Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 35

Records of the discussions in the Conference Room on 09-05-2018

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Fangzhe Qiu, Bernhard Bauer, Siobhán Barrett, Theodorus Fransen, Romanas Bulatovas, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Elliott Lash

Practicalities
After an extended St. Patrick's Day and Easter break the Thurneysen Fanclub meets again and lo, there are cookies.

David had a very productive week last week, finishing four articles in one week (c. 30.000 words)! It is noted that this equals almost half of a PhD thesis. David counters this by adding that he tends to have about 51 unproductive weeks a year, but it is very impressive nonetheless.

The Fanclub congratulates Siobhán on successfully defending her PhD thesis, well done!

The Fanclub also congratulates Deborah Hayden on winning a wonderful grant.[1]

David mentions that Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh's seminar on Irish dialects will start tomorrow at 16.00 at the DIAS.

Syncope (§106 – continued)
We continue reading from *samail* onwards. Thurneysen essentially continues to illustrate the process of syncope patterns by means of examples.

"The vowel remains only before *cht*, e.g. **cumachte** 'might', **cumachtach** 'mighty'." Yes, this is the one major exception to syncope, bit odd really. They must have felt that a cluster *-Ccht-* would have been impossible to pronounce.[2] We cannot think of any other major exceptions to syncope.

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[1] David: "Is there anyone else who has done something we should congratulate them for?" Theodorus: "It was may birthday last week." The Fanclub congratulates Theodorus upon surviving another year! Hurray!

[2] David: "Surely it wouldn't be that bad?" David tries to produce /kuṽχtəχ/ and struggles. David: "Oh." David: "But really, if there were a vowel following it…" David succeeds admirably.

"Disyllabic *ia* becomes *e* as the result of syncope; e.g. **rïam** 'before him', **remi** 'before her'; **no·bïad** 'he would be', pl. **no·betis** for *bïatis*." Rather, *iä* derives from *eä* and if it takes part in syncope the second vowel is simply syncopated away, while the *e* remains. It is only afterwards that *e* is raised to *i* in hiatus in unaffected words.

As to *dédenach*, it is not really relevant for the overall question of syncope, so we do not discuss it.

Syncope in compound verbs (§107)
In general, David wonders whether paragraphs 107–109 are fundamentally necessary. They do not seem to add anything essential to the explanation of syncope. We will turn to this as we read these paragraphs.

The examples of verbal allomorphy between deutero- and prototonic stems that Thurneysen offers are all fine and show the correct, expected forms. However, they could just as well be included in the previous paragraph §106 to illustrate few examples of compound verbs there. Further treatment of this topic should be included in the verbal section of the grammar.

Theodorus asks what happened to the form *·eiperr* (*as·beir*) < *·es-ber-ar*, where the third, rather than the second vowel was deleted. This is in fact the result of an earlier, entirely separate kind of syncope, through which an unstressed vowel in a closed, final syllable which is both preceded and closed by the same kind of consonant and is removed at least two positions from the stressed vowel is deleted.[3]

Another example of this development is 3sg. pres. *do·adbat*, with a final /d/, which goes back to *to-ad-u̯ei̯d-et > to-ad-u̯ei̯d-t*. It is also seen in compounds of *reithid* 'to run', such as *to-ambi-di-reth* 'to serve (lit. to run back and forth)', verbal noun *timthirecht*. The expected 3sg. pres. of this verb would otherwise have been **do·imthirid*, but one finds *do·imthiret*.

The verbal form *do·adbdem* with lenited *d* shows that there was originally a contrast between final /d/ and internal /ð/ due to this development. In some cases analogy has caused the form with /d/ to spread within the paradigm. The final /d/ has also spread to the verb *ad·fét* due to analogy with these verbs, even though it should not have happened in *ad·fét* due to the vowel being to close to the stress.

Within *as·beir* these early-syncopated forms also spread due to intraparadigmatic analogy, e.g. *as·berar* is found next to *as·berr*; in the 3pl. *·epertar* < *es-ber-ontar* (with syncope of the third, rather than the second vowel) the syncope pattern has spread through analogy with the 3sg. form and/or the deuterotonic form.

Another type of early syncope (§108)
The main problem with this paragraph (which is absent from the German version) is that it is simply out of place. Thurneysen is now discussing a much earlier prehistoric sound-change, which has nothing to do with the main syncope (like the sound law we ourselves just finished discussing).

"Thus the prototonic forms of **in·fét** 'relates' with perfective *co(m)-* (§ 533) point, not to *eŋkowēd-*, whence *ēg(w)ed-* ; e.g. 3 sg. subj. pass. **·écestar** (with palatal *c = g*). So, too, in the corresponding forms of the verb 'to go' (*di-com-wed*), e.g. 3 sg. past subj. **·dichsed**, < *·dichesseth*, pointing to *·dik(w)ess-*, not to *·dikowess-*, as against deuterotonic **do·coísed** (< *cowess-*)." In order to understand the problem, it must be noted first of all that the verb *in·fét < *in(de)-u̯ei̯d-* is one of those rare verbs that do not take the augment *ro*, but instead use *co(m)-*. So for the augmented forms we would reconstruct *en-kom-u̯ei̯d-*. Within the Proto-Celtic period already, a cluster *mu̯ > *u̯*, giving *en-ko-u̯ei̯d* as our preform. The *u̯* was then lost during the 7th century AD, so the attested deuterotonic form *in·cuäid* is essentially as expected.

