

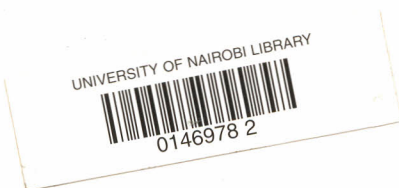
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**THE STATUS AND FUNCTION OF  
TONE IN TIRA "**

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempts to demonstrate that Tira, a Kordofanian language of Sudan, is tonal. It describes lexical and grammatical functions of Tira tone as well as processes of tone association. It is a case study based on one speaker of the El Akdar dialect.

Theoretical concepts from traditional and generative phonology as presented by Hyman (1975) were used as a model for description of tone-bearing segments, non-tone-bearing segments and surface tones. Autosegmental theory as presented by Goldsmith (1990) was used as a model to analyze and describe underlying tone, tone association and its representation.

Chapter one gives historical background to the problem, states the problem and objectives for the research. A fairly detailed review of literature on aspects of tonal typology and evaluation of earlier works on Tira is included.

Chapter two re-examines the phonemes proposed by an earlier researcher, identifying tone-bearing segments. It further discusses Tira morpheme structure in terms of segmental and tonal phonemes, syllable structure and word structure. It describes segmental morphophonemic changes

that are triggered by the concatenation of morphemes and syllabification of words.

Chapter three demonstrates the four surface tones of Tira and their allotones. It also suggests what the relationships between tone, length and loudness are. Finally, it shows that Tira demonstrates characteristics typical of tone languages and meets the definition given for a tone language.

Chapter four shows that Tira tone functions lexically in nouns and grammatically in verbs. Using the principles of autosegmental analysis it demonstrates that Tira has only two underlying tones, high and low, from which the surface tones are derived. It shows that tone spreading, contour tone formation and tone shifting found in Tira are all explained with universal principles of tonal association plus parameters and rules specific to Tira. It also demonstrates that syllabification and tonal association are interdependent in Tira.

Chapter five gives a general summary and the conclusions drawn from the research. It also suggests some areas for further study.