

MAJANG NOMINAL PLURALS, WITH COMPARATIVE NOTES\*

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This paper describes the complex Majang system of noun plural formation. Majang uses singulative suffixes, plural suffixes, and suppletive plural stems to mark number on nouns. Majang is seen to exemplify in many ways the \*N/\*K pattern of singular and plural marking as described by Bryan [1968] for many Nilo-Saharan languages. Tiersma's [1982] theory of "Local Markedness" is shown to provide an explanation for singulative marking on some nouns in Majang and other Surma languages. A comparison of Majang noun plurals with plural forms in other Surma languages allows the reconstruction of some number marking for Proto-Surma.

1. Introduction

Building on the work of Cerulli [1948] and Bender [1983b], this paper describes the marking of number on nouns in Majang, a Nilo-Saharan language spoken by 20,000-30,000 people in western Ethiopia. It is classified within the Eastern Sudanic phylum, a member of the Surma group [Bender 1983a]. Fleming [1983:533] groups all Surma languages except Majang into Southern Surma, placing Majang in a crucial position for the reconstruction of Proto-

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Surma.

In this paper, section 2 describes the marking of number on Majang nouns, the behavior of liquid substances as syntactic plurals, and many manifestations of Bryan's [1968] \*N/\*K number marking pattern. Section 3 gives comparisons of number marking in other Surma languages.<sup>1</sup> Evidence is given for a Proto-Surma plural suffix -Vk marking derived nouns and for a singulative suffix. Tiersma's [1982] theory of Local Markedness is shown to provide an explanation for these singulative suffixes.

## 2. Marking of Number

The marking of number on nouns in Majang is complex, as in other Surma and Eastern Sudanic languages. Singular and plural nouns are differentiated in a number of ways: suppletive stems for singular and plural, singulative suffixes, plural suffixes. Some words have both singulative and plural suffixes.

A certain amount of variation for marking number on some nouns is noticeable, even by one speaker, as noted by Bender [1983b:127]. Generally, the variation consisted of alternate suffixes. For examples, I have recorded the plural of taame 'face' as taama, taametun, and taamekək. The nouns that have suppletive singular and plural forms were consistent in geographically separate areas of my research, as well as with Bender's examples, such as taŋ/togi 'cow, cattle'. Comparing data from the far north of Majang territory and the central area (near Tepi, Illubabor), I found little variation in the formation of noun plurals, no more than within one local area.

The present complexities of marking number on nouns may very well reflect an archaic noun class system, as suggested for Didinga and Murle by

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<sup>1</sup>In Majang, Bender [1983b:116-117] described [s], [ʃ], [sʏ], and [ʃ] as variants of a single phoneme /c/. When citing examples from Bender, they will be given with Bender's transcriptions. In my data, I use the symbol /c/ for all forms. Tone and ATR vowel articulations are not fully understood yet. For descriptions of plural marking in other Surma languages, see Arensen [1982:27-47] on Murle, Odden [1983:170-173] on Didinga, Turton and Bender [1976:544, 545] on Mursi, and Will [forthcoming] on Me'en.

Tucker [1933:894].

2.1. Suppletive stems between singular and plural. For three words in my data, plurals are shown by suppletive stems, viz. *ŋaai* 'woman' *ŋon* 'women', *taŋ* 'cow' *toŋi* 'cattle', and *idit* 'person' *joop* 'persons', though Cerulli [1948:155] listed *jo* as a Majang singular form. Presumably, such cases can be traced to different stems historically.<sup>2</sup> For example, Hieda [1983:327] lists \**ltaŋ* as Proto-Nilotic 'cow', cognate to the singular in Majang and several other Surma languages. The Majang plural form *toŋi* is very similar to the Gaam plural *toŋ* [Bender and Malik 1988:151] and also to the Proto-Nilotic \**dhok* [Hall et al. 1975:7]. This is not to say that Majang borrowed these stems directly from a Nilotic language or from Gaam, but to illustrate that both of the Majang forms can be compared to an extant root in languages that are both geographically close and genetically related.

2.2. Singulative suffixes. Similar to the situation described by Dimendaal [1987:196, 197] for the Bari group of Nilotic languages, in Majang, "there are certain nouns whose principal form has a plural meaning, but these nouns take a singular suffix in order to indicate one item" from a group. That is, the uninflected noun is plural, as in (1), below.

