

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 19

Records of the discussions in the small conference room on 25-09-2017

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Bernhard Bauer, Fangzhe Qiu, Elliott Lash, Tom Tynan, Siobhán Barrett, Romanas Bulatovas, Daniel Watson, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Nicole Volmering, Deborah Hayden, Elizabeth Boyle, Anne Harrington, Chantal Kobel

Practicalities

Bernhard Bauer has generously provided the scribe with paper, which was essential to the taking of these minutes.

As this is the first meeting since the lengthy summer-break and since it is Tom's first time attending these meetings there is some reflection upon what we have been doing over the past year. Basically, we read through Thurneysen's *A Grammar of Old Irish* very slowly and minutely with the aim of emending the text, adding in the research that has been done since the grammar first appeared. Moreover, we tend to be fairly critical of Thurneysen;¹ in particular, the structure of the first chapters leaves much to be desired. The meetings are carefully minuted and it is hoped that all this should eventually tie into the writing of a new Grammar of Old Irish.

As the new ChronHib-website is now mostly up and running it is intended that the proceedings should eventually end up being uploaded over there, rather than on academia.edu. In future, there might be sandwiches as well cookies during these meetings. Finally, David has now also requested a university moodle-page for the members of the fanclub, just in case we might need one at some point. It is not yet up and running, but it will have the code SG666.

Quality of Vowels (in stressed syllables) (§49)

We will skip much of the following section, as it is largely concerned with diachronic phonology and is therefore largely outdated (the understanding of Proto-Indo-European has improved dramatically since Thurneysen's day). However, we will read those sections that have a bearing on the synchronic phonology of Old Irish, esp. synchronic phonological variation.

ǃ, á, ě (§50-52)

These paragraphs are essentially irrelevant. The question is asked what Thurneysen meant by "European *a* (Skt. *i*, 'schwa Indogermanicum') in §50. David explain that this is a term from before the laryngeal theory was accepted and has to do with the treatment of vocalized laryngeals (in this particular instance most European Indo-European languages turned the laryngeal into *a*, whereas in Indic it became *i*).

The first é (§53)

"The letter é (é §24, 1) represents two distinct sounds." This is certainly true for pre- and Early Old Irish (before breaking), but it is not certain whether they remained phonetically distinct in Classical Old Irish.

"The first é is for the most part a development of the old diphthong *ei*." Did he mean Proto-Indo-European or Proto-Celtic **ei*? David believes that PIE **ei* did not turn into **ē* in Proto-Celtic, but was still retained as such, as this appears to be borne out by multiple inscriptions, becoming a monophthong

¹ Siobhán: "Thurneysen must be turning in his grave!", David: "That's why he is called 'Turn-'eysen."

only in the individual languages. What did Thurneysen mean with “for the most part”? What does Proto-Indo-European **ē* yield in Old Irish?

“The transition seems to be early, since in the Britannic dialects old *ei* is treated like the *ē* of Latin loan-words and *ē* for *ei* is also found in Gaulish dialects, e.g. *Dēuo-gnāta* ‘daughter of a god’, *Rhēnus* ‘Rhine’...” This is mostly correct, but we can be more extensive (e.g. including Lepontic and more evidence from the inscriptions in general, where *ei* is actually still preserved). The issue is also briefly raised how one gets from *Rhēnus* to the vowels of English *Rhine*, German *Rhein* and Dutch *Rijn*, which go back to *ī*. Presumably the word was borrowed before **ei* > **ē* in Celtic, as **ei* would become *ī* in Germanic. This is further evidence for the retention of *ei* in Proto-Celtic.

“As a rule this *é* is still preserved in archaic texts. But in Wb. and later sources it has generally been replaced by the diphthong *ía* when followed by neutral or *u*-quality consonance...; hence the interchange between *é* and *ía* is found in closely related forms.” We would of course drop the term *u*-quality. Moreover, we would like to be very explicit about such synchronic rules and devote a specific chapter of the grammar to that very subject.

It is noticed that *GOI* translates the Old English *wītan* and Old High German *wīzan* as ‘to reprove’, while it more accurately means ‘to know’. On closer examination we notice that in the German version Thurneysen translated the words as ‘verweisen’, which was probably chosen for containing *-ei-*. This, presumably, triggered the odd translation of ‘to reprove’.

It is noted that Old Irish *réid* ‘fit for driving, level, easy’ is paralleled in German *bereit* (and more broadly in Germanic) which also derive the meaning ‘ready’ (which is not itself to be included in this group of words) from ‘to ride’.

