Beyond Borealism:

New Perspectives on the North

eds. Ian Giles, Laura Chapot, Christian Cooijmans,
Ryan Foster and Barbara Tesio

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Contributor Biographies

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Biographies

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Haftor Medbøe is Associate Professor of Music and Jazz Musician in Residence at Edinburgh Napier University where he lectures in composition and improvisation. His research interests lie predominantly in New Jazz Studies and Music Pedagogy. He is widely published and currently writing a monograph. As a musician and composer, Haftor has released several albums to critical acclaim, both with his eponymous group, and with other musical collaborators for Linn, Fabrikant and Losen Records.

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Eleanor Parker received her doctorate in medieval literature from the University of Oxford, and subsequently held a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities. Her research focuses on historical writing and romance in post-Conquest England, and she has published several articles on Anglo-Danish literary culture and the reign of Cnut. She is currently writing a book on the literature of the Vikings in England.
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Tonal Stability and Tonogenesis in North Germanic

Pavel Iosad

The origin of North Germanic tonal accents is a question with a long history and a range of available answers. Although the basic facts are not in dispute, the accents' historical development remains controversial. In this paper, I aim to contribute an argument in favour of the view that tonal accent arose in post-Viking Age North Germanic in connection with changes in syllable count (Oftedal 1952; Elstad 1980; Bye 2004, 2011; Hognestad 2012). I will argue that the genesis of ‘accent 1’ and ‘accent 2’ as a grammaticalization of syllable count need not be seen as an isolated, unique phenomenon in the history of the North Germanic languages: instead, it is a recurring event, as demonstrated by the genesis of new ‘tonal accent’ oppositions triggered by apocope in at least three further separate instances in Central Scandinavia, Zealand, and East Slesvig. I will also adduce further typological parallels from West Germanic and from Goidelic Celtic.

The organization of this paper is as follows. In section 1, I will review the data and the competing accounts of the origins of tone accents. In section 2, I will consider tonogenesis in Central Scandinavian varieties and in Zealand Danish, and argue that these events, as well as the ‘common Scandinavian’ type of accent contrast, can be accounted for via the phenomenon of tonal stability. In section 3, I will briefly review two similar cases from West Germanic and Goidelic Celtic that support a link between tonal stability and tonal accent genesis. Section 4 provides a short conclusion.
Tonal Accent in North Germanic

By ‘tonal accent’ I refer to the distinction between two major classes of words expressed by laryngeal activity in the stressed syllable (and, in many varieties, also the following one): normally pitch movement but also glottal closure. Thus, in most varieties of Norwegian the lexical items bønder ‘farmers’ and bønner ‘beans’ are identical on the segmental level (both [bønːər] or the like) but differ in pitch contours, although the precise nature of that difference varies significantly across dialects. Traditionally, words such as bønner are said to bear ‘accent 1’ (acute in the Swedish tradition), and words such as bønder are said to have ‘accent 2’ (or grave).

Typology of Tonal Accent

Geographically, the accent distinction is distributed as follows:

- In most Norwegian and Swedish varieties, the distinction is expressed by different pitch contours associated with stressed syllables (the difference can, however, persevere into a following unstressed syllable);
- In many varieties of Danish, including Standard Danish, the distinction is realized using a phonetically complex phenomenon known as stød, whose main component involves glottal occlusion, although it can also be accompanied by changes in pitch and intensity (Fischer-Jørgensen 1989);
- In some varieties, pitch and glottal occlusion (or at least creaky voice) coexist: for instance, in many Danish dialects on Funen stød and rising pitch stand in complementary distribution (Andersen 1958; Ejskjær 1990);
- Finally, some varieties lack the tonal accent system altogether: these include Finland and Tornedal Swedish, Norwegian varieties in Finnmark and North Troms, Faroese, and Icelandic. In some cases the lack of tonal accent is normally attributed to language contact (with Finnish in Finland and with the Sámi languages in Northern Norway); in others it is supposed that the contrast...
never arose, as in Icelandic (see, however, Haukur Jörgeirsson 2013 for arguments that it may have been present historically).