(1)	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
	<i>weena</i>	<i>ween</i>	'ear'
	<i>ŋetiŋ</i>	<i>ŋeti</i>	'louse'

A few nouns are marked with singulative *-t*, such as *kεt* 'tree'<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>2</sup>'Cow' and 'cattle' are suppletive in a number of Eastern Sudanic languages, Didinga [Odden 1983:172], Gaam [Bender and Malik 1980:151], and many (all?) Nilotic languages, (including, by implication, Proto-Nilotic [Hall et al. 1975:6]). The singular and plural are also suppletive in unrelated English, again showing the cross-language tendencies of local markedness.

<sup>3</sup>The Proto-Surma forms must have been \**kεε+t* 'tree' and \**kεε+n* 'trees', with the consonants functioning as number suffixes. Several Kalenjin languages of Southern Nilotic have a form *keet* for 'tree', adding a suffix *-it* to form the "secondary" singular form *keetit* [Van Otterloo

kɛɛn 'trees'. Another example is 'hand'. The singular is arit (though the final -t̄ is lost in most grammatical environments), and the plural is arn .

The most common singulative suffix is -n . Many Majang nouns that have singulative -n also have a suffix -k for plural, such as tutukan 'egg', tutukak 'eggs' [Bender 1983b:124]. Many of the Majang nouns that are marked with singulative -n are also marked for singulative in other Surma languages (see 3.2 below).

(2)	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
	piŋon	piŋok	'leaf'
	ŋiidan	ŋiidan	'tooth'
	waikun	waikuk	'seed'
	marion	mariok	'star'
	gopan	gopak	'path'

2.3. Plural suffixation. The usual way to distinguish singular from plural nouns in Majang is by adding a suffix to the singular form, as in ugu | 'crocodile', uguŋer 'crocodiles'. Bender [1983b:127] correctly pointed out Cerulli's oversight in listing -ke as the only plural suffix. Rather, there are a variety of such suffixes, including many examples of -(V)r for animate objects and body parts, fitting Greenberg's [1970:114] Eastern Sudanic pattern of r for animate plural. There is a wide variety of plural suffixes, with twelve clearly attested types identified thus far, most involving either a final vowel, -r , or -k .

(3)	<i>suffix</i>	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
	-n/-k	tutuka+n	tutuka+k	'egg'
	-k	dʃane	dʃane+k	'beehive'

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1979:Appendix 1, p.4]. Tucker and Bryan [1962:160] with more opportunity to study phonetic detail, give the Kalenjin "primary" singular as kɛ:t̄ , a match with the Majang form. I do not yet have sufficient evidence to decide whether Proto-Surma interpreted a root final consonant as a suffix or whether the Kalenjin languages are descended from a stage where a singulative suffix -t̄ was interpreted as part of the root.

-ak	gaput	gaput+ak	'bat'
-kok	tol	tol+kok	'hole through'
-ako	rii	rii+ako	'shadow'
-atok	gati	gati+atok	'debt'
-r	komoi	komoi+r	'clan'
-vr	ugul	ugul+er	'crocodile'
-ter	kaadfa	kaadfa+ter	'tongue'
-i	atiŋ	atiŋ+i	'bachelor'
-e	tuusi	tussi+e	'house pole'
-tun	ato	ato+tun	'mouth'

Some generalizations concerning various plural noun classes are noticeable. Some of the plural classes are grouped by phonological criteria and others by semantic criteria. These criteria are usually not 100% predictive as to which plural suffix a noun will take. Rather, these criteria are descriptive of the groups of nouns which are found within a class and which take a common suffix. For example, nouns whose roots end in *oi-* often take the plural suffix *-r* and nouns that take the plural suffix *-ako* all have monosyllabic roots. There is also a tendency for (seemingly) reduplicated nouns to form plurals by the suffixation of *-e* :

(4)	keketi	'snake'	keketi	'snakes'
	tɪltɪ	'root'	tɪltile	'roots'
	bʃolbʃolt	'burrow'	bʃolbʃole	'burrows'
	polpol	'finger/toe'	polpole	'fingers/toes'
	siilsil	'lizard (sp.)'	siilsile	'lizards (sp.)'

The only rule that is 100% predictive for a large group of nouns is that any derived noun will take the suffix *-ak* , a pattern found in other Surma languages, as well (sec. 3.1).

