

ACCENT IN THE CENTRAL SOMALI NOMINAL SYSTEM*

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The accentual system of Central Somali nominal forms is described in this paper and contrasted with the systems of Northern Somali and Proto-Somali. In particular, it is shown that a diachronic rightward shift of the accent has had widespread consequences, resulting in surface alternations and a restructuring of the accentual system. However, despite the complications introduced by this change, it is possible to describe the system with two synchronic accentual rules, which generally reflect the history of this development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The prosodic system of Northern Somali has recently been described by Hyman [1981] as a tonal-accent one, as opposed to either a "pure" tone system or a stress-accent system. That is, every non-particle, i.e. noun, verb, adjective, etc., can have at most one H tone, marking the system as accentual, yet an underlying accent is realised as a high pitch (rather than part of an intonational pattern), marking the system as a tonal-accent one (see Hyman [1981:177-178] for a fuller discussion).

The purpose of the present paper is to describe the accentual system of Central Somali and to contrast this system with the one operative in Northern Somali. The prosodic system of Central Somali is also a tonal-accent one. However, there are major differences between the two surface accentual systems. In particular, it will be shown that a simple diachronic shift of the accent to the right in Central Somali has resulted in surface accentual alternations and an overall restructuring of the accentual system.¹

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¹This study is limited to nominal forms, although the overall accentual system of this dialect should be analysed at some point.

Central Somali (self designation *reeween*, otherwise known as *Rahaween* or *Rahanweyn*) is spoken by approximately 20,000 people living in Mandera District, Kenya, plus a larger population residing within Somalia. The overall grammatical system of this dialect has recently been described by Saeed [to appear]. The two language assistants who helped with the present paper are both from Mandera: Mahamad Adan and Hassan Abdirahman.

2. Accent Assignment

In Northern Somali, nominal forms do not have an underlying accent, but rather they are assigned an accent on the basis of their phonological shape plus the factors of gender and number.² In particular, vowel-final roots (Hyman's class D2) are assigned a penultimate accent, as are consonant-final masculine roots,³ while consonant-final feminine roots are assigned an ultimate accent [Hyman 1981:180]. The only additional major factor to be noted at this point is that accent is assigned to moras rather than syllables. That is, each vowel is a potential tone-bearing unit. This is particularly relevant with respect to CVVC syllables, since this analysis does away with the need for gliding tones while at the same time maintaining the unity of the overall analysis, i.e. masculine CVVC roots are assigned penultimate accent (CVVC) while feminine CVVC roots are assigned ultimate accent (CVVC).

In Central Somali, the system is essentially the same, i.e. accent is predictable based on the phonological shape of the root and grammatical factors and must be analysed in terms of moras rather than syllables, except that diachronically the accent has shifted one mora to the right. Thus, accent in V-final and masculine C-final roots has shifted from the penultimate to the ultimate mora. Consider the following examples:⁴

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|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (1) <i>dubé</i> | 'ox' (masc.) | (5) <i>hoóg</i> | 'strength' (m.) |
| (2) <i>maroodé</i> | 'elephant' (m.) | (6) <i>waár</i> | 'baby goat' (m.) |

²There are additional grammatical factors such as case which condition accentual alternations in Northern Somali.

³There is a small exception class of masculine roots with final accent (Hyman's [1981:180] class D3).

⁴D and G are implosive consonants. There are actually ten vowel positions in Somali, although this paper will follow the standard Somali ortho-

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|------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| (3) sheeké | 'story' (fem.) | (7) ilbaáb | 'door' (m.) |
| (4) abeesé | 'puff-adder' (f.) | (8) ferés | 'horse' (m.) |
| | | (9) nebeddoón | 'committee' (m.)
[lit. 'peace-want'] |
| | | (10) turjubaán | 'translator' (m.) |

Forms (1-4) illustrate the general phonological rule which assigns accent to V-final roots, i.e.

Rule 1a: $V \rightarrow [+A] / _ \#$

That is, regardless of the gender, V-final roots are assigned a final accent.

