

Tonal accents in Scandinavian: Origin and development.

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Norwegian and Swedish prosody is characterized by a system of lexically contrasting tonal accents, commonly referred to as accent 1 and 2, producing minimal pairs like ¹tanken (the tank) and ²tanken (the thought). Also, any accentual phrase (AP) in these languages, consisting of a main stress syllable and a number of unstressed syllables, irrespective of word boundaries, will display one of the two accentual melodies. See Kristoffersen 2000: 233-273 and Gussenhoven 2004: 209-227 for overviews.

In a recent dissertation, I propose an analysis of Norwegian tonal accents using the concept of *peak delay*. Rephonologization due to a successive rightward movement of a high focus peak H is seen as the responsible mechanism both behind accent system genesis in Scandinavian and subsequent dialect change, yielding the considerable variation in accent realization we find in Norwegian and Swedish dialects today.

The conference talk will briefly outline this analysis. The building blocks of Scandinavian accentual melodies are high (H) and low (L) tones. A ¹HL/²HL-system, still found in some dialects, is seen as archaic. Here, both accents have identical melodies, but accent contrast is nevertheless created through different localization of H within the main stress syllable. This is seen as an effect caused by *peak delay* in accent 2. Also due to *peak delay*, this type of original system has developed further in several stages, e.g. ¹HL/²LHL, ¹LHL/²HLHL, ¹LH/²HLH. Besides being part of a *peak delay* driven diachronic process, all stages are also synchronically attested in modern dialects, each relating differently to the archaic starting point. In fact, it was field work within modern Norwegian dialects (sound files may be included in the presentation) that gave rise to the proposed analysis. Basically, then, any Scandinavian accentual melodies can be identified, and related to those in other dialects, by the precise position of focus H. The further to the right H has migrated in a given melody, the more room has been created for resulting tonal innovation at the left AP boundary.

Thus, the proposed analysis suggests that complex melodies, e.g. ¹LHL/²HLHL are a relatively recent development, whereas simpler structures are closer to an originally non-delayed and non-contrasting HL/HL tonality of early old Norse. This analysis is presented as an alternative to that proposed by Swedish tonologist Tomas Riad (1998, 2003 etc.). His approach is that complex melodies are archaic, and that various processes of simplification has yielded systems with fewer tonal components. The two competing approaches will be briefly compared.

References

- Gussenhoven, Carlos (2004): *The Phonology of Tone and Intonation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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Riad, Tomas (1998): The origin of Scandinavian tone accents. *Diachronica* XV:1, 63-98.
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