Binary and unary structure in Classical Arabic metrics

Chris Golston & Tomas Riad

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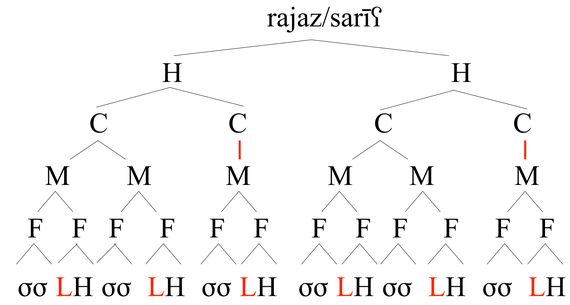
Classical Arabic metra are traditionally TERNARY:
[PKK] [KQK] Al-Khalīl 780, Maling 1973
More recent accounts are BINARY one way or another
Prince 1989, Golston/Riad 1997, Fabb/Halle 2008

We show that Arabic meters use UNARY elements as well:
⇒ every metron has exactly *one* monomoraic L
⇒ every line has unary Feet ⊻ Cola ⊻ Lines
(except marginal madīd)

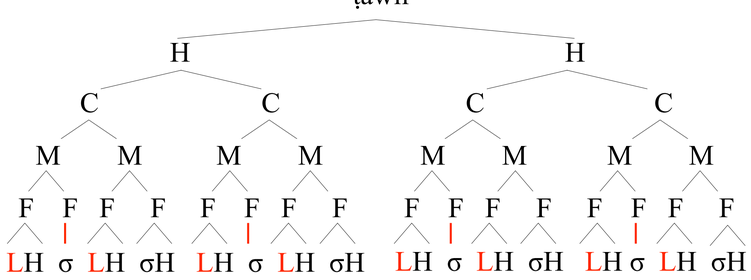
rajaz/sarīʕ



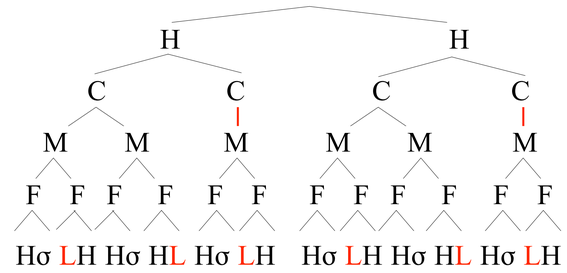
Five non-Classical meters exist
their authenticity is suspect and all are rare
2 respect our constraints, 3 do not

⇒ every metron has exactly *one* monomoraic L
but both of the mutadāriks and muqtaḍab do not
⇒ every line has unary Feet ⊻ Cola ⊻ Lines
but both mutadāriks have unary Metra

