

ON THE TONAL AND PROSODIC ACCENTS OF THE BALTIC SEA AREA

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The language area that can be called the Baltic Sea Area includes three main groups of languages: Scandinavian, Baltic, and Finnic. One phonetic feature that seems to be more or less common to many of these languages is the "singing" quality of speech; four of the languages are generally considered to be tone languages with the opposition between two tonal accents (Norwegian, Swedish, Latvian, and Lithuanian), while two of them (Danish and Livonian) are stød languages. Even in those languages that are not tone or stød languages (e.g. Estonian and Finnish) there are dialect differences that can be explained by referring to tonal curves.

I first give an inventory of the main types of tonal accents of this area. Next I give the geographic distribution of the main tonal and prosodic types. Thirdly, I consider the origin of the various types. It is my purpose to present a more or less uniform explanation for the rise of the støds in Danish and Livonian and the tonal accents in Swedish and Norwegian. I also give an explanation for the rise of the Estonian and Livonian syllable gradation with the various tonal curves associated with the strong and weak grades. Finally I ponder on the influence that the languages of this area may have exerted on each other. Many of the dialect differences can be explained by language contacts.