



This publication originates in research undertaken in the project *Chronologicon Hibernicum* (*ChronHib*) at Maynooth University. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 647351).

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 33

Records of the discussions in the Conference Room on 26-02-2018

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Fangzhe Qiu, Elliott Lash, Theodorus Fransen, Siobhán Barrett, Romanas Bulatovas, Bjørn Olaf Vatzlavik, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Daniel Watson, Bernhard Bauer

Practicalities

We begin by discussing the new template David has made for the proceedings, which includes (as may be seen above) all the proper logos and the ERC grant reference of the *ChronHib* project, of which these meetings are a part. Romanas asks whether we should change the name from 'Fanclub' to 'Reading group' or some such if it is to be a more formal part of the project. However, the others are in favour of retaining the fanclub, saying that we are a "very serious fanclub". It is also noted that in the draft template, David opened the meeting with the note that "Elliott throws in a remark" (which was actually derived from a real issue of the proceedings); Elliott appreciates this and we all agree that it is indeed something which happens often enough.

The template is accepted and the proceedings for the last two weeks will now shortly be sent on to David, presumably along with today's proceedings, so that they may be processed and published.

We also note that we have a new member, the exchange student from Oslo: Bjørn. We welcome him and briefly explain our practices.¹ We have managed to read 63 pages in a year and a half, although we actually skipped some parts. As such, we do not have a hope of reaching the end of the grammar by the end of the project (in 2020), but we are making progress all the same.

Unstressed vowels in closed syllables (§102)

As mentioned at the end of last week's meeting, Thurneysen is very detailed in his description of the unstressed vowels (in post-tonic syllables), which in part derives from the fact that he operates with three consonant qualities. His separate treatment of unstressed non-final closed vs. open syllables is a subtle distinction which we do not generally make, but which may be useful. We shall see.

"An unstressed short vowel, whatever its origin, which stands between two consonants belonging to the same syllable is written as follows..." This is essentially the correct approach when it comes to the

¹ David: "Our proceedings are very simple, I read the Gospel [= Thurneysen's *GOI*]... and then we tear it to pieces."

treatment of *schwa* in Old Irish. For the most part, what Thurneysen says in the following paragraphs is non-controversial and David implores us not to be too argumentative about it today, so that we may manage to read on for a bit (and get this out of the way).

“1. Between palatal consonants *i...* quite exceptionally *e...*” This is correct. Spellings with *e* are definitely exceptional. As for Thurneysen’s example for this, *soírfed* ‘he will be free’, we note that he assumes that this is the fut. 3sg., which should indeed be *soírfid*. However, it might also be the conditional, which sometimes does occur without the prefix *no-* and would have a non-palatal final consonant.

“2. Between neutral consonants *a...*” The only odd thing here is that Thurneysen transcribes the second letter of *acaldam* as the geminate *gg*, which seems superfluous for Old Irish.

“Between *u*-quality consonants *u...*” This is of course the first place where there is a real difference between Thurneysen and ourselves. David is, quite rightly, keen to avoid having another vast discussion on the disputed existence of *u*-quality, since we have been going over that for the past few sessions – always reaching the same conclusion: that we do not recognize *u*-quality, primarily for diachronical reasons.

This does mean that where Thurneysen seems to operate which one vowel (presumably *schwa*) and three consonant-qualities in these unstressed syllables, we recognize two vowels (*schwa* and *u*) and two consonant-qualities. In this case we would therefore say that we are dealing with *u* between two non-palatal consonants.

The spelling of *o* for expected *u* seems possible, as in Thurneysen’s example *aidbligod*. However, we do wonder how the *g* is supposed to have gotten its supposed *u*-quality within Thurneysen’s system. The end of the word derives from < *-getus. Did the *g* get *u*-quality through some inherent feature, such as its being a velar? Or did it spread secondarily, after the unstressed vowel was coloured due to the *u*-quality of the dental?

