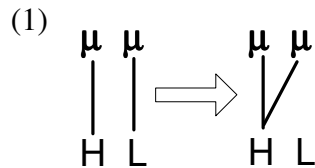


Tone in Shi
John Goldsmith
University of Chicago

Shi is an Eastern Bantu language whose tonal system has been studied in some detail by Louise Polak-Bynon (1975). While it is clear that there is a binary underlying tonal contrast, and that there are two surface tones (High and Low) much as in related languages like KiHunde, Tonga, and Luganda, it is far from clear what the underlying contrast *is*. Even if one supposes that the underlying contrast is between High and Low tone, it's not clear which of the two underlying tone classes should be identified as High and which as Low.

In this paper, I'll argue that the simplest analysis by far of the tonal data is one which treats Shi in a fashion very similar to Tonga, a Bantu language of Zambia (Meeussen 1963, Carter 1971-72, McCawley 1973, Goldsmith 1984). The analysis consists of the following parts:

1. The underlying contrast is between unaccented moras and accented moras;
2. Accented moras are assigned a H L* melody, with the Low tone associated with the accented mora.
3. High tones associate to all toneless vowels accessible to them without violating the line-crossing prohibition, and to no other vowels. (Points 1-3 are shared by Tonga.)
4. There is a rule of Rightward High shift, as in (1).



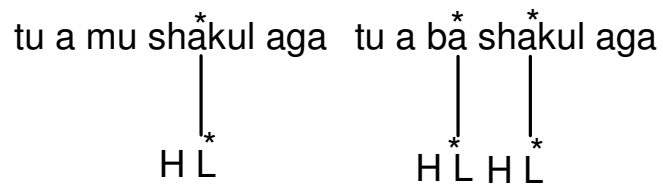
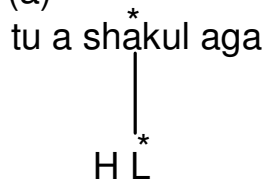
Under such assumptions, accent assignment in verbs is similar to that found in other Eastern Bantu languages. Historically, accent derives from High tone, even though in present-day Shi it is realized as both High and Low: it is High when an accentless mora precedes, and Low when an accented mora precedes.

This system appears to have arisen as a reinterpretation of a relatively late rule lowering a High immediately after High, a widespread rule in Eastern Bantu which in many languages led to a neutralization of historical High/Low in all positions immediately following High. Shi in a sense found a way to integrate the effects of this rule (often called *Meeussen's Rule*) while *not* neutralizing the contrast.

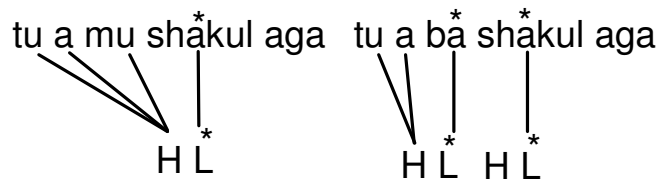
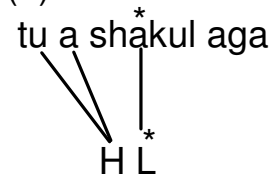
In (2), three forms are derived, based on the Subject Marker *tu*, the Far Past marker *a*, the Object Markers *mu* and *ba*, and the accented stem *shakul*. The row (a) gives the form after (2) above, the row (b) after (3) above, and row (c) after (4) above; the accents above the vowels indicate the observed surface forms, correctly predicted by the structures in row (c).

(2)

(a)



(b)



(c)