In terms of phonetic realization, there are several approaches to the typology: possible criteria include pitch levels, the shape of the pitch curve, and the timing of tonal peaks and troughs relative to the stressed syllable.

- In terms of pitch level, it is common, especially in the Norwegian tradition, to distinguish between ‘low tone’ and ‘high tone’ varieties, with the distinguishing feature being the tone found on the stressed syllable in accent 1 words. In Norway, ‘high tone’ dialects are found in the south-west and in the north, whilst ‘low tone’ dialects are found in Eastern Norway and in Trøndelag. Most Swedish varieties with a tone accent contrast are ‘high tone’, with the exception of west-central (Götaland) varieties abutting the East Norwegian area;

- In terms of curve shape, the important distinction is that between the shapes of accent 2 curves, with a difference between ‘single-peak’ accent 2 (western and northern Norway, southern Sweden, Gotland, and Dalarna) and ‘double-peak’ accent 2 (southern, eastern, and central Norway, and most of central and northern Sweden, including Central Standard Swedish). Generally, in single-peak systems the distinction between accent 1 and accent 2 lies in the timing, with accent 2 peaks timed later than accent 1;

- Finally, Gårding (1977) offers a typology that combines the single vs. double-peak accent contrast with a distinction between early and late-timed peaks: in her system, types 1A and 1B are both single-peak systems, but in 1B peaks are placed later than in cognate 1A dialects; and ‘low-tone dialects’ are essentially 2B dialects, where the peak in accent 1 is shifted so far rightwards as to leave the stressed syllable entirely, leaving it with a low tone.

Thus, the typology of North Germanic tonal accents submits to treatments that emphasize different aspects of their phonetic properties. The same difference in emphasis can also be observed in
various approaches to the history of the tonal accent distinction.

**The History of Tonal Accents**

In the literature, we find three broad approaches to the history of tonal accents in North Germanic languages: I shall call them the ‘double-peak’ approach, the ‘peak delay’ approach, and the ‘stød-first’ approach. In this paper, I endorse the ‘peak delay’ account, and concentrate on a critique of the ‘double-peak’ one; I do not address the ‘stød-first’ argument that stød historically preceded tonal accents (e.g. Liberman 1984; Lahiri & Wetterlin 2015) for reasons of space and focus.

The ‘double-peak’ scenario builds on two observations. First, as already noticed by Kock (1885; see also d’Alquen & Brown 1992), in the modern languages accent 2 is normally found in words that were at least trisyllabic in Proto-North-Germanic, and had undergone syncope in the 1st millennium CE. In the modern languages, such words tend to be disyllabic. Accent 1, on the other hand, is found in words that had not undergone syncope because they were too short in the relevant era, and which tend to be monosyllabic in the modern languages. Hence, Swedish dom ‘judgement’ has accent 1, because it goes back to Proto-North-Germanic *dōmaz, with a single stressed syllable and no syncope. An accent 2 word like dōma ‘to judge’, on the other hand, represents Proto-North-Germanic *dōmijān, with two stressed syllables. Both stresses would be retained even following syncope, so that the word would assume the form *DŌMĀ, with a stress clash (two adjacent stressed syllables). It is this clash that would have been reinterpreted as a double-peaked accent 2: hence, under this approach (Riad 1998, 2003, 2005), the double-peaked variety of accent 2 (as in Stockholm Swedish) is considered to be the most archaic. A second observation adduced in favour of this scenario is the so-called ‘combinatorial accent 2’, a phenomenon whereby all compounds, irrespective of the accentual properties of their components, receive accent 2 (Riad 1998, 2014). The existence of this phenomenon again underlines the connection between accent 2 and the presence of more than one ictus in a word. Hence, the ‘double-peak’ scenario privileges the shape of the tonal curve.
The ‘peak delay’ scenario takes as its starting point a different observation, namely that the distribution of accent 1 and accent 2 is largely predictable from the number of syllables in the word at the Old Scandinavian stage. In this scenario, accent 1 on *dom* ‘judgement’ is attributable to the fact that it goes back to an Old Scandinavian monosyllabic form, like Old Icelandic *dómr*, whereas the accent 2 on *döma* is due to the disyllabic shape of a form like Old Icelandic *daema*. In this scenario, the rise of a distinctive tonal accent is connected not with the late Proto-North-Germanic syncope but with later disruptions in syllable count. Specifically, proponents of this theory (e.g. Oftedal 1952; Elstad 1980; Bye 2004; Hognestad 2012) argue that these later disruptions did not change the tonal pattern of the word, and hence the distribution of the tonal patterns became unpredictable from syllable count. Particular attention is drawn to the incorporation of the definite article into the nominal form, so that *bit it* ‘the bit’, still with the ‘monosyllabic’ tone pattern on *bit*, becomes unpredictably distinct from *bit it* ‘(has) bitten’. Another factor is the epenthesis of vowels in word-final clusters of rising sonority, hence *fōtr* ‘feet’ corresponding to Modern Swedish *fötter* with accent 1 (contrast *nyckel* ‘key’ with accent 2, cf. Old Icelandic *lykill*). Thus, the proponents of this theory do not privilege the exact shape of the tonal curve but focus on its domain. In fact, early proponents (Oftedal 1952; Öhman 1967; Elstad 1980) tended to remain fairly agnostic on the precise phonetic difference between mono and disyllabic words that would later morph into a tonal accent distinction.