“4. Between a palatal and a neutral consonant *e...*” Correct.

“For the rare spelling *ea* in Ml. see §87. In archaic ‘rhetorical’ texts *ia* occurs; e.g. **gabiam** ‘let us take’ Auraic. 5087, later **gaibem**; **Lugthiach** LL 287^a22, later **Lugdech** (gen. of **Luguid**); cp. **i n-égthiar** ‘wherein is cried out’ RC. xx. 154, later **-éigther...**” The example of *i n-égthiar* must derive from *Amra Choluim Chille*, the other examples are less well known to us, but we suppose that they are also found in late manuscripts. That is to say, we believe them to be not archaic, but rather archaising. In the case of the name *Lugthiach*, there really is no possible hiatus which could be represented here, so it must just be a spelling for *schwa* between a palatal and a non-palatal consonant.

Elliott brings up the example *ciatu-* (for *ceta-*, *cita-*) in Wb. or Ml., but this is in a pretonic, open syllable and is therefore in a different context.

Fangzhe brings up the name *Colgion* (classical Old Irish *Colgen*, later Old Irish *Colgan*), which is found in the *Vita Columbae*. This might be a genuine, old spelling, as the end of the word derives from < *-iġon-. The spelling of the name is somewhat problematic, as the later form *Colgan* shows that the *g* was, in fact, non-palatal. The *e* of earlier Old Irish must have arisen either out of syncope, or the merger of hiatus in an unstressed syllable, but we refrain from scrutinising the exact process.

“5. Between a neutral and a palatal consonant, in the earlier period frequently *i*, later as a rule *ai...*” This is correct.

“6. Between a *u*-quality and a palatal consonant *i* or *ui...*” We would say, between a non-palatal consonant and a palatal consonant, with a labializing, or velarizing colouring on the vowel. The examples given agree well with our proposed phonetic consonant colouring effect on vowels, since the vowels are in all cases found next to either labials, or lenited gutturals. We note that Thurneysen again fails to

explain why these consonants have *u*-quality in the first place. Is it simply because there are forms with a *u* written here?

It is briefly asked whether we ever find spellings like 1sg. **cingiu* of the S1-verb *cingid* (rather than *cingu*). We do not think there are examples of such spellings, but if there were, we would say that this reflects the reanalysis of the verb as an S2-verb, which has palatal stem-final consonants throughout.

“7. Between a palatal and a *u*-quality consonant *iu*... archaic *u*...” We note that in all examples the palatal quality is marked at least in some fashion, even in the example of *ru·laimur*, where it is marked by the *i*-glide in the stressed syllable.

“8. Between a *u*-quality and a neutral consonant *o* or *u*...” Why do we find *o* for *u* in some of these examples? E.g. in *figor* < Latin *figura*, we would have expected *u*, according to our system. It looks as if the expected *u* was lowered to *o* before the *a*. This seems to imply that whilst we can work with a main opposition between *schwa* and *u* in unstressed, post-tonic syllables, we would need to allow for allophones. We already accepted the existence of a rounded *schwa* as an allophone to *schwa*; we also seem to need to have a lowered *o* as an allophone to *u*.

As to the example *flechod*, we wonder why it should have *u*-quality; it may be derived from a *u*-stem? Is it **ulik^uoto*? Or is this all due to analogy with other forms with a similar looking ending?

For the latter, a comparison is made with the word *céol*, the etymology of which is uncertain, but for which the diphthong is entirely unexplained and for which some sort of analogy must have come into play. A possible etymology might be **keklo-*. It is suggested that it might also be from **kantlo-*, although this regularly results in *cétal* in Old Irish; might there have been a split paradigm, giving both *cétal* and *céol* from the same proto-form? At this stage we are mainly thinking out loud. At any rate, to finish this point off, **kantlo-* consists of the root **kan-* ‘to sing’ and the instrumental suffix **-tlo-*; essentially it meant something like ‘singing-thing’. Lithuanian *kankles* (borrowed into Finnish as *kan-tele*) shows the same formation (with **tl > kl*); in these languages it refers to a kind of stringed instrument.

