Re-analysing some tonal deviations in western Franconian dialects

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Introduction

In a small western area around Borgloon, the relationship between two distinctive tone accents and their historic distribution is not particularly clear in words originating from WGm. ai and au, cp. e.g.

/stɛi¹n/ 'stone' /bɛi²n/ 'leg'
/lɛi¹t/ 'sorrow; ugly' /ɛi²t/ 'oath'
/zwɛi¹tə/ 'to sweat' /hɛi²tə/ 'to be named'
/tɛi¹kə/ 'sign' /zɛi²kə/ 'to go on'

/bɔu¹m/ 'tree' /zɔu²m/ 'hem, edge'
/strɔu¹m/ 'stream' /drɔu²m/ 'dream'
/lɔu¹pə/ 'to run' /slɔu²pə/ 'to demolish'
/zɔu¹ɤə/ 'to breastfeed' /dɔu²ɤə/ 'to be good (for)'

In line with e.g. WGm. î & û, as well as the short vowels in open syllable (OSL), all of these words could be expected to have TA 2 from a diachronic point of view, cp. some general (simplified) rules:

1° Historic monosyllabic words have TA 2
2° Historic disyllabic words have TA 2 when the following consonant (or the final element of a consonant cluster) was voiceless
3° Historic disyllabic words have TA 1 when the following consonant was voiced (and which may have become voiceless later on)

Distribution of WGm. ai & au

WGm. ai and au developed differently in Middle Dutch (MD) than in Middle High German (MHG).

a) Dutch development (*vocalic sequence*)

WGm. ai > MD *ê* – except when followed by an umlaut in the next syllable, in which case WGm. ai > MD *ei*
e.g. *been, breed, teen, meer, zee – eik, geit*

WGm. au > MD *ô*
e.g. *hoog, groot, oor, boom, doof, lopen*

b) German development (*consonantal sequence*)

WGm. ai > MHG *ê* in front of *h, r, w* or word final
e.g. *Zehe, mehr, See*
> MHG *ei* in other cases
e.g. *Bein, breit, Eiche, Geiß*

WGm. au > MHG *ô* in front of *h, r* or a dental consonant
e.g. *hoch, groß, Ohr*
> MHG *ou* in other cases
e.g. *Baum, taub, laufen*

**Consequences with respect to the distribution of TA**

MD/MHG *ê* & *ô* always have TA 1 (spontaneous TA 1)
MD/MHG *ei* & *ou*: TA 1 is found only "conditioned by a following originally voiced word-internal consonant" (De Vaan 1999)

Words as e.g. *been/Bein* or *boom/Baum* have
– TA 1 in dialects with a development as in Dutch
– TA 2 in dialects with a development as in German

Questions

→ Where to draw the border between the Dutch and the German development?
→ How to account for the tonal deviations?