The normal pattern for C-final masculine roots is illustrated by (5-10), that is, accent is assigned to the ultimate mora. This rule could be written:

Rule 1b: $V \rightarrow [+A] / V X _ C \#]_{+Masc.}$

However, rule 1a and rule 1b both perform the same function, which can be shown by collapsing the two of them, i.e.:

Rule 1: Final Accent Assignment

$$V \rightarrow [+A] / V X _ <C> \#]_{\text{NOUN}}^{<+Masc.>}$$

This rule applies only to roots with two or more vowels, i.e. CVC roots are excluded. In isolation, CVC roots are all accented, and therefore it might be supposed that CVC masculine roots would be assigned an accent by Rule 1. For example:

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|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------------------|
| (11) Dár | 'clothes' (m.) | (13) f̄d | 'home/village' (f.) |
| (12) Df̄b | 'problem' (m.) | (14) f̄ár | 'finger' (f.) |

However, the following discussion of CVC+suffix forms will show that this accent is assigned by a later rule (Rule 2), regardless of the gender.

In the case of C-final feminine roots the accent is in effect shifted off the word, with a new accent appearing word-initially, e.g.

graphy and distinguish only five of these. Finally, Central Somali has the following near-surface phonological rule: $n \rightarrow \eta / _ \#$.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (15) béer 'farm' (f.) | (18) gálan 'hand/arm' (f.) |
| (16) wáar 'baby goat' (f.) | (19) máGaayed 'restaurant' (f.) |
| (17) fllg 'tooth' (f.) | (20) máhakamad 'court' (f.) |

These forms illustrate the normal pattern for C-final feminine roots, that is, accent is assigned to the initial mora. This same accent assignment also holds for a very small class of masculine roots,⁵ e.g.

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|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (21) réer 'extended family' (m.) | (23) wálaal 'brother' (m.) |
| (22) fúud 'soup' (m.) | (24) áfaaf 'entrance' (m.) |

In fact, it will be seen that this rule applies just before the surface representation to any phrase which has no other assigned accent. That is, this rule functions to prevent the possibility of a nonaccented nominal form on the surface. Thus, the nouns of the masculine exception class, e.g. (21-24), would simply be marked [-Rule 1], and by default they will receive an initial accent. The rule could be formalised as:

Rule 2: Default Accent Assignment

V → [+A] / % (C) ___ X % Condition: X does not contain
an accented vowel

where % represents a phrase boundary.

3. Accentual Alternations

Both nominal roots and suffixes show accentual alternations. However, these alternations do not appear in the masculine paradigms:

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|---|--|
| (25) waárke 'the baby goat'(m.) | (26) feréske 'the horse' (m.) |
| waárkli 'the ...' (previous
reference) | feréskli 'the ...' (previous
reference) |
| waárkun 'this ...' | feréskun 'this ...' |
| waárkaas 'that ...' | feréskaas 'that ...' |
| waárkey 'my ...' | feréskey 'my ...' |

⁵Of the 222 nominal forms surveyed for this study, 117 belong to the masculine class, 83 to the feminine class, and only 22 to this class of exceptions.

- (27) turjubaánke 'the translator' (m.)
 turjubaánkil 'the ...' (previous reference)
 turjubaánkun 'this ...'
 turjubaánkaas 'that ...'
 turjubaánkey 'my ...'

That is, the accent in masculine roots remains in the final-mora position throughout the paradigms. However, both the feminine forms and the CVC words show a synchronic accentual alternation:

CVC forms

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|---------|---------|--|---------|---------|---|
| (28) a. | Dfbkil | 'the problem' (m.)
(previous reference) | (29) a. | fártii | 'the finger' (f.)
(previous reference) |
| | Dfbkaas | 'that ...' | | fártaas | 'that ...' |
| b. | Dibké | 'the ...' | b. | farté | 'the ...' |
| | Dibkún | 'this ...' | | fartún | 'this ...' |
| | Dibkéy | 'my ...' | | fartéy | 'my ...' |

Feminine

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|---------|----------|------------------|---------|----------|--------------|
| (30) a. | wáartii | 'baby goat' (f.) | (31) a. | íilgdii | 'tooth' (f.) |
| | wáartaas | | | íilgdaas | |
| b. | waarté | | b. | iligdé | |
| | waartún | | | iligdún | |
| | waartéy | | | iligdéy | |
- (32) a. máGaayeddii 'restaurant' (f.)
 máGaayeddaas
- b. maGaayeddé
 maGaayeddún
 maGaayeddéy

Thus *ke/te*, *kun/tun* and the possessive suffixes⁶ are assigned an accent while *kil/tii* and *kaas/taas* are not. The default rule, i.e. rule 2, will account for the (a) forms in both the feminine paradigms and the CVC+