In recent years, this approach has been given a more precise phonetic grounding by authors such as Bye (2004; 2011), Lorentz (2008), and Hognestad (2012). They have argued that disyllabic words would be associated with a different pitch pattern compared to disyllabic words thanks to peak delay, a phenomenon well known from intonational phonology (e.g. Ladd 2008). In languages with peak delay, longer domains are associated with a later placement of the tonal peak; hence, disyllabic words would have associated their peaks further to the right compared to monosyllabic words. Under this scenario, the historically original system is Gårding’s (1977) 1A, with a single-peak accent 2 and the peak placed in the stressed syllables in both classes, with only
timing the difference between the two accents. This system is found in peripheral areas such as southern Sweden and Western and Northern Norway.

**Tonal Stability and Typology**

Tomas Riad’s œuvre presents the most sustained argument for the ‘double-peak’ theory and against the ‘peak delay’ approach. In Riad (2005) he summarizes a number of objections to the ‘peak delay’ approach. In this short paper I cannot hope to deal with them all, so I will focus on a single one (but see Bye 2011; Hognestad 2012 for more discussion). Specifically, I address Riad’s typological objection. Under the peak delay approach, syllable count before cliticization of the definite article and epenthesis appears to be such an important element of the sound system that it is signalled (by tone) even after syllable counts have been disrupted. Riad (2005: 4) asks:

> Det har visserligen demonstrerats att tajmningen av en given intonation kan variera beroende på ordlängd […], men man undrar varför denna typ av tonala kontraster inte uppstår ofta ur stavelseantalsskillnader.

(It has indeed been demonstrated that the timing of a given intonation may vary depending on word length […], but one wonders why this type of tonal contrasts does not arise from syllable count distinctions more often)\(^1\)

Lahiri & Wetterlin (2015) express a similar reservation about the typological unusualness of a syllable-count origin for tonal accents, and argue that their stød-first approach is typologically superior, since the genesis of tones from glottalization or loss of glottal consonants is very well attested cross-linguistically (Kingston 2011). In the remainder of this paper I show that the preservation of syllable counts, via tonal stability, is a recurring event in the history of the North Germanic languages, and also has certain parallels outside this subgroup.

Pavel Iosad
The basic mechanism for the genesis of tonal accent contrasts from syllable counts is *tonal stability*, i.e. the persistence of tonal specifications in the face of changes in the segmental make-up. This phenomenon is well known in the theoretical literature (e.g. Goldsmith 1976), and presents a major piece of evidence supporting the autosegmental approach to tone. The genesis of tonal accent in North Germanic varieties, particularly in Swedish and Norwegian, is explained under the ‘peak delay’ scenario as the persistence of the alignment of tonal specifications (specifically the high tone peak) following segmental changes.