All this triggers an excursion on the circumstances of language contact between Lithuanian and Finnish. This leads to some discussion of the well-known borrowings from Germanic into Finnish, which causes a brief mention of the North-Germanic loans borrowed into Slavic during the Viking Age. Finally, Fangzhe brings up an example of borrowing from Chinese into Mongol, which was eventually borrowed back into Chinese through Manchurian (it concerned the word for ‘prince’).²

The form *fleuchud* must be Middle Irish, when such forms with *u* start appearing before *ch*.

“9. Between a neutral and a *u*-quality consonant *o* or *u*...” Again, we would explain this by means of *u*-infection.

The example of *atrob*, *atrub*, *atrab* is complicated.³ The simplex *treb* ‘settlement, inhabitants of a settlement’ is derived from the *ā*-stem **trebā*, but in compounds it switches to other stem classes, e.g. *o*-stem in *dithrub* < **dī-treb-o*. Matters are complicated further by the loanword *triub* < Latin *tribus*. There is also the *i*-stem compound *óentrib* < **-trebi*. Might ablaut explain these various reflexes of *treb*? Perhaps, but it is found without ablaut in the other Celtic languages. Romanas adds that Lithuanian *trobà* comes from an ablauted form. Why is there an interchange between *o* and *u* in these words? It is probably not very significant. It probably fits in with our theory of labialising/velarizing effects from consonants. It might also just be an orthographic variant for */u/*.

² At this stage David slams the table, saying: “Back to Old Irish!”

³ David is about to write down more on an already full whiteboard. Elliott: “David, can you erase something?” David: “No.” David starts erasing the whiteboard. Elliott: “That’s my catch-phrase; it has to come up at some point.” Bjørn: “My catchphrase is: ‘I don’t understand’... And now the scribe is writing it down!”

“In 8 and 9 both consonants may have early developed an intermediate (o-) quality.” Well! Essentially, this comes close to our own rounded-*schwa* hypothesis, but Thurneysen’s apparent willingness to entertain a 4-way consonant quality distinction is remarkable, to say the least.

Unstressed vowels in open syllables (§103)

It is noted that Thurneysen’s presentation could be better; final and non-final open syllables should be strictly kept apart, also in the title, given that they behave very differently.

Elliott brings up the word *fochuid*, an *i*-stem noun. In Milan there is the gen. sg. *fochodo*. This probably reflects *fochādo*, with colouring due to the *ch*? Or perhaps due to some kind of vowel harmony? The fact that other spellings are found in Würzburg accords well with a subphonemic explanation, which could give rise to variation in the spelling.

“1. Between palatal consonants as *i*, seldom as *e*...” True.

“2. Between neutral consonants as *a*...” Yep.

“3. Between *u*-quality consonants as *u*, e.g. **cruthugud**...” It is asked where the ending *-ugud* comes from; is it the same as the **-agetus* of *aidbligod* we discussed previously? Yes, it is. In *cruthugud* it is obviously not palatal. One may, however, compare it to *foilsigud*, where the *g* is also non-palatal, and with *foilsigtheo*, where it is. Essentially, whenever the **e* gets syncopated, the *g* becomes palatal. It is easy to see how this might then spread analogically. Perhaps spellings with loads of *u* vs. spellings with *i* near to the consonant also have helped spread palatalisation due to graphical confusion and extension? Just some thoughts.

“4. Between a palatal and a neutral consonant usually as *e*, occasionally as *i*...” Yes, this is correct. And he may well be right that in closed syllables you do not get this variation as often as in open syllables.

“5. Between a neutral and a palatal consonant mostly as *i* in the earlier period, later as *ai* and sometimes *a*...” Again, he may have a point as to there being a bit more variation in the spelling of open syllables than in that found for closed syllables. It should be noted, though, that these spellings would not have been problematic to native speakers.