⁶All possessive suffixes follow the same pattern as *key/tey*, although only the first person singular form is given here.

suffix paradigms. As for the (b) forms, an additional rule is required, which must be ordered before the default rule. That is, the accent in feminine roots has shifted from the ultimate position in Proto-Somali to a post-root position, i.e.

$$X C (V) \overset{[+A]}{V} C \# Y > X C (V) V C \# \overset{[+A]}{Y}$$

Thus it could be said (synchronically) that feminine roots are assigned a post-verbal "floating" accent, which is realised on the immediately following suffix if there is one, and otherwise is reduced. In this latter case, Rule 2 would later apply to assign an initial accent.

The rule assigning accent to feminine roots is actually the "elsewhere" case corresponding to Rule 1 [Kiparsky 1973]. That is, #CVC# roots were assigned an underlying accent in Proto-Somali, which has since been shifted to the post-root position in the same way as feminine roots. The same holds for the masculine exception class (marked [-Rule 1]). Thus synchronically all roots not assigned a final accent by rule 1 are assigned a post-root accent, i.e.

Rule 3: Post-Root Accent

$$V \rightarrow [+A] / \overset{[-A]}{V} C \# (C) \text{ ---}$$

If there is a suffix following the root, this rule will assign an accent to its initial vowel. However it will not apply to masculine forms, due to the root-final accent assigned by Rule 1. Under this analysis, *kii/tii* and *kaas/taas* must be treated as full words, e.g. *waar##taas*, so that no accent is assigned to them. Finally, if there is no vowel for the accent to associate with, the rule will not apply. These rules are illustrated by the following derivations:

<u>Masculine</u>		
	/feres/	/feres#kun/
Rule 1	ferés	feréskun
Rules 2-3	---	---
Surface Rep.	ferés	feréskun

Feminine

	/lllg/	/lllg#dun/	/lllg##daas/
Rule 1	---	---	---
Rule 3	lllg̣	lllgdún	lllgdaas
Rule 2	fllg	---	fllgdaas
Surface Rep.	fllg	lllgdún	fllgdaas

As mentioned earlier, Rule 2 must be ordered last, immediately preceding the surface representation, since its function is to prevent the possibility of an accentless surface form.⁷

A further complication of the accentual system of Central Somali results from the combination of both determiners and possessives in the same word. Consider the following masculine examples:

(33) waárkaaskéy	'that (m.) baby goat of mine'	(34) feréskaaskéy	'that horse (m.) of mine'
waárkunkéy	'this ...'	feréskunkéy	'this ...'
waárkilkéy	'the (prev. ref.) ...'	feréskilkéy	'the (prev. ref.) ...'
waárkekéy	'the ...'	feréskekéy	'the ...'

Examples (33) and (34) show the expected root-final masculine accent, but in addition the possessive suffix carries an accent in these forms. In fact, it is possible to reverse the order of these suffixes, e.g. feréskeykaas (/feres#key##kaas/) 'that horse of mine', and feréskeykún (/feres#key#kun/) 'this horse of mine'. These examples can be accounted for by the claim that Rule 3 applies to nominal suffixes as well as roots. Diachronically this analysis receives support from the fact that the demonstratives and possessive pronouns were assigned final accent in Proto-Somali, which was shifted to the post-root position in this dialect. Apparently this rule (Rule 3) has come to apply to the definite articles in addition to the demonstratives by analogy. This analysis is illustrated by the following derivation:⁸

⁷The possessive suffixes are assigned an accent (by Rule 3) in the same way as kun/tun, etc. However, a low-level phonetic rule assigns a H tone to both vowels in these forms, e.g. ROOT#tʃis → ROOT#tʃífs.

⁸There is additionally a surface rule lowering the pitch of the second accent in these forms.

(34)	/feres#kun#key/
Rule 1	feréskunkey
Rule 3	feréskunkéy
Rule 2	---
Surface Rep.	feréskunkéy

However, the following feminine examples show that Rule 3 must apply from left to right:

(35)	waartúntey	'this (f.) baby	(36)	lllgdúntey	'this tooth (f.)
	/waar#tun#tey/	goat of mine'		/lllg#dun#tey/	of mine'

as compared to:

	waartaastéy	'that (f.) baby		lllgdaastéy	'that tooth (f.)
	/waar##taas#tey/	goat of mine'		/lllg##daas#tey/	of mine'

That is, it is not possible for accents to occur on two adjacent syllables in Central Somali, which would be the result if Rule 3 applied simultaneously. Furthermore, the rule must apply from the left to the right, since the incorrect results are predicted by a right to left application, e.g.