Here, peak delay (i.e. a later placement of the tonal peak) arises first as an automatic consequence of the presence of a second syllable. At some point, the difference between earlier and later placement of the peak enters the phonological grammar.² Crucially, changes in the conditioning environment do not lead to changes in tonal associations. In other words, the grammar does not deterministically enforce a later peak placement in disyllables: otherwise we would expect the newly disyllabic [aker] to have ‘accent 2’ (late tonal placement). That this does not happen (Modern Swedish åker has accent 1) is due to tonal stability.

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**Table 1: The Genesis of Tonal Accent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Form 1</th>
<th>Tone placement 1</th>
<th>Form 2</th>
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<td>Before peak delay</td>
<td>[akr]</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>[lykill]</td>
<td>Early, predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak delay in longer forms</td>
<td>[l]akr</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>[l]y[l]kill</td>
<td>Late, predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonologization</td>
<td>[l]akr</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>[l]y[l]kill</td>
<td>Late, predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epenthesis and phonemization</td>
<td>[l]aker</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>[l]y[l]kill</td>
<td>Late, unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a[l]ker</em></td>
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² Linguistic Liasons
In theoretical phonological terms, this phenomenon is the typological
explanandum for the ‘peak delay’ theory of tonal accent genesis. In
the remainder of this paper, I argue that tonal stability is attested in
North Germanic and further afield beyond the genesis of the accent
1 vs. accent 2 contrast, and hence that the ‘peak delay’ account is not
typologically suspect.

Central Scandinavian ‘Circumflex Accent’

Probably the best-known case of tonal accents reflecting earlier
syllable counts is found in the case of the so-called ‘circumflex accent’,
a tonal accent distinction in monosyllables following apocope. In most
Norwegian and Swedish varieties, monosyllables do not show a tone
accent contrast (cf. Vanvik 1956). However, in a large area of Central
Scandinavia such contrasts do exist, and they reproduce old syllable
counts. Apocope in some form is found in Norway from Nordmøre
through Trøndelag and parts of Helgeland to Salten and Lofoten; in
the Swedish-speaking area it is characteristic of most dialects from
Härjedalen and Jämtland north and eastwards, including Swedish-
speaking Finland.

In many areas apocope does not neutralize the distinction between
monosyllables and disyllables. For instance, in the variety of the
Skogn area around Levanger in Nord-Trøndelag (Dalen 1985), tonal
distinctions are found in both mono and disyllabic words: kast ‘a throw’
(accent 1) vs. kåst ‘to throw’ (circumflex accent), and kaste ‘the throw’
(accent 1) vs. kaste ‘throw (present)’ (accent 2). For other descriptions
of dialects with circumflex accent, see Dahlstedt (1962); Apalset
(1978); Elstad (1979); Almberg (2001); Lorentz (2008); Kristoffersen

The circumflex accent normally reflects historical accent 2 in
disyllables. In fact, many synchronic analyses assume that accent 2
on polysyllables and ‘circumflex’ on apocopated disyllables reflect
the same underlying tonal melody, even if the surface curves are not
identical; see Lorentz (2008) for Salten and Dalen (1985) for Skogn.
Other synchronic analyses are available; see, for instance, Kristoffersen
(2011). Historically, however, ‘circumflex accent’ clearly exemplifies
pitch distinctions persisting after changes in the segmental make-up that have consequences for syllable structure. From a theoretical phonological perspective, it demonstrates a clear example of tonal stability: the tonal specification and its association remain intact despite segmental changes. The ‘circumflex’ situation is also similar to that hypothesized under the ‘peak delay’ scenario in that at least at the initial stage of the phonemicization of the ‘new’ tonal accent (‘circumflex’ or ‘accent 1’) the tonal contours themselves remain intact, and the surface differences are only in how they are distributed within the domain.