Geographical outline

From: Peters 2007: 170

Based on Stevens s.d.
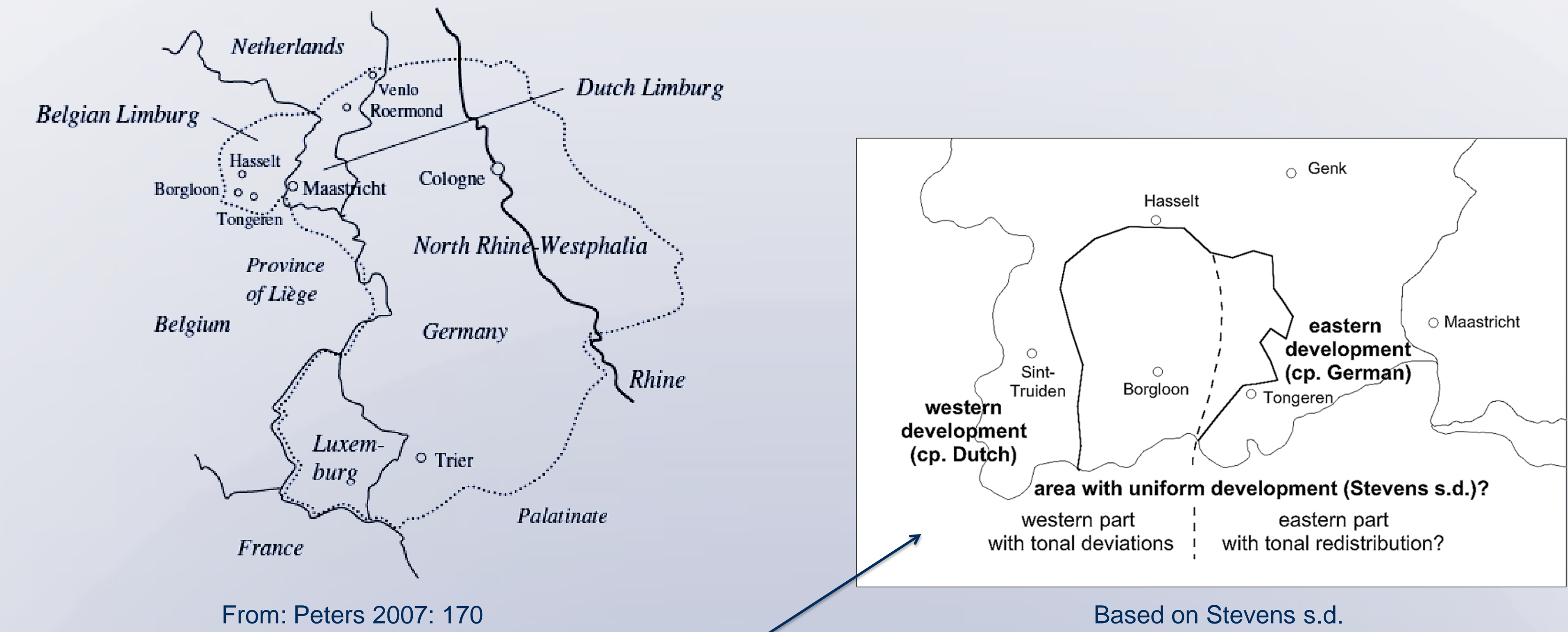
Previous views

I. Stevens (1951): area with an own, uniform development

According to Stevens, WGm. ai & au are distributed neither as in Dutch nor as in German in a small western area of the Franconian dialects. Instead, he thinks that both sounds did not split at all, but developed in a uniform way into resp. a diphthong /ɛi/ and /ɔu/.
Moreover, he distinguishes two different regions in this area:
- an eastern part with a tonal redistribution into /ɛi¹/ and /ɔu¹/ vs. /eː²/ and /oː²/
- a western part with some tonal deviations (cf *introduction*)

II. Goossens (1987, 2006): western development as in Dutch in the part with tonal deviatons

Goossens considers the tonal deviations in the western part as the result of MD *ê* (spontaneous TA 1) in contrast to MHG *ei* (conditioned TA). In his view,
- the eastern part with allegedly tonal redistribution belongs to the area with a split as MHG *ei*
- the western part with tonal deviations belongs to the area with a split in MD *ê*

New proposal

In contrast to Stevens or Goossens, I would like to argue that the West-Franconian dialects around Borgloon all had an eastern development and thus have an underlying split as in German.
In this approach, WGm. ai & au did split and most probably merged in a later stage, so it only seems that they have had a uniform development from a present point of view,
cp. e.g. MHG *ei* /bɛi²n/ 'leg', /bɛi¹n/ 'legs' next to MHG *ê* /tɛi¹n/ 'toe'

In the eastern part of our area, only words with TA 1 originating from MHG *ei* have merged with MHG *ê* (spontaneous TA 1) into /ɛi/, whereas words with TA 2 derived from MHG *ei* developed into /eː/.
The distribution of TA 1 and TA 2 in this part corresponds completely to that in the eastern dialects.

WGm. ai	TA 1	TA 2
- MHG *ê*	/tein/ 'toe'	/
- MHG *ei*	/bein/ 'legs'	/beːn/ 'leg'

The western part, however, shows some peculiarities regarding the distribution of TA 1 and TA 2,
cp. e.g. western /stɛi¹n/ 'stone' to /bɛi²n/ 'leg' (or to eastern /steː²n/ 'stone' and /beː²n/ 'leg)'.
Despite these tonal deviations, the hypothesis that the western part of this area once also had a split as in MHG and the eastern part nevertheless seems to be strengthened by at least three factors:

- WGm. ai & au developed into the same diphthong as in the eastern part with an underlying distribution as in MHG
- a similar development of WGm. ī and ū into /ɛi/ and /ɔu/ in more or less the same area
- TA 2 never occurs in words with historic TA 1

The tonal deviations themselves, finally, most likely have to be ascribed to the influence of the western, prevailing Brabantic dialects as e.g. Goossens also does for the exceptions /zi¹p/ 'soap' and /i¹mər/ 'bucket' in the dialect of Genk east of the West-Franconian area.
According to Peters (2007: 190), "Accent 1 words are lexically toneless" in the West-Franconian dialect of Borgloon, so the distinction between words with TA 2 and TA 1 could be interpreted as a or difference between words with and without TA ("a distinction between 'accent' and 'no accent'").
Following this point of view, the tonal deviations in the westen part could be seen as the loss of TA, which also seems to hint in the direction of a western influence, since the dialects west of the West-Franconian area have no tone opposition at all.