(37)	/lllg#dun#tey/
Rule 1	---
Rule 3	lllg#duntéy
Rule 3	lllgdúntéy
Rule 2	---
Surface Rep.	*lllgdúntéy

However, under a left to right analysis, the application of the rule will be blocked by any immediately preceding accent (see the original formulation of this rule), and therefore the correct results are predicted. Consider the following derivations:

(38)	/lllg##daas#tey/	/lllg#dun#tey/
Rule 1	---	---
Rule 3	lllg ^o daas#tey	lllgdún#tey
Rule 3	lllgdaastéy	lllgdúntéy
Rule 2	---	---
Surface Rep.	lllgdaastéy	lllgdúntey

Finally it might be noted that both Rule 3 and Rule 2 assign an accent to a vowel immediately following a grammatical boundary. The major difference between the two rules is that Rule 2 "looks" to the right, and applies only if there is no *following* accent in the phrase; whereas Rule 3 looks to the left and applies only if there is no immediately *preceding* accent. However, Rule 3 will never apply if there is a following accent either. Therefore these two rules can be collapsed:

Rule 2-3: Post-Boundary Accent⁹

$$V \rightarrow [+A] / \% (X \overset{[-A]}{V} C \#) (C) _ Q \%$$

Condition: X contains no % and Q contains no [+A]

The Q variable in this rule has the interpretation: "take the longest possible expansion". Thus, the rule itself has two possible expansions: (1) the fullest expansion (including the parenthesized portion of the rule) will apply first, placing the accent after the left-most # which is not immediately preceded by an accented vowel; (2) otherwise the accent will be placed after the left-most boundary, i.e. after the %, resulting in an accent on the first syllable of the phrase. The condition on both of these readings is that there are no following accents in the phrase. Two points should be noted. First, under this formalisation, there is no need to specify a direction of application, since the Q variable guarantees the same result that a left to right application does in this case. Secondly, the fact that Rule 2 and Rule 3 can be collapsed indicates that the similarities between them are not accidental. That is, apparently Rule 3, which assigns an accent to the vowel

⁹There is another possible formulation of this rule:

$$V \rightarrow [+A] / \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [-A] \\ V \quad C \# \\ \% \end{array} \right\} (C) _ Q \%$$

However, the use of curly brackets here hides the real generalization. That is, this device can be used to collapse anything (regardless of whether there is any relationship between the collapsed items; see McCawley [1971:3-4]) and thus it would not capture the actual relationship between the environments

$\overset{[-A]}{V} C \#$ and $\%$.

immediately following the left-most #, has been generalised to assign an accent immediately following the absolute left-most boundary (%) in case no other accent has been assigned.

4. Conclusion

A complete study of accent in Central Somali should include the verbal paradigms, as well as adjectival phrases, genitive constructions, etc. In fact, the rightward accentual shift has affected most of these other parts of the grammar in addition to the nominal paradigms. For instance, imperative forms in Northern Somali take penultimate accent, e.g. kéen 'bring', árag 'see', joójl 'stop it', except for the conjugation class 3 (C3)¹⁰ [Hyman 1981:174] which is assigned a final accent, e.g. baró 'learn', joogsó 'stand'. The corresponding forms in Central Somali all show a rightward shift of the accent. For example: seén 'bring', arág 'see', roojf 'stop it', barof 'learn', roogsof 'stand'.¹¹ However, the verbal paradigms do not show the range of alternations that the nominal paradigms do. That is, the study of the nominal system in this dialect is especially interesting due to the opposition between masculine and feminine forms and the maintenance of this opposition despite the diachronic accentual shift.

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¹⁰The verbs of this class are composed of reflexive derived stems.

¹¹As can be seen, even the C3 verbs have undergone this shift by "creating" an extra vowel. The origin of the final -i in these forms is mysterious, as I am not aware of any evidence for its existence in Proto-Sam or Proto-Lowland East Cushitic. For example, consider the reflexive suffix in the following languages: Rendille +o ; Dasanech +u ; Oromo +aDu .