**Zealand Danish**

Another of similar phonologization of timing of a tonal contour is provided by the dialects of the Danish islands, in particular that of Zealand (for overviews, see Ejskjær 1990, 2005). As described by Ejskjær (1967) and Larsen (1976) for eastern Zealand, forms corresponding to disyllables with final schwa in the standard language are frequently – in fact predominantly – realized without that final schwa. However, forms such as [hʌb̥] ‘(a) hop’ and [hʌb̥] ‘to hop’ (Standard hop, hoppe) are not identical: instead, as Larsen (1976) documents, they show different pitch contours. Apocopated words show a ‘later and smoother’ rise in pitch (‘jævnere og senere rejsning’) compared to original monosyllables.

Once again, a ‘tonal accent’ – the use of pitch to distinguish between two types of stressed syllables – has been born thanks to the perseverance of tonal melody despite the change in segmental structure. Crucially, this phenomenon is probably historically independent from the Central Scandinavian ‘circumflex’ accent: in Zealand Danish, the cognate of the accent 1 / accent 2 distinction is the stød / non-stød contrast. The relatively recent date of the tonogenesis in apocopated words is also suggested by the fact that the tonal contours involved are still identical, and by the still not entirely obligatory status of apocope. Hence, Zealand Danish presents a second, independent case of ‘tonal stability’.
East Slesvig and Other Cases of ‘Circumflex Accent’

Within the Danish-speaking area, Zealand Danish is unique in combining stød with a newer tonal contrast. It is, however, not unique in failing to neutralize the distinction between monosyllables and apocopated words. A particularly clear case where this contrast is preserved is found in East Slesvig (including the island of Als), and on the island of Rømø off the west Slesvig coast. Ejskjær (1990), citing Bjerrum (1949), describes them as lacking stød (hence with no reflex of the accent 1 / accent 2 distinction) but distinguishing between monosyllables ([ʰren̥] ring ‘ring’) and apocopated disyllables ([ʰren̥] ringe ‘small’). Here, tonal accents apparently contrast only in monosyllables, unlike the Central Scandinavian situation (but like Zealand Danish), and hence again the distinction is likely to be historically independent.

A similar situation is found in dialects of islands off the south coast of Funen such as Ærø, where ‘accent 1’ is found in old monosyllables and some, but not all, apocopated disyllables, whereas the other apocopated disyllables show ‘accent 2’. There is again no common Danish stød (corresponding to the Swedish and Norwegian accents) in these varieties.

The use of tone to preserve syllable count distinctions after apocope is attested in other varieties (see Haugen 1976: §11.3.10(4) for a list). One example is Öland Swedish (Selmer 1930), although the system there is again different: e.g., the circumflex accent can correspond to accent 1 in contrasts like tak ‘roof’ vs. tâk ‘the roof’ (Standard Swedish ʰtaket).

To conclude, the genesis of the accent 1 / accent 2 opposition in North Germanic under the ‘peak delay’ hypothesis presupposes a scenario where tonal stability enables contrasts in syllable count to be preserved using pitch differences. Far from being a unique and typologically unusual event, this kind of phonologization is amply and uncontroversially attested in the later history of the North Germanic languages; moreover, the several later events are likely to be independent from each other, lending further plausibility to the scenario. In the next section I briefly consider two further typological parallels.
Tonal Stability Outside North Germanic

Similar scenarios for the genesis of ‘tonal accents’ can be found in West Germanic and in Goidelic Celtic, both relying at least partly on tonal stability for their genesis.

In West Germanic, tonal accents are found in Low and Middle Franconian dialects in Limburg and around the Middle Rhine. Unlike Norwegian and Swedish ‘tonal accents’ (but like the ‘circumflex accents’ and stød), they are also contrastive in monosyllables. Although there is no agreement on the precise reconstruction of their history (de Vaan 1999; Gussenhoven 2000; Köhnlein 2013, 2015; Boersma forthcoming), it is clear that at least at some stage in their development the tonal contrasts, in some varieties, survived segmental changes that potentially disrupt syllable structure, notably apocope. Hence, we find that forms with apocopated schwa can be tonally distinct from morphologically related monosyllables: Geleen Limburgian [kniin] ‘rabbit’ vs. [kniin] ‘rabbits’. All reconstructions assume that this lack of neutralization between mono- and disyllables is due to the fact that a contrast in tonal placement had been established before apocope. This offers a strong parallel to North Germanic cases of tonogenesis out of syllable counts; the ‘circumflex accents’ of Section 2 are particularly similar.