(5)	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
	dʃowarkan	dʃowarkanak	'hunter'
	ibaalkan	ibaalkanak	'dancer'
	ñonkan	ñonkanak	'liar'
	laaltan	laaltanak	'crack' (n)

agaltan	agaltanak	'loot' (n)
jambulon	jambulonak	'teacher'

The form *muktan* 'marriage song', appears to be a derived noun formed with the product suffix *-tan*, but I have found no root *muk-*. Its plural is *muktanak*, but this may be by analogy with the many other (derived) nouns which end in *-tan*.

2.4. Double plurals. Double plurals are those where a language adds a plural marker to a form that is already plural, such as *feets* or *datas*. This process seems to have happened to create a double plural on 'termite', the singular of which is *mootak* and the plural *mootakok*. The singular seems to end with the common plural suffix *-ak*. Since the word most commonly occurs in its plural form, the earlier plural form was re-analyzed as a singular and then pluralized.

Another probable case of Majang adding a plural suffix to an already plural form appears in 'flying termite' *dsumutun/dsumutunak*. The *-tun* at the end of the singular is probably an example of the plural suffix *-tun*, as in *waar/waartun* 'dog/dogs', *ato/atotun* 'mouth/mouths', *kooli/koolitun* 'tail/tails'. This suggests an earlier singular form *dumu* for 'flying termite'. The plural of this earlier singular *dumu* was *dumutun*. Later, the plural suffix *-ak* was added to *dumutun*. What had been a plural was later reinterpreted as singular, then an additional plural suffix was added.

The fact that 'termite' and 'flying termite' have both received *-ak* as a plural suffix suggests that semantic classes may be involved in the selection of some plural forms.

Tiersma [1982:837-839] has pointed out that creation of such diachronic double plurals is quite common on nouns which are more commonly referred to in the plural than in the singular, what he terms "locally unmarked" nouns.

2.5. Inherently plural nouns. Bender [1983b:126-127] pointed out that some Majang nouns are inherently plural, e.g. 'twins', 'water', 'name', 'spirit', and 'thing'. He also listed a group of nouns as "not having plurals", most of which are "mass nouns or unique things". Some of the nouns

"not having plurals" are plurals, at least syntactically. It could be as easily argued that they do not have singular forms. This can be demonstrated by the use of a possessive frame. As Bender [1983b:129] explained, "There is a distinction according to singular thing possessed and plural things possessed ... The use of possessives shows up inherently plural nouns." The possessive pronoun for a singular third person possessing a singular object is *nɛɛk*, possession of a plural object is marked by *gɛɛŋk*. This is shown below with the countable noun 'bull'.

- (6) *jɛgoy nɛɛk*            'his bull'  
       *jɛgoyir gɛɛŋk*        'his bulls'

Since most liquid substances take the plural possessive form, this indicates that they are syntactic plurals. The following list of liquids with plural possessed forms demonstrates that most liquids are syntactic plurals, as they are also in related Mursi [Turton and Bender 1976:545]:

- (7) *ɛrce gɛɛŋk*            'his milk'  
       *mooe gɛɛŋk*            'his coffee'  
       *maaw gɛɛŋk*           'his water'  
       *ogol gɛɛŋk*            'his honey mead'  
       *toyo gɛɛŋk*            'his urine'  
       *ñotu gɛɛŋk*            'his faeces'  
       *paitankak gɛɛŋk*       'his vomit'

The last example is based on the verb root *pai-* 'vomit'. It has the product suffix *-tan* and carries the standard plural suffix *-ak*. Because liquids are plural, the derived noun is marked for plural.

There are a few liquids, all loan words, which are exceptions to this pattern of liquids as syntactic plurals. This foreign origin explains Bender's [1983b:129] one exceptional liquid 'blood'. Again, the use of a possessive frame indicates a noun's singular status.

- (8) *yɛrum nɛɛk*            'his blood'  
       *caayi nɛɛk*            'his tea'  
       *tajan nɛɛk*            'his beer'

Fleming [1983:544] has pointed out that 'blood' *yerum* is from Omotic, found in the Majoid languages, Majang being adjacent to the Majoid language Sheko. 'Tea' is obviously from Amharic *šay*. The use of the singular with *tajan* 'beer' is more interesting. It appears to be borrowed from the Amharic *tʔəj* 'honey mead'.<sup>4</sup> A Majang man told us that it is better to say *tajan neək* rather than *tajan geɛŋk* because beer is sold by the bottle and *counted* to calculate cost.

