

# On the typological variation in tripartite number systems of Nilo-Saharan languages

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Introduced by Dimmendaal (2000), the term “tripartite” has been widely used to describe the number marking systems of several Nilo-Saharan languages. According to the original definition, tripartite refers to the three different number marking patterns in which nouns in the respective languages can occur: singulative, plural and replative. However, looking more closely into the number systems of individual languages, typological differences emerge which cannot be captured by the original definition. While the number of languages with tripartite number marking as such is considerable (cf. Güldemann 2018: 257), its realization varies significantly on both a morphological and semantic level. In order to illustrate the degrees of variation, my talk provides the results of a comparative analysis of selected languages (Shatt, Gaam, Krongo, Ik and Murle) from five Nilo-Saharan subgroups (Dajuic, Eastern Jebel, Kadu, Kuliak and Surmic, respectively) exhibiting tripartite number in different ways. The analysis is based on a comparative noun list encompassing 600 entries from various semantic domains, and embedded in a novel theoretical framework on the typology of tripartite number (Güldemann and Junglas, in prep.). As part of this framework, a more detailed terminology is introduced, differentiating between four concepts of tripartiteness which allow for a more detailed analysis than the original interpretation of the term: *systemic* tripartiteness, *encoding* tripartiteness, *lexemic* tripartiteness and *noun-type* tripartiteness.

## References

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- Güldemann, Tom and Jan Junglas. in prep. The four-way meaning of tripartite number: implications for a typology of number morphology.