Construction Tonology: The Case of Kalabari (Ijoid)
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Although it is common for ‘replacive’ tonal patterns to be assigned by word-level morphological constructions, it is far less common for such overriding schemas to be assigned by specific phrase-level syntactic constructions. Kalabari, an Ijoid language of Nigeria, does exactly this: Whenever the noun is preceded by a modifier, it loses its tones and receives different ‘melodies’ depending on the constructional word class of the preceding specifier/modifier, either HL, HLH, LH or L. Based on joint work with Otelemate Harry, I first document the assignment of these different syntactic melodies and then provide evidence for how they developed diachronically.