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Formal Problems in Semitic Phonology and Morphology

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Abstract

This study deals with the formal character of phonological representations and rules. Two basic lines of investigation are pursued. One, the metrical, holds that there is hierarchic metrical structure within syllable structure and of stress is elaborated based on data from Tiberian Hebrew, Classical Arabic, and the modern Arabic dialects of Cairo and Damascus. The effects of syllable structure on the form and function of segmental phonological rules are adumbrated with data from Tiberian Hebrew as well. The role of metrical structure in vowel harmony also figures briefly.

The other formal line followed is prosodic. An essentially autosegmental theory of nonconcatenative morphology is developed and extensively illustrated with data from Classical Arabic and Tiberian Hebrew. A general constraint limiting the morphology to context-sensitive rewrite rules is developed and defended on the basis of this theory. The prosodic model is also shown to solve several traditional problems in the characterization of reduplication phenomena. Finally, a theory of internally-structured lexical entries is proposed and is demonstrated to have significant empirical consequences within this morphological system.

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