An even closer parallel to the phonemicization of tone due to epenthesis, as required under the ‘peak delay’ scenario, is found in Goidelic Celtic. In Scottish Gaelic, two sound changes that potentially neutralize syllable count distinctions have failed to do so, with the contrast expressed tonally (see in particular Ternes 2006). The first is the deletion of intervocalic voiced fricatives: in Lewis Gaelic [ɬɔːr] leabhar ‘book’ (Old Irish lebor) shows the same kind of pitch pattern as [aː] adha ‘liver’, which is a historical disyllable (Old Irish óa, Middle Irish âe) and contrasts with [aː] áth ‘ford’ (Old Irish áth); see Oftedal (1956); Brown (2009); Iosad (2015). Even more relevant is the interaction between tone and epenthesis. In Gaelic, words like [palˠak] balg ‘belly’ (Old Irish bolg) contrast in pitch patterns with old disyllables such as ballag ‘skull’. Specifically, as Brown (2009)
shows, in the latter the low pitch accent targets the first vowel but in the former it targets the second one. This is the clearest case of tonal associations persisting despite epenthesis, in parallel to the emergence of the contrast sketched in Table 1: epenthesis in balg does not lead to neutralization with a disyllable like ballag.\textsuperscript{5}

**Conclusion**

In this article I have aimed to show that the genesis of tonal accents from metrical structure (in particular syllable counts), which is required under the ‘peak delay’ scenario for North Germanic, is not typologically as rare as some critics have suggested: it has repeatedly, and probably independently, occurred both within North Germanic and also in other European languages (see Kehrein 2008 for additional, albeit more remote, parallels). Whatever the merits of other objections to the ‘peak delay’ scenario advanced in work such as that by Riad (2005), this particular argument can, I suggest, be rejected.

The underlying mechanism that facilitates the persistence of syllable count contrasts is tonal stability: a basic consequence of autosegmental phonology and its separation between tonal specification and segmental representation. The same insight underlies some recent synchronic analyses of European ‘tonal accent’ systems that emphasize differences in the mapping between tones and segments rather than differences in tonal melodies (e.g. Kristoffersen 2006; Hermans 2009; Morén-Duolljá 2013; Kehrein forthcoming; Köhnlein forthcoming).

Finally, it must be noted that ‘European’ tonal accent systems, characterized by the persistence of tonal mappings and alignments over changes in segmental structure (Ladd 2004) appear to be cross-linguistically rare. Thus, the ‘peak delay’ scenario is relatively well supported typologically within the European linguistic area, but we should not perhaps expect to find ample parallels elsewhere. The question of what it is about European languages that facilitates the genesis of this type of tonal accent is a promising avenue for future research.
Endnotes

1 All translations author’s own unless otherwise specified.

2 It is immaterial here how exactly this difference is represented; see Morén-Duelljá (2013); Köhnlein (2013) for some discussion. For more on the concept of phonologization as envisaged here, see Iosad & Honeybone (2015).

3 However, the circumflex accent is often found in syncopated definite singular forms of sonorant-final nouns like *mønne* ‘the man’, *sønne* ‘the son’, where we historically expect accent 1; see in particular Christiansen (1947).

4 This phenomenon is found in Standard Danish: Basbøll (2005) refers to it as ‘schwa assimilation’. According to Basbøll, however, in the standard language it is both variable and neutralizing: *masse* ‘mass’ can be pronounced with or without the schwa, but when it is absent, *masse* is not distinct from *Mads* ‘personal name’.

5 The difference between North Germanic and Gaelic is that in the former the tones stay put despite the changed context, while in latter the low tone keeps the association and hence apparently ‘moves rightwards’ (although it is still associated to the same vowel with the same timing as before epenthesis). Boersma (forthcoming) offers a very similar scenario for the initial phonologization of the tonal contrast in Franconian.

References


Aschehoug & Co.