The prototonic form is, as Thurneysen points out, problematic. Prototonic *en-ko-u̯ei̯d- > *ēggou̯ēd- > *ēggˣu̯ˣed-* should give Old Irish **écaid*, with non-palatal /g/. But the attested form is *·écestar*, with a

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[3] Here's a more abstract representation: $VC_1VC_1 > VC_1C_1$ if both V are unstressed.

clearly palatal /g/. This is why Thurneysen suggest an early syncope of an unstressed vowel besides *$u̯$ in an immediately posttonic syllable.[4] This would give: *$en\text{-}ko\text{-}u̯ei̯d\text{-} > *ḗggu̯ēd\text{-}$ as the expected form at the time of the main syncope.

"Similarly **céol** (monosyllabic), gen. **cíuil**, neut., 'music, melody' may go back to *$kiwolo\text{-}$ or *$kiwala\text{-}$ through intermediate *$kiw'lo\text{-}$." This word is problematic in that its etymology is uncertain (relating it to *$kantlo\text{-}$ would be attractive). Thurneysen's reconstruction of *$kiwolo\text{-}$ or *$kiwala\text{-}$ is purely mechanical and establishes little, as it fails to link the Irish form to cognates in any other language. It should also be noted that even if we were to accept his reconstruction, the phonetic context for his proposed early syncope is different from that in *in·fét*. In the earlier example, the sequence is *$CVu̯$ whereas for *céol* it would be *$u̯VC$.

"If **fedb** 'widow', W. *gweddw* (< *$widwā$), as against Skt. *vidhávā*, O.Slav. *vъdova* (Goth. *widuwō*), Gk. *ἠίθεος* 'bachelor', belongs here, elision of this kind dates from a very early period." This looks like a good example of this early syncope, as the Indo-European cognates all point to a three-syllabic word (reconstructed, for instance, as *$h_1ui\text{-}d^hh^1\text{-}eu\text{-}o\text{-}$ in De Vaan 2008) , whereas the Irish and the Welsh both point to a disyllabic word. Therefore, *fedb* would go back to *$uid^e/_ou̯ā$ with subsequent syncope of the second vowel according to this rule.

It is suggested that words like *medb* could also have provided a parallel for analogically reshaping *fedb*. This is possible. The word *medb* < *$medu̯ā$ has traditionally been associated with the PIE root *$med^hu\text{-}$ 'mead' and taken to mean 'the intoxicating one', but Irslinger has argued instead for associating it with the root *$med\text{-}$ 'to measure, rule'.

At any rate, as stated before, this entire paragraph deals with a prehistoric, early kind of syncope, which was unrelated to the main syncope. It should really be treated elsewhere and it should also be discussed together with the other early syncope, which we discussed earlier in this meeting. Within this context all one should mention is that earlier developments somewhat obscure the workings of the main syncope and then give a reference to a chapter on prehistoric developments.

Analogical levelling of syncope (§109)
"Such incongruities arising from syncope are still tolerated to a considerable extent in Old Irish, which indicates that the date of syncope was not very remote (in point of fact the interior vowels are shown in most of the Ogam inscriptions)." Thurneysen essentially says that after syncope, the irregularities within the language (especially the massive incongruities within the verbal system) had become too complex to survive for long. Then again, what exactly is meant by 'very remote'? The main syncope is taken to have happened during the sixth century, which is about a century before Old Irish was codified at around 650 AD.

There follows a lengthy discussion of whether or not so complex a system could have survived in a natural language or not. Some argue that the transmission of so many irregularities would have been impossible and there is even some speculation that the system as attested in the written language was highly learned and artificial. On the other hand, what could have motivated the creation (much less the maintenance!) of such artificial complexity? There is some disagreement, but we take it that in all likelihood the attested system was real when the language was codified in the mid-seventh century. It is also noted that the system was *not* actually stable. Analogical levelling is attested from our oldest sources and accelerates throughout the Old Irish period and onwards. Moreover, there were definitely patterns to the patterns which resulted from syncope, which must have been apparent to native speakers.

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[4] That is to say: *$σ́CVu̯ > *σ́Cu̯$.

To illustrate early analogical levelling of syncope, the following example is given:

	marbaid	*ad·ella*
3sg. pret.	*·marb*	*·adall*
3pl. pret.	*·marbsat*	*·adallsat*

The form *·adallsat* is attested in Blathmac, but the expected form would have been ***·aidlesat*. Clearly, the form was analogically remodeled on the basis of the pattern offered by *marbaid*. In Blathmac, most verbal forms are actually etymologically expected, but it should be noted that he is a very early poet.

As to the *ogam* inscriptions, these do indeed tend to show vowels where syncope should have operated, but in many cases the vowels are not of the etymologically expected qualities.

"Yet even in our period many adjustments have already been made by levelling." Yes, and this is an important matter to keep in mind. The Old Irish glosses were not written in some primordial stage of the language, but show a language already tending to simplification. As such, hard as it may be to imagine from our present point of view, the directly previous stage of the language must have been even more complicated.

Most of the examples given by Thurneysen are fine, but we note that *comocus* and *comoicse* are irrelevant: these are simply synchronic, new compounds (i.e. they were formed after syncope).

We would classify these examples more clearly, noting that some are the result of analogy in compounds with independent forms of the nouns, whereas others are cases of intraparadigmatic analogy between deuterotonic and prototonic forms of verbs, etc. It is a useful paragraph, mainly for illustrating that there really was already quite a bit of analogy going on even in Old Irish itself, but it should be more structured.

Disyllabic words and syncope (§110)
Yes, this is true. And indeed, *foít* has been influenced analogically, whilst *ro·foíded* is in its expected form.

Pages read in this session: c. 2,25.
Paragraphs discussed: §§106–110.