PROSODIC STRUCTURE OF NALBARIA ASSAMESE

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The paper intends to explore prosody related phenomena such as syllable structure, foot formation, syncope, stress shift, vowel coalescence and diphthong formation in NA (Nalbaria variety of Assamese, an Eastern Indic language spoken in Assam, India) and their interactive consequences. The analysis is mostly done on the diachronic sound changes taking place in NA which I propose to have been originated from Early Nalbaria Assamese (ENA). The analysis will be done using the constraint-based framework of Optimality Theory. NA is syllable-timed and lacks phonemic vowel length. It is a quantity-sensitive language. The reason for vowel syncope in NA is 'stress' as evidenced by other processes such as diphthong formation in initial syllables and vowel coalescence in final syllable. Stressed syllables are always heavy or made heavy by adding a moraic coda or by diphthong formation in the initial syllable. It shows a tendency for rhythmic categorical vowel deletion which is motivated by two prosodic factors – (i) prohibition for complex structure and (ii) preference for forming initial trochaic foot at the prosodic level. However, the syncope pattern in NA, FT-TRO is a high-ranked constraint but PARSE-σ is not undominated because it allows occasional occurrences of non-initial unparsed syllables. A markedness constraint *STRUCTURE may also be invoked to deal with the rhythmic categorical vowel deletion in NA. In NA, stem-initial vowels are never deleted in compound word formations. NA rhythmic vowel deletion does not affect disyllabic words as it is a language-specific requirement to form an initial trochaic foot. Therefore, apocope is not encountered. NA prefers a disyllabic CVC.CV sequence which is often resulted by deleting the medial (unstressed) vowel of the word both in lexical roots as well as in derived environment.

(1)   NA foot structure: A rule-based algorithm

Syllabification:	Syllabify open syllables (CV) as light and closed syllables (CVC) as heavy. Syllables with diphthongs (CVV) are also treated as heavy.
Syncope:	Vowel in non-head syllable is deleted.
Metrification:	Assign (left-headed) iterative (quantity-sensitive) trochees (ˈ**H**) or

('**LL**) from left to right. Heavy syllable (H) bears the primary stress
('**H**) and if a word contains one heavy syllable and two consecutive
light syllables, then this trochaic foot bears secondary stress ('**LL**).

Extrametricality: Mark the final syllable of disyllabic words as extrametrical if it contains an initial heavy syllable. NA allows secondary stress and allows stress clash too.

End Rule (left): Promote the leftmost foot as the location for primary stress.

Syncope: Vowels in non-head syllables are deleted followed by re-syllabification.

(2) NA metrification

a.	/nɒkɒɾa/	[nɒk.ɾa]	(ˈH). ⟨L⟩	'NEG-do-PRES-3P-MH'
b.	/pɒnia/	[pai.na]	(ˈH).⟨L⟩	'a cooking utensil'
c.	/tʋhɒtɒk/	[tʋh.tɒk]	(ˈH). (ˌH)	'you-NH-ACC'
d.	/kɒkalɒɾ/	[kɒk.loɾ]	(ˈH). (ˌH)	'waist-GEN'
e.	/nɒdʰɒɾila/	[nɒdʰ.ɾi.la]	(ˈH). (ˌLL)	'NEG-catch-PRESPERF-2P'
f.	/aponalok/	[ap.na.lok]	(ˈH).L.(ˌH)	'you-PL-HH'