Liquids also show themselves to be plural in some other syntactic constructions. For example, liquids can trigger plural markers in subject suffixes of verbs:

- (9) *ku+ɛr+ko moor+it* 'it did not boil'  
 NEG+3pl+PST boil+NEG

Liquids are also plurals in adjective phrases. Singular adjectives are introduced by *co*, as in *co mɪntanəŋk* 'good one'. Adjectives modifying plural nouns are introduced by *cigo*, as in *cigo mɪntanəŋk* 'good ones'. Liquids take the plural form *cigo*, as well as the pluralized form of the adjective:

- (10) *ʔutaako ogol cigo mɪntan+a+ŋk* 'I drank good mead'  
 I-drank mead REL good+PL+ADJ ('I drank mead which is good')  
*dʃamaako tar ci mɪntan+ŋk* 'I ate good meat'  
 I-ate meat REL good+ADJ

Liquids trigger plural agreement on nouns marked for case. When a noun that carries a case marking suffix is plural, a suffix *-k-* (glossed PC) is inserted between the root and the case suffix (see 2.6 below).

- (11) *ŋaaka mooɛ+k+ɔŋk* 'aroma of coffee'  
 arome coffee+PC+GEN

2.6. Plural marking on other NP constituents. Number is marked on other constituents of nouns phrases in addition to nouns. These include such con-

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<sup>4</sup>The phonological correspondences are as follows: glottalized consonants lose their glottalization when borrowed into Majang, and the Amharic "first order" vowel (a fronted schwa) is pronounced as a short /a/.

stituents as demonstratives, possessive pronouns, case markings, and relative markers.

Demonstratives are marked for number, as explained by Bender [1983b:130].

- (12) cini 'this'                      cigi 'these'  
       cinoi 'that'                    cigoi 'those'

When a demonstrative is marked as a locative, there is an additional suffix marking number on both singular and plural forms:

- (13) cinene 'in this'            cigege 'in these'

Adjectival constructions are generally formed by relative clauses with intransitive verbs [Unseth forthcoming a]. These are marked for plural by a plural affix which follows the intransitive suffix (IS). One exception to this is the word for 'big' *obii*, which becomes *bober* for plural, retaining a Proto-Surma process of stem reduplication for plural [Unseth forthcoming b].

- (14) co    mɪntan+ŋ+ɔŋk                      cigo mɪntan+a+ŋ+ɔŋk  
       which good+IS+REL                    which good+PL+IS+REL  
       'one which is good'                    'ones which are good'

Example (14) again illustrates what was pointed out above in 2.5, that singular relative clauses are introduced by *co* and plurals by *cigo*.

Majang nouns are overtly marked for case when they indicate genitive (GEN), locative (LOC), or oblique (OBL) cases [Unseth forthcoming a]. If nouns that are marked with these cases are plural (including liquids), they are marked with a *-k-* suffix (glossed PC) preceding the case marker.

- (15) gabŋ+aa mooyi taŋ+a                      gabŋ+aa mooyi togi+k+a  
       give+1s salt cow+OBL                    give+1s salt cows+PC+OBL  
       'I give salt to the cow'                'I give salt to the cows'  
  
       togi tapadŋ+ɔŋk                          togi tapa+a+k+ɔŋk  
       cows chief+GEN                          cows chief+PL+PC+GEN  
       'cows of a chief'                        'cows of chiefs'



## (20) Possessive pronouns

taŋ naak	'my cow'	tog <sub>i</sub> gaan <sub>k</sub>	'my cows'
toon naak	'my child'	toomok gaan <sub>k</sub>	'my children'

## (21) Number suffixes

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
tutukan	tutukak	'egg'
gopan	gopak	'path'
piilan	piilak	'eyelash'
dŋomōn	dŋomok	'leopard'
lijan	lijak	'bracelet'

In addition to these, some question words are also marked for plural when the expected answer is plural. Marking for plural on question words is based on suffixes containing reflexes of \*K .

(22)	mɛl+k+i+ko	wodŋ	mɛl+k+ir+ko	wodŋ+ak
	come+LOC+3s+PAST	who?	come+LOC+3p+PAST	who?+PL
	'who (sg) came?'		'who (pl) came?'	
	bŋokot+u+ko	jik	bŋokot+u+ko	jik+onak
	kill+3s+PAST	what?	kill+3s+PAST	what?+PL
	'what (sg) did he kill?'		'what (pl) did he kill?'	

