

LESSON

27

# Numerals—Part 1

*The interesting origins of numerical terms, and the concordial agreements for cardinal numbers.*

According to linguists of Bantu languages, the primitive people of the Bantu tribes used to count with their hands and fingers. Once the tale of the fingers, *one to nine*, was completed, there was a clap for 10, *kumi*, which in many Bantu languages still means *clap*. The transition, in Kinyarwanda, from *kumi* to *cumi* is obvious and even more so for *amakumi abiri* (*two claps*) to *makumyabiri*. Since there are only two hands, there could be only two claps. Counting above 20 was done in rows of numbers. In Kinyarwanda, the word for rows is *imirongo*. Hence, *imirongo itatu* (*three rows*) became *mirongwitatu*, and then *mirongwine*, *mirongwitanu*, for 30, 40, 50, and so on.

## ROOTS FOR THE CARDINAL NUMBERS 1–20

NUMBER	ROOT	CLASS 1 NOUNS	CLASS 4 NOUNS
1	-mwe	umuntu umwe	ikintu kimwe
2	-biri	abantu babiri	ibintu bibiri
3	-tatu	abantu batatu	ibintu bitatu
4	-ne	abantu bane	ibintu bine
5	-tanu	abantu batanu	ibintu bitanu
6	-tandatu	abantu batandatu	ibintu bitandatu
7	-rindwi	abantu barindwi	ibintu birindwi
8	munani	abantu munani	ibintu munani
9	cyenda	abantu cyenda	ibintu cyenda
10	cumi	abantu cumi	ibintu cumi

## ROOTS FOR THE CARDINAL NUMBERS 1–20 (CONT.)

NUMBER	CLASS 1 NOUNS	CLASS 4 NOUNS
11	abantu cumi n’umwe	ibintu cumi na kimwe
12	abantu cumi na babiri	ibintu cumi na bibiri
13	abantu cumi na batatu	ibintu cumi na bitatu
14	abantu cumi na bane	ibintu cumi na bine
15	abantu cumi na batanu	ibintu cumi na bitanu
16	abantu cumi na batandatu	ibintu cumi na bitandatu
17	abantu cumi na barindwi	ibintu cumi na birindwi
18	abantu cumi n’umunani	ibintu cumi n’umunani
19	abantu cumi n’icyenda	ibintu cumi n’icyenda
20	abantu makumyabiri	ibintu makumyabiri

## THE CARDINAL CONCORDS

NOUN CLASS	SINGULAR NOUN	PLURAL NOUN
1	umuntu <b>u</b> -mwe	abantu <b>ba</b> -biri
2	umusozi <b>u</b> -mwe	imisozi <b>i</b> -biri
3	inka <b>i</b> -mwe	inka <b>ebyiri</b>
4	ikintu <b>ki</b> -mwe	ibintu <b>bi</b> -biri
5	ibuye <b>ri</b> -mwe	amabuye <b>a</b> -biri
6	urukwi <b>ru</b> -mwe	inkwi <b>ebyiri</b>
7	akantu <b>ka</b> -mwe	utuntu <b>tu</b> -biri
8	ubwato <b>bu</b> -mwe	amato <b>a</b> -biri
9	ugutwi <b>ku</b> -mwe	amatwi <b>a</b> -biri
10	ahantu <b>ha</b> -mwe	ahantu <b>ha</b> -biri

**Note:** The plural cardinals for Classes 3 and 6 are irregular:

NUMBER	CLASS 3 NOUNS	CLASS 6 NOUNS
1	inka imwe [ink’ imwe]	urukwavu rumwe
2	inka ebyiri	inkwavu ebyiri
3	inka eshatu	inkwavu eshatu
4	inka enye	inkwavu enye
5	inka eshanu	inkwavu eshanu
6	inka esheshatu	inkwavu esheshatu
7	inka ndwi	inkwavu ndwi
8	inka munani	inkwavu munani
9	inka cyenda	inkwavu cyenda
10	inka cumi	inkwavu cumi

The indeclinable roots for 8 (munani), 9 (cyenda), and 10 (cumi) do not employ initial vowels when they immediately follow a noun, but when they are separated from a noun, the initial vowel becomes necessary:

Har' abantu munani. (*There are eight people.*)

Har' abantu bangahe? N'umunani. (*How many people are there? There are eight.*)

Har' ibintu birindwi. (*There are seven things.*)

Oya, har' icyenda. (*No, there are nine.*)

## COUNTING UP TO 200

20	makumyabiri	70	mirongwirindwi
30	mirongwitatu	80	mirongo munami
40	mirongwine	90	mirongo cyenda
50	mirongwitanu	100	ijana
60	mirongwitandatu	200	maganabiri

When counting intermediate numbers between the tens, such as *twenty-one*, *twenty-five*, and so on, we say, *Abantu makumyabiri n'umwe* (*not abantu makumyabiri na bamwe!*), *abantu makumyabiri na batanu*, and *imisozi cumi n'ibiri*, *inkwavu cumi na rumwe*, etc. You have noticed that the number following the *na* takes the concords of the appropriate noun (with the exception, of course, of the numerals *munani*, *cyenda*, and *cumi* that have no concordial prefixes).