Remarkable parallel

In most of the dialects in the area around Borgloon, the present-day diphthongs /ɛi/ and /ɔu/ represent not only WGm. ai & au (in at least all words with TA 1), but also WGm. ī & ū. Moreover, this area belongs to an area in which WGm. ō and ū did not merge either (cf Keulen 2010).

This might suggest to analyse the western and the eastern part of the area with /ɛi/ and /ɔu/ for WGm. ai & au as a whole and consider them (just as for WGm ī & ū) as one larger entity with two subregions.
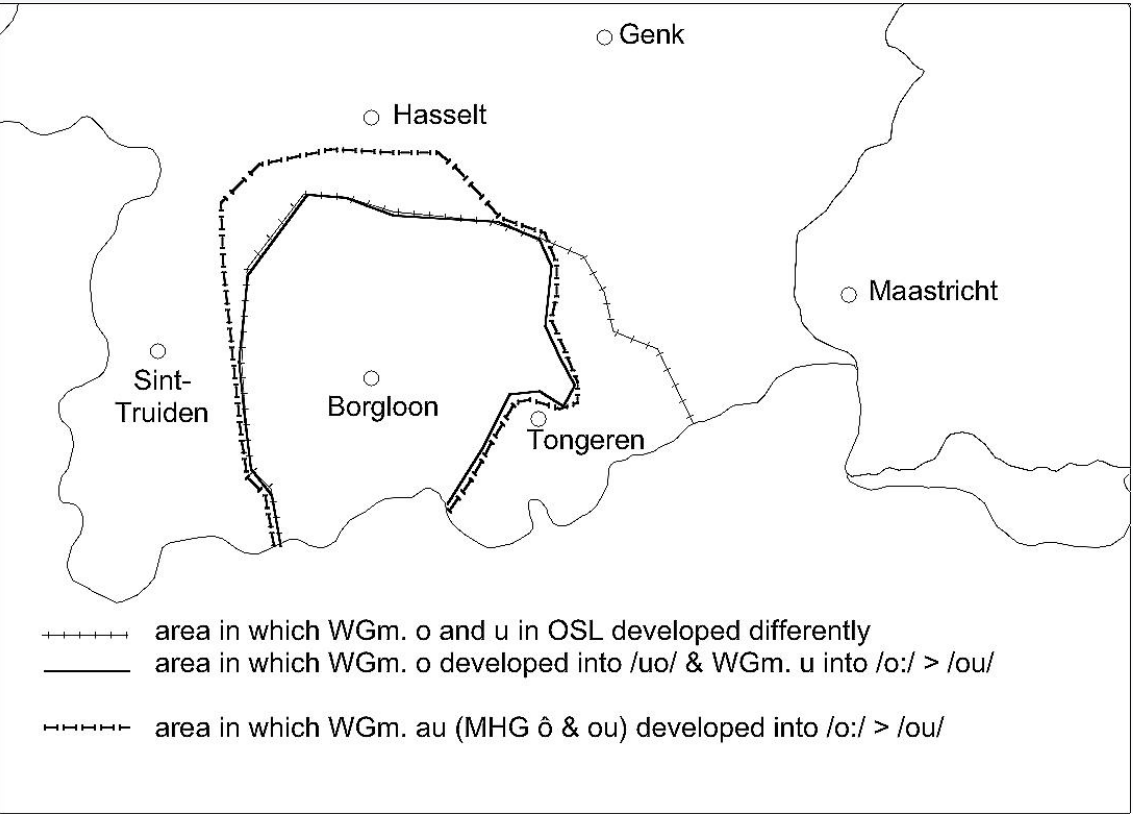
Additional split according to TA

Apart from the development into MHG *ê*/*ô* and MHG *ei*/*ou*, some eastern dialects also have a secondary split of MHG *ei*/*ou* according to whether MHG *ei*/*ou* have TA 1 or TA 2. This leads to a threefold distinction as in e.g. my native dialect of Val-Meer:

WGm. ai	TA 1	TA 2	WGm. au	TA 1	TA 2
- MHG *ê*	/teːn/ 'toe'	/	- MHG *ô*	/hoːχ/ 'high'	/
- MHG *ei*	/stein/ 'stones'	/steːn/ 'stone'	- MHG *ou*	/ɔuχ/ 'eye'	/ɔːɤə/ 'eyes'

cp. also Niesten s.d. for Vroenhoven: MHG *ê*/*ô* > /i¹/, /u¹/, whereas MHG *ei*/*ou* > /ɛi¹/, /ɔu¹/ vs. /eː²/, /oː²/

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