On the question word 'which?', there is also a suffix -n for singular:

(23)	kɛt+ɛ	kɛt wo+n	kɛt+ɛ	kɛn	wo+g
	chop+3s	tree which?+SG	chop+3s	trees	which?+PL
	'which tree did he chop?'		'which trees did he chop?'		

### 3. Comparison with Other Surma Languages

A comparison of Majang data with the limited data available on other Surma languages reveals several points in common.

3.1. Plural suffixes. For Surma languages, the most thorough description of plural formation is Arensen's [1982:27-47] *Murle Grammar*, in which he demonstrates that some plural classes are based on semantic categories, some based on phonological criteria, yet others seem totally arbitrary. Since Murle's 18 plural classes are well documented, much of the same data was

gathered in Majang for comparison. I compared Majang's plural classes to Murle examples to see if the same nouns had similar suffixes or if the same sets of nouns grouped together.

Only two of the Murle noun plural classes appear comparable with Majang. The first is a semantic class of flying creatures. Both Murle and Majang have a class of flying creatures, though some of the specific members of this class varied in the two languages.

Second, the use of *-ak* to mark plurals of derived nominal forms in Majang (see 2.3) closely parallels the Murle suffix *-ok* for plurals of derived nouns [Arensen 1982:87] and also the suffix *-k* for derived nominals in Didinga [Nicky De Jong, p.c.].

(22)		<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
	Murle	paay+in	paay+in+ak	'judgement' [Arensen 1982:87]
		keeb+in+et	keeb+in+ok	'reading'
	Didinga	igor+ya+hit	ogor+ya+k	'thief' [De Jong, p.c.]
		ben+yo+hit	ben+yo+k	'singer'

This strongly suggests that Proto-Surma marked plurals of derived nouns with a suffix *\*-Vk*. The Didinga examples contain another example of a singulative suffix.

3.2. Singulative suffixes. All other Surma languages (for which there are adequate descriptions) also have singulative suffixes, Murle [Arensen 1982:40-44], Didinga [Odden 1983:170], Me'en [Will forthcoming], and Mursi [Turton & Bender 1976:544]. Many of the same nouns that are marked for singulative in Majang are also marked for singulative in other Surma languages. The following are only a few of the many examples:

(23)		<i>Majang</i>	<i>Murle</i>	<i>Didinga</i>	<i>Me'en</i>
	'tree'	sg. keet	keet	xeet	ket
		pl. keen	keen	xeenA	kena
	'egg'	sg. tutukan	buurnet	buurryanit	mulac
		pl. tutukak	buuro	burru	mula

'seed'	sg.	waikun	xĩñomooC	duʔut
	pl.	waikuk	xĩñomo	duʔu
'leaf'	sg.	piĩᅇon	bolotot	salic
	pl.	piĩᅇok	bolok	saalaa

Tiersma [1982] provides an explanation of this consistent use of singulative suffixes on the same nouns in the four languages. He compared languages where singular nouns are more "marked" (more complex) than their plurals. He labels these cases "locally unmarked", since they are an exception to the universal trend of marking plurals rather than singulars. He has noted that such locally unmarked plurals generally fall into certain classes, "When the referent of a noun occurs in pairs or groups, and/or when it is generally referred to collectively, such a noun is locally unmarked in the plural" [1982:835].<sup>5</sup> The examples in (23) all fall into this category. In fact, Tiersma [1982:842] specifically cites 'leaf' as a word that is frequently unmarked in the plural in the world's languages. This concept of locally unmarked plurals is at least a partial explanation for a group of nouns that share singulative marking.

The Didinga forms for 'seed/s', xĩñomooC/xĩñomo, are an interesting example of local markedness, since the Surma singulative suffix has been applied to a loan word. According to Dimmendaal [1982:104], these forms are borrowed from Eastern Nilotic languages. He gives Eastern Nilotic cognates for 'seed', such as kiñom in Toposa, ñomo in Bari and Lotuxo. Didinga borrowed the Eastern Nilotic root as its own unmarked form and added a singulative suffix to make the singular form. The root was borrowed into Didinga, and Didinga speakers must have affixed their own singulative suffix. A similar situation holds for mulac 'egg' in Me'en, since mula, the plural, is an Omotic loan. Tiersma's principle of local markedness gives an explanation for the suffixed, longer singular form. In both of these cases,

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<sup>5</sup>Greenberg [1970:114] had earlier recognized the same principle at work in many Nilo-Saharan languages, observing that singulative suffixes are often affixed to a noun which is "a single particle of an extended or collective entity".

the Surma singulative suffix and the general principles of its use are carried over onto loan words.