“6. Between a *u*-quality and a palatal consonant as *u* or *ui*, rarely as *i*...” True enough.

What is the etymology of *sochuide*? David wrote about this in his article on **z* deletion in *Ériu* 59. He argued for regarding it as *cuít* ‘part’ < **k^uizdi* with the prefix *so-* and deletion of the *z*.

“7. Between a palatal and a *u*-quality consonant as *i*, rarely as *iu*...” *inuilliugud* is certainly a curious word.

“8. Between a *u*-quality and a neutral consonant, as well as between a neutral and a *u*-quality consonant, mostly as *u*, more rarely as *o*...” In the case of *cétbutho*, this is clearly a compound with *buth* and may therefore retain the vocalism of the simplex, at least in the spelling. As to *dilgud*, this should not have a *u* in the first place, here it is probably due to the lenited guttural again.

“occasionally with mutation of the quality in the following syllable...” Does he refer to some kind of vowel-harmony, or to the spread of *u*-quality? This seems a matter of some significance.

In all, Thurneysen has seventeen different, subtle contexts for post-tonic unstressed vowels. He made some good observations about the distinction between closed and open syllables, but did not present the matter altogether too clearly. Of course, this all needs statistics to back it up. Also, in our system we need fewer contexts (as we do not have to account for *u*-quality), which should make for an easier presentation in a new grammar.

Exceptions to the above (§104)

“(a) In obvious compounds the vocalism of the simplex is retained, e.g. **forloiscthe** ‘igni examinatus’ Ml. 31^c28, with *oi* instead of *ai* in the unstressed syllable on the model of **loiscthe** ‘burnt’.” First of all, Thurneysen does not distinguish between orthography and phonology here. We would actually think that in these cases the orthography may well indicate that the second member of the compound preserved the phonological quality of the simplex, i.e. that the spelling agrees with the pronunciation in these instances. He might also as well have used his earlier citation of *cétbutho* as an example here.

“(b) The vocalism of one form may spread to another; e.g. **condeilgg** Sg. 42^a4, **coindeulc coindeulgg** 3^b1, 25^b2, gen. and dat. sg. of nom. acc. **condelg** ‘comparison’ 42^a6 etc.,” We would call this intra-paradigmatic analogy in our modern parlance. We would also note that the main problem with *condelg* is actually its nom. and acc. sg. form. The expected forms would be *condalg*, gen. *condailg*, dat. *condulg*. In the cited forms it must have been influenced by the simplex, reflected by the verb *con-delga* (which is itself the only Irish verb from the root **delg-*, which is well-attested in British, e.g. in Breton *delc’her*, *dalc’h-*). As such, it is actually a good example of (a), rather than (b).

As to (a), you can sometimes distinguish older and younger compounds from one another because the older ones behave as expected according to the sound laws in the unstressed first syllable of the second member; in younger compounds the vowel of that syllable very often reflects that of the simplex. It is suggested that there might be a secondary stress in compounds, which preserves the vowel. There may be something to this. We have noticed that in Blathmac there is often what appears to be a conscious use of alliteration within compounds, even though one does not otherwise (generally) do alliteration with unstressed consonants. A secondary stress would help explain that metrical matter as well.

“The rules in §102 f. apply to the period at which *u*-quality was still largely preserved (cp. §174). On the other hand, they do not hold good for archaic texts, which often retain an earlier vocalism.” This is very weird. If it ever existed, *u*-quality should have been better preserved and more extensive in earlier texts, rather than in later ones.

“Evidently many unstressed interior vowels had become quite indistinct, and the five Latin vocalic symbols did not suffice for their exact representation.” This is again an odd statement. What does he mean exactly? Does he mean that there were very many vowels? Or merely that they had all become indistinct? Curious.

Pages read in this session: 3.

Paragraphs discussed: §§102–104.