Class 3 nouns are also exceptional: *inka mirongwitatu n'ebiyiri*, *inka cumi n'eshatu*, *inka makumyabiri n'eshanu*, *inka cumi n'esheshatu*, etc.

- **Abantu:** cumi, cumi n'umwe, cumi na babiri, cumi na batatu . . . cumi na barindwi, cumi n'umunani, cumi n'icyenda, makumyabiri n'umwe (21).
- **Imisozi:** cumi, cumi n'umwe, cumi n'ibiri, cumi n'itatu . . . cumi n'irindwi, cumi n'umunani, cumi n'icyenda, makumyabiri n'umwe (21).
- **Imbwa:** cumi, cumi n'imwe, cumi n'ebiyiri, cumi n'eshatu, cumi n'enye, cumi n'eshanu, cumi n'esheshatu . . . cumi n'indwi, cumi n'umunani, cumi n'icyenda, makumyabiri n'imwe (21).
- **Ibintu:** cumi, cumi na kimwe, cumi na bibiri, cumi na bitatu . . . cumi na birindwi, cumi n'umunani, cumi n'icyenda, makumyabiri na kimwe (21).
- **Inkwavu:** cumi, cumi na rumwe, cumi n'ebiyiri, cumi n'eshatu . . . cumi n'indwi, cumi n'umunani, cumi n'icyenda, makumyabiri na rumwe (21).

## EXERCISES

### Exercise 1

Count from 1 to 10, using the following nouns:

- |                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1. umuntu (umwe, babiri . . .) | 4. ikintu  |
| 2. umusozi                     | 5. ibuye   |
| 3. inka                        | 6. inkwavu |

### Exercise 2

Translate and read aloud:

- |                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. umuntu umwe       | 21. ibintu bitanu       |
| 2. ibuye rimwe       | 22. amaguru ane         |
| 3. impu eshatu       | 23. ururabyo rumwe      |
| 4. abigisha munani   | 24. inka cumi           |
| 5. ibitabo cyenda    | 25. urugi rumwe         |
| 6. amagi atatu       | 26. ivunja rimwe        |
| 7. iminsi ibiri      | 27. amafranga munani    |
| 8. amaboko abiri     | 28. insengero esheshatu |
| 9. amasuka munani    | 29. urubaho rumwe       |
| 10. amashuri arindwi | 30. impinja ebyiri      |
| 11. amezi cyenda     | 31. umwigishwa umwe     |
| 12. ingendo ebyiri   | 32. imigozi itanu       |
| 13. ibigori birindwi | 33. igiti kimwe         |
| 14. ijambo rimwe     | 34. ibyaha cyenda       |
| 15. ibijumba cumi    | 35. amazina abiri       |
| 16. imitsima ibiri   | 36. imidugudu itatu     |
| 17. umukiza umwe     | 37. inka esheshatu      |
| 18. amafi arindwi    | 38. imbwa ndwi          |
| 19. inzandiko ebyiri | 39. inkwavu ebyiri      |
| 20. imisozi itatu    | 40. intama imwe         |

### Exercise 3

Translate and read aloud:

1. Har' amato makumyabiri na bumwe.
2. Ejo nzohereza abantu barindwi. Bazashobora guha abakene ibyokurya bibakwiriye.
3. Uriya mukobwa afite ijisho rimwe gusa.
4. Hariho iminsi irindwi [harihw imins' irindwi] mu cyumweru.
5. Har' amazu cyenda dukwiriye kũbaka muri iki cyumweru.
6. Dukwiriye kũmvira itegeko rye kuko rizazana amahoro mu gihugu.
7. Nĩgisha abana cumi. Oya, si cyenda. Batatu bazasubira iwabo.
8. Mu gitabo cyanjye har' amagambo arindwi nkwiye kwiga.
9. Mbese har' imbwa enye? Oya, n'eshanu.
10. Ni tugerageza tuzashobora rwose kubona amabuye mirongwitatu na rimwe.
11. Abantu maganabiri na mirongwine na bane bazaza mu materaniro.

12. Ntidukwiriye kugira imitima ibiri ahubwo dukwiriye gushyira umutima wose ku murimo dukora.
13. Tuzashyira ibintu ijana na makumyabiri na kimwe mu kibindi.
14. Bazashyira amabuye maganacyenda na mirongwine na rimwe mu kibindi.
15. Mu mwaka har' iminsi magana atatu na mirongwitatu n'itanu.
16. Inka mirongwinani n'ebiyiri n'izanjye; izindi eshanu n'ize.
17. Aba bagabo baravuga yuko bazazana ihene cumi.
18. Abakozi makumyabiri na batanu bazashobora kuzana abandi mirongwine.
19. N'umpa amafranga cumi n'atanu, nzagura amasahane atatu.
20. Har' amababi mirongwitatu n'atatu kuri iri shami rimwe.