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 & au, cp. e.g.

- /sac/ ‘stone’ vs. /sac/ ‘leg’
- /scl/ ‘sorrow; ugly’ vs. /scl/ ‘oath’
- /swi/ ‘to sweat’ vs. /swi/ ‘to be named’
- /xal/ ‘sign’ vs. /xal/ ‘to go on’
- /In/ ‘tree’ vs. /In/ ‘hem; edge’
- /swim/ ‘stream’ vs. /swim/ ‘dream’
- /n/ ‘to run’ vs. /n/ ‘to demolish’
- /oz/ ‘to breastfeed’ vs. /oz/ ‘to be good (for)’

In line with e.g. WGm. i & ū, 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.

Geographical outline

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

a) Dutch development (vocalic sequence)
WGm. ai > MD ō – 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 ō e.g. hoog, groot, oor, boom, doof, loop

b) German development (consonantal sequence)
WGm. ai > MHG ū in front of h, r, w or word final e.g. Zehe, mehr, See
> MG u in other cases e.g. Bein, breit, Eiche, Geiß
WGm. au > MHG ū 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 ū & ū 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/Boom 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?

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 had an underlying split from a present point of view, cp. e.g. MHG ei/er/h/leg’ vs. h/legs’ next to MHG ei/er/h/1e’/t1e’

In the eastern part of our area, only words with TA 1 originating from MHG ei/er/h/leg’ (spontaneous TA 1) into /e/,
whereas words with TA 2 derived from MHG ei/er/h/leg’ into /e/.
The distribution of TA 1 and TA 2 in this part corresponds completely to that in the eastern dialects.

The western part, however, shows some peculiarities regarding the distribution of TA 1 and TA 2, cp. e.g. western /sac/ ‘stone’ vs. h/leg’ (or to eastern /sac/ ‘stone’ and h/legs’). 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. i & ū into /e/ and /u/ 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 /sac/ ‘soap’ and /l/’en/ ‘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 or a difference between words with and without TA (“a distinction between ‘accent’ and ‘no accent’”)

Following this point of view, the tonal deviations in the western 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.

Geographical outline

From: Peters 2007: 170

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 /e/ and /u/.

Moreover, he distinguishes two different regions in this area:
- In the eastern part with a trisyllabic word distribution into /e/ (and /u/) vs. /e/ (and /u/)
- A western part with some tonal deviations (cf introduction)

II. Goossens (1987, 2006): western development as in Dutch in the part with tonal deviations
Goossens considers the tonal deviations in the western part as the result of MD ō (spontaneous TA 1) in contrast to MHG ei (tailed condition TA 1). In his view,
- the eastern part with allegedly tonal distribution 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 ō

Remarkable parallel

In most of the dialects in the area around Borgloon, the present-day diphthongs /e/ and /u/ represent not only WGm. ai & au (in at least all words with TA 1), but also WGm i & 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 and /e/ and /u/ for WGm. ai & au as a whole and consider them (just as for WGm i & ū) as one larger entity with two subregions.

Additional split according to TA

Apart from the development into MHG ū 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 & au
TA 1 / TA 2
MHG ū / /
MHG ei / / /
MHG ou / / /

cp. also Niessen s.t. for Vroenhoven: MHG ū > /i/, /ui/, whereas MHG ei/ou > /e/, /ae/ vs. /e/, /ae/

References


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