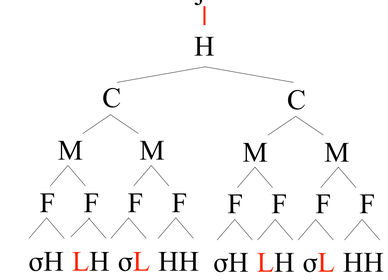
ṭawīl



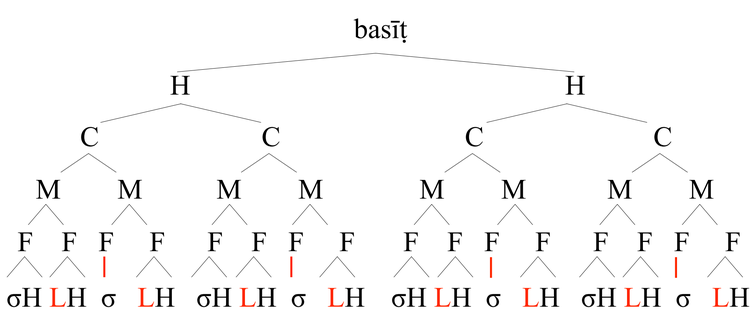
munsariḥ



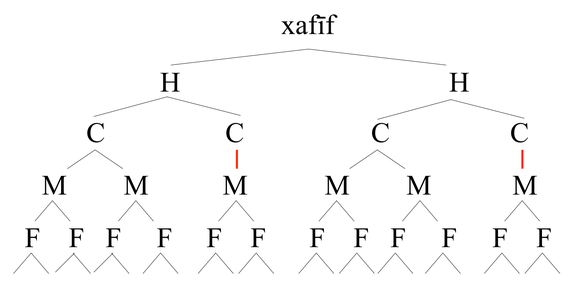
mujtaθθ



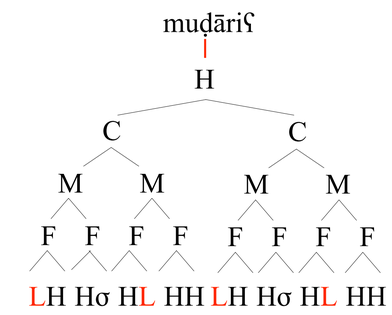
basīṭ



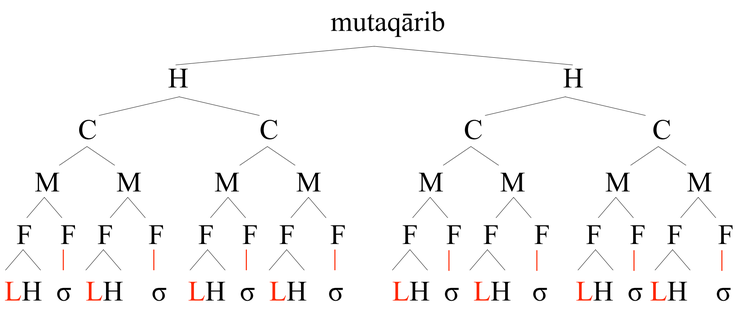
xafīf



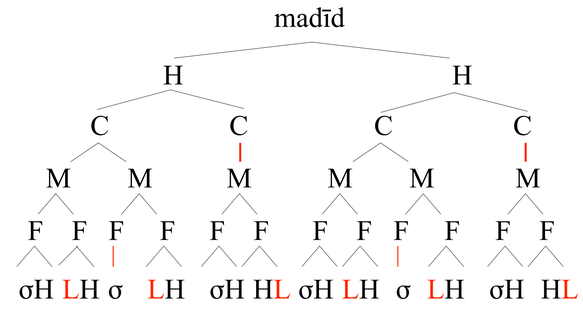
muḍāriʕ



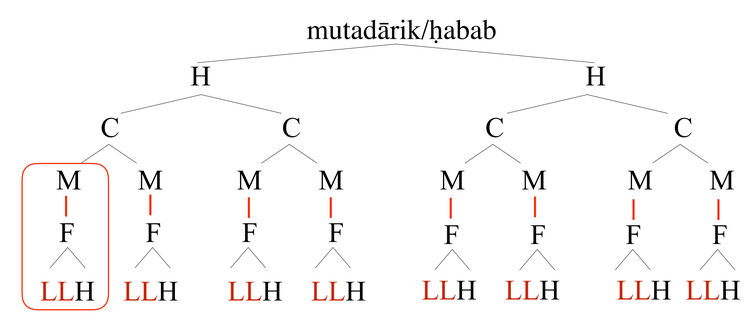
mutaqārib



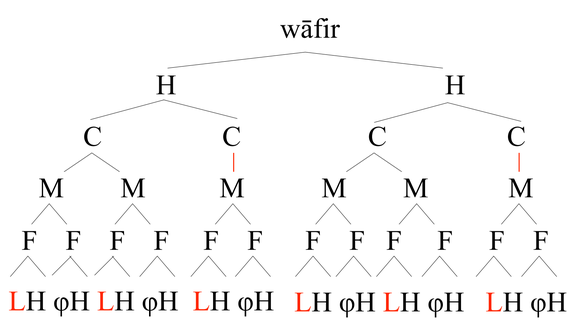
madīd



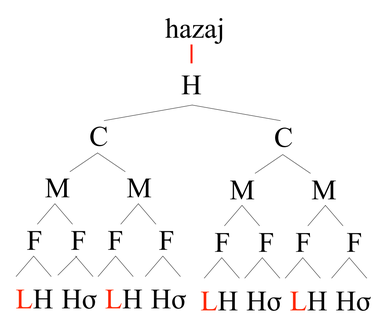
mutadārik/ḥabab



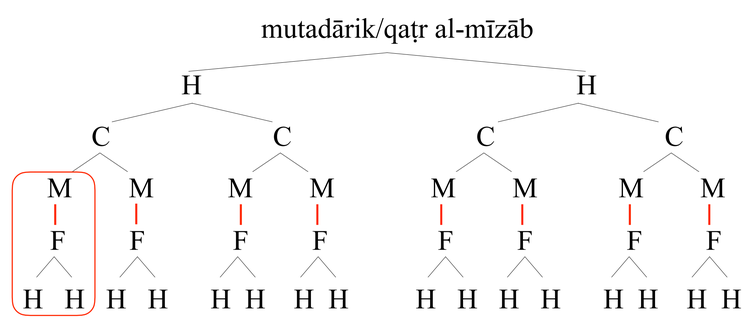
wāfir



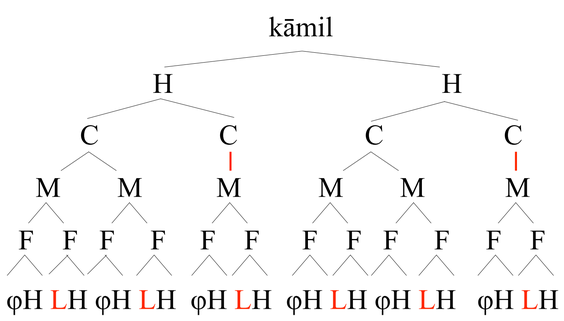
hazaj



mutadārik/qaṭr al-mīzāb



kāmil



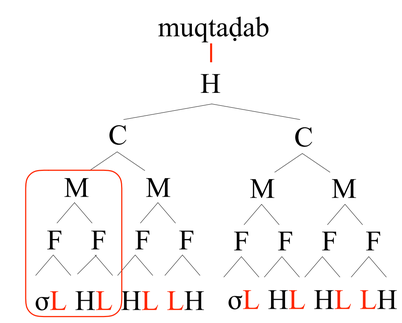
Common meters avoid μLAPSE (Golston & Riad 1997) and a line-final unary L syllable.

NOμLAPSE No stressless μ follows another (*HL, *Hσ).
NOFINALL No line ends in a L syllable.

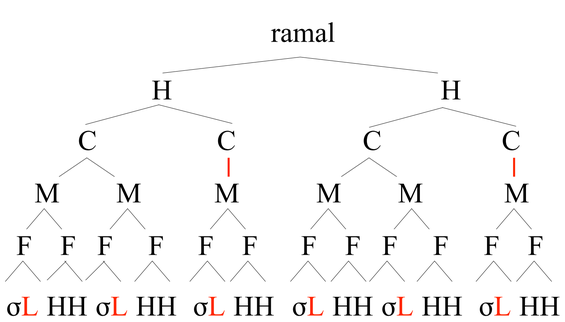
	%	NOμLAPSE NOFINALL
ṭawīl	35	
kāmil	19	
wāfir	13	
basīṭ	12	
mutaqārib	4	σ]
xafīf	4	σL
ramal	3	σL
rajaz/sarīʕ	3	σσ
munsariḥ	3	Hσ
hazaj	<1	Hσ, σ]
madīd	<1	HL, L]

Vadet 1955, Stoetzer 1986; μLAPSE, Kager 1993

muqtaḍab



ramal



Core clssical meters have exactly one L position per metron.
Beyond that, they violate binary at one additional level:
Tetrameters have unary verse feet.
Trimeters have unary cola.
Dimeters have unary lines.

References Fabb & Halle (2008) *Meter in poetry.* Golston (1996) Direct Optimality Theory. *Language.* Golston & Riad (1997) The phonology of Classical Arabic meter. *Linguistics.* Golston & Riad (2000) The phonology of Classical Greek meter. *Linguistics.* Kager (1993) Alternatives to the iambic-trochaic law. *NLLT.* Maling (1973) *The theory of classical Arabic metrics*. MIT diss. Prince (1989) Metrical forms. *Rhythm and Meter.* Stoetzer (1986) *Theory and practice in Arabic metrics*. Leiden diss. Vadet (1955) Contribution à l'histoire de la métrique arabe. *Arabica II*.