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‘Suiker’ in de Limburgse dialecten en de ontwikkeling van Wgm. **ǔ* in gesloten syllabe

Summary

The word for ‘sugar’ entered the dialects of Limburg in the thirteenth or fourteenth century from the east in the form [sukəɾ]. Comparison with the dialectal vocalism of other words containing Wgm. **u* in a closed syllable, such as ‘he-goat’ (Dutch *bok*), ‘mouth’ (Dutch *mond*) and ‘dog’ (Dutch *hond*), shows that in the southwestern part of Limburg, those words have a different vocalism from that of ‘sugar’, thus implying that **o* and **u* had already merged when ‘sugar’ was borrowed with [u]. In the northeastern part of Limburg, ‘sugar’ joined the descendants of **u* and their later development into a lower vowel.

More recently, a development [sokəɾ] > [sɔkəɾ] took place in Central Dutch Limburg, and this can be compared with the same development in the word for ‘bigger’ (Dutch *groter*), generally described as shortening of a long vowel followed by a voiceless stop plus syllabic *r* or *l*.

The study of the more recent loanword ‘sugar’ thus provides us with internal linguistic evidence to date the merger of **u* and **o* in the southwestern dialects of Limburg, and so supplements palaeographic studies that were unable to draw sharp lines in this question.