

## Cross-dialect variation in Dinka tone systems

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This talk examines tonal phonology across dialects of the Dinka language (West Nilotic, South Sudan). Dinka has a highly complex sound system, with a three-level vowel length contrast, a voice quality contrast, and tone; all elements are both lexical and morphological, and most of the language's morphology is expressed through its suprasegmentals. While ternary vowel length and binary voice quality are relatively stable across dialects, tone is not, and when approaching an undocumented variety, it is impossible to know in advance the number of tones, their phonological specifications, or any contextual tonal processes. The high functional load of tone in the language, along with the varying number of tones and extensive tone sandhi, has led to the mistaken impression that the tone systems of different varieties of Dinka cannot be compared, and that systematic correspondences do not exist. I show that systematic phonological tone correspondences exist across dialects of Dinka, including varieties that were previously undocumented. I also discuss the range of tonal phenomena across dialects of Dinka, how the phenomena relate to one another, and what they show about the evolution of individual dialectal tone systems.