM.M/F    child-DEM.PL-DAT    3=PL~be.sorry-PF[3M]  
 ‘The women (each of them) felt sorry for the child.’

Likewise, an intransitive verb with a plural subject need not evoke a plural event as we have seen with the verb **muk-** ‘to sleep’ which can be used with plural

subjects in its singular form since the multiple subjects sleeping is not conceived as an event with sub-events.

In other languages too an apparent ergative pattern in the use of pluractionals is nothing but a strong tendency reflecting the prominence of an object that is expressed. In Alagwa, where the pluractional has this kind of distribution, it is nonetheless possible to have a singular object with a pluractional verb (Mous 2016: 134).

## 7.5 Accomplishment verbs

Konso is an exception to the claim that the pluractional does not apply to accomplishment verbs. Wood (2007: 130) argues that the effect of a pluractional on accomplishment verbs (a process and a culmination) would be to take away the culmination from the lexical semantics and would render the verb conative, only attempting or directed at a target. This is not what happens for Konso. Achievement verbs such as **fayyad-** ‘to climb up’, **maaffood-** ‘to get drunk’, **kuti?** ‘to sit down’, **kal-** ‘to return home’, **fir-** ‘to fall suddenly’ all allow for a pluractional and for none of them that results in a meaning that the culmination is not reached. The pluractional of these verbs either expresses that the process is divided in different phases: ‘to climb in different phases’, ‘to fall in a long and complicated way’, ‘to return home with interruptions spending nights on the way and stop at places’; or that the participant is plural leading to an event with sub-events: ‘to sit down one by one’, ‘several people falling’, ‘to climb various trees in one movement (like monkeys do)’, ‘several people getting drunk’; or that there are several (low plurality) events (distributed in time and/or place): ‘to get drunk from time to time’. The differences in semantics among the accomplishment verbs relate to the lexical semantics of these verbs in terms of event number as expressed in the verb: While ‘falling’, ‘returning home’ and ‘climbing up’ can be considered as consisting of different phases, this is not the case (in Konso) for ‘sitting down’.

## 8 Conclusions

Konso pluractional and punctual form together a grammatical system of event number. The punctual is clearly derivational: it has frozen forms, it shows lexicalization, not every verb has a punctual, it is not productive, it is closest to the root and cannot apply to any derived stems. The pluractional is much more to the inflectional side: it is completely productive, every verb marked by a pluractional has plural event meaning even if it has additional specialised meaning. But

it can form specialised meaning and is not completely on the inflectional side. The Konso pluractional is different from other languages with pluractionals in the fact that event number has a grammatical function: every sentence is interpreted in terms of event number and the existence of a punctual derivation often renders the base pluractional in meaning even if the base has no pluractional marking. An exception to this is formed by the lexical marked ambivalent SG/PL bases. Event number in Konso forms an intricate grammatical system in which the meaning of one element of a paradigm depends on the other members of the paradigm. Event number is formally marked either by lexical choice in the case of suppletive pairs, or by two different markers: the pluractional and punctual. Coupled with the fact that event number is not an instance of agreement (7.4), the category is one of Booijs' (1994) inherent inflection.

We can summarise the relation between form and meaning of the different event number constellations in Table 6.

Because the lexical semantic classification works differently for event number compared to aspect, we propose to use a lexical classification, repeated below in Table 7, that is geared specifically for event number. For example, semelfactives are an important category for aspect because they are telic and have no duration but for event number the crucial factor is whether the verb can be repeated in the same event and while most semelfactive verbs can, some others cannot, for example 'to faint' is semelfactive but not repeatable.

**Table 6:** Form and meaning of event number.

<b>Pluractional of singular (SG) verb:</b>	<b>1. repetitive, PL.O/PL.S, 2. distributed</b>
Suppletive plural (PL) verb:	1. (repetitive), PL.O/PL.S, 2. distributed
Underived plural (PL) verb (or SG/PL verb):	1. repetitive, PL.O/PL.S, 2. distributed
Pluractional of plural (PL) or (SG/PL) verb:	2. distributed
Pluractional of suppletive plural:	2. distributed
Pluractional of Punctual:	2. distributed
Punctual of plural (PL) verb:	1. once, a bit; 2. intensively (with force), quickly, suddenly.
Suppletive singular (SG) verb:	1. once, a bit; 2. intensively (with force), quickly, suddenly.
Underived singular (SG) verb (or SG/PL):	1. once, a bit; 2. intensively (with force), quickly, suddenly.
Punctual of singular (SG) or SG/PL:	2. intensively (with force), quickly, suddenly
Punctual of suppletive SG verb:	2. intensively (with force), quickly, suddenly

**Table 7:** Lexical event number classes.

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Lexical semantic distinctions for the interpretation of event plurality:

- (i) verbs that are naturally repeated within one and the same event
- (ii) verbs for which it is possible to repeat the action within one event
- (iii) verbs for which repetition means different events.

Lexical semantic distinctions for the interpretation of event punctuality:

- (i) the action is naturally repetitive – the punctual denotes one of those repetitions
  - (ii) the action is dividable in natural units – the punctual denotes one of those
  - (iii) the action is continuous, i.e. cannot be seen as consisting of concrete sub-events but it is possible to envisage the action partly done or for a short time – the punctual is partitive
  - (iv) it is not possible to divide the action up in parts (mainly telic verbs) – the punctual means intensity, suddenness, quickness.
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## Abbreviations and symbols

<b>ACC</b>	accusative
<b>ATT</b>	attention holder
<b>CAUS</b>	causative
<b>CONT</b>	continuative
<b>DEF</b>	definite
<b>DEM</b>	demonstrative
<b>F</b>	feminine
<b>FUT</b>	future
<b>IMP</b>	imperative
<b>INST</b>	instrumental
<b>IPF</b>	imperfective
<b>M</b>	masculine
<b>MID</b>	middle
<b>NOM</b>	nominative
<b>P</b>	plural as value of gender
<b>PF</b>	perfective
<b>PL</b>	plural
<b>PRES</b>	present
<b>PRO</b>	pronoun
<b>SG</b>	singular
<b>1</b>	first person
<b>2</b>	second person
<b>3</b>	third person

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