Singulative suffixes in various Surma languages show that Proto-Surma not only had the widespread *-n* singulative (found more in Majang than in other Surma languages), but also *\*T*, as in *kεεt* 'tree'. The pattern of *\*T* for singular was also part of Bryan's [1968] work, found commonly on nominals. In several Surma languages, this *\*T* is realized as /c/, e.g. Didinga *iŋáac* 'louse' and *iŋá* 'lice' [Odden 1983:170].

Linguists with a background in Ethiopian languages may be reminded of Ferguson's [1976:74] article on the Ethiopian Language Area (ELA), where he listed the singulative markers as one of the grammatical features of the ELA. Zaborski [1986:292] has shown that in the Cushitic languages (the largest part of the ELA), "a group of singulative suffixes contains the old Afroasiatic or Hamito-Semitic morpheme *-t-*". It is indeed striking to find the same morpheme *-t-* for an uncommon grammatical category such as singulative in two language groups that are supposedly unrelated.

Bryan [1968:215] had found some Cushitic languages that fit her T/K number marking pattern, but called them "aberrant". If, however, as Zaborski states, they are reflexes of an Afroasiatic morpheme, they are not aberrant when viewed in the Afroasiatic context. Since Majang and Surma *-n* and *-t* singulative markers are part of a larger Nilo-Saharan pattern, and since the Cushitic singulative *-t-* is part of a larger Afroasiatic pattern, any discussion of relationship between the Surma singulative and the ELA singulative is inappropriate. We should probably credit this merely to coincidence.

3.3. Suppletive singular and plural stems. Tiersma's work helps explain the co-existence of suppletive singular and plural stems for 'cow' (*taŋ/togi*), 'person' (*idit/joop*), and 'woman' (*ŋaai/ŋon*). He points out [1982:841] that when a word is used often enough in the plural, there is a greater tendency to preserve and tolerate morphological irregularity in its forms. The comparative evidence confirms this with Murle also showing suppletive stems for the singular and plural of 'person' (*eet/ɔl*) and 'cow'

(tan/tiin) .

3.4. Double plurals. There is at least one example of a double plural (a plural form marked with a second plural marker) that becomes evident by comparing Majang data with that of other Surma languages, shown in (24) below:

(24)		<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
	Murle	ibaa	ibaati	'arm'
	Majang	baadfi	baadfiak	'bicep'

The Murle plural for 'arm' is clearly cognate to the Majang singular 'bicep'. Based on these two forms, the Proto-Surma plural of 'arm/bicep' was approximately \*baaDi, (the medial consonant being some type of alveo-dental stop). Majang has apparently added a typical plural suffix -ak to what was already a plural in Proto-Surma.<sup>6</sup> Tiersma [1982:834, 835] specifically cited 'arm' as a word that is often locally unmarked in the plural, so it is not surprising to find double plural marking on this form.

3.5. \*N/\*K patterning. Just as Bryan's \*N/\*K pattern for marking singular and plural was found in Majang, it is also common in other Surma languages, marking number on some of the same constructions, such as interrogative pronouns, demonstratives, possessive pronouns [Bryan 1968:180-183].

#### 4. Summary

In summary, this paper has shown that Majang marks number on nouns by three methods (singulative suffixes, plural suffixes, suppletive stems), has shown the Majang singulative suffixes to fit a larger African pattern, has shown that Tiersma's "local markedness" concept gives explanations for some

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<sup>6</sup>Alternatively, Murle reinterpreted the Proto-Surma singular as its plural, then removed the final syllable -ti to form a singular. This is less likely for two reasons. First, it is the reverse of what is suggested by the concept of local markedness, which would be that a noun which is used more often in the plural would be more basic in the plural and therefore a candidate for double plural affixation. Secondly, -ti, the final syllable of the Murle plural ibaati, is a normal Murle plural suffix for body parts [Arensen 1982:36], so this also suggests that ibaa was the original singular.

points, has given evidence of a Proto-Surma plural suffix -VK for derived nouns, and has shown several ways in which most liquids are syntactic plurals.

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