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Plenary lecture

The Quantity Shift in Norwegian and Swedish

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Old Norse and Old Swedish were characterized by a system based on segmental quantity. In stressed syllables short and long vowels could combine freely with short and long consonants, rendering the following four way system: 'CV.CV, 'CVV.CV, 'CVC.CV or 'CVVC.CV.¹ In most present-day Norwegian and Swedish dialects on the other hand, stressed syllables must be heavy. This means that the options have been reduced to two, in that a stressed syllable rime minimally must consist of a either long vowel or a short vowel followed by a consonant, that is, either 'CVV.CV or 'CVC.CV. The same structural constraints and the same development can be observed in monosyllabic words, except that a bare CV-word was not possible. The elimination of the light 'CV.CV and superheavy 'CVVC.CV types is usually referred to as the *Quantity Shift* (or the implementation of *Prokosch' law*).

Some dialects have not yet fully implemented the shift, however. These can be placed at different stages on the trajectory from the original four-way system to the modern two-way system. In my talk, I shall show that the attested trajectories, i.e. the set of attested intermediate stages, seem to be restricted with respect to the set of logically *possible* trajectories the shift could have taken. I shall further argue that these restrictions can be theoretically motivated. The shift will be modelled by means of very simple (and idealized) Optimality Theoretic grammar consisting of four general and independently motivated constraints. The factorial typology that can be derived from the set of all possible rankings of these constraints renders six empirically different grammars, of which one represents the original Old Norse system and one the modern Post-Prokosch' system. All six systems are represented in at least one dialect of Norwegian or Swedish, and equally important, no other system than the six predicted by the analysis seem to exist.

¹ The dot marks the syllable boundary.