“The same *é*, *ía* corresponds to Lat. *ē* (also *oe*) in loan-words...” In Vulgar Latin first *ae* and then *oe* fall together with *ē* and this is reflected in the loanwords.

Síans / *sens* / *MI. sés* < Lat. *sēnsus*; the various forms show that the word was borrowed more than once. However, is *sés* from Milan actually the same word? The loss of *-n-* is problematic, as this is a much earlier development in Celtic. Might this be some Vulgar Latin development, or are the forms unrelated?

Pían / *pén*, gen. *péne* < Lat. *poena*; *pén* looks archaic / archaised.

In Adomnán *Vita Columbae*, *-é-* is written consistently so, implying that the breaking of *é* to *ía* had not yet taken place at that stage, but many of the Latin loanwords must have already been borrowed before that (in the 7th century, certainly with the arrival of Isidore’s *etymologiae*). These Latin loanwords therefore appear to have been treated like native words with this ‘first’ long *é*.

“As an intermediate form between *é* and *ía* archaic texts sometimes have *ea*, e.g. **Druim Leas** Thes. II. 268, 30 (Arm.) for later **D. Lías**.” This is one of the indications that the Book of Armagh (c. 800 AD) contains older material.

“This spelling is still retained in Sg. and later sources for the word **dea** ‘god’ when it means ‘idol, false god’.” Might this be considered an ‘artificial’ form, where deliberate use was made of an archaic form to distinguish the word from the word for ‘God’? Or might this be a borrowing from Latin *dea* (or *deus*)? It is briefly considered whether it might refer specifically to a pagan goddess, as it often refers

to goddesses in Sg. But as the word is then often specifically *bandea*, the word itself must be gender-neutral. Cf. John Carey's article in *Ériu* on this word for 'pagan god'.

"In isolated instances the diphthong is written *ie*, e.g. **gríén** 'sun' Thes. II. 21, 37 for normal **grían**." Fangzhe and Elliott have collected examples of these spellings, e.g. *clied* for *clíath* and *Niell* for *Níall* in the *Vita Columbae*.

"The declension of nom. acc. **día** 'God', in the first instance < **dēwas*, -*an*, voc. **dé**, < *dēwī*, dat. **día** < **dēwū*, shows that the tendency towards diphthongization had begun before the loss of *w* (§ 204)..." This, presumably, because it implies that the consonant would still have to have been present to condition the split. However, this is not necessary. It is believed that a palatalised -*u̯*- became -*i̯*- very early and it can easily be argued that the *é* broke to *ía* in absolute final position, but remained before *i̯*. As such, we need not posit that breaking began before the loss of -*u̯*-. [But this is contradicted by the behaviour of word-final -*é* in the 3sg. of the *s*-subjunctive, e.g. ·*té*, which is never broken.]

"**Final** *ē* has become *ía* in **cía** 'who?' ... and **cía** 'although' ..., which in general are closely attached to the following word." If followed by a relative verb *cía* 'who' can hardly be considered to be closely attached to the following word.

"Elsewhere it does not seem to have been diphthongized; cp. 3 sg. subj. ·**té** (in Wb. ·**tei**, §56), 1 sg. ·**tías** (indic. **tíagu**) and the like (§ 625). For the comparatives **sía** 'longer' (= W. *hwy*) and **lía** 'more' see § 375." But there is no fundamental difference between the underlying forms of ·*té* and *cía* (or *sía* and *lía* for that matter, if Jasanoff's preforms are correct). The only significant difference is that ·*té* is part of a paradigm, whereas the other forms are not. If we were to postulate a rule that the 'first *é*' is not diphthongised in the third person singular, we could state that this *é* otherwise diphthongises in final position. At any rate, it seems that it is ·*té* that warrants further explanation, rather than the other forms.

At this point Elliott notes that the German version of the grammar has -*u̯*- where the English grammar has -*w*-.²

The second *é* (§54)

"In all other cases *é* represents *ě* (sometimes *ǣ*) which has been lengthened through loss of a following consonant... This compensatorily lengthened *ē* never becomes *ía*, and thus was distinct from the *é* discussed in § 53." Also compensatorily lengthened *ī* (e.g. the future of *do·gní*, *do·géni* < reduplicated ·*gigni*).

"In Wb., even before neutral consonants, this *é* is often written *ée* or *eí*..." Does this imply that the other *é* is never written like this? That seems unlikely, given that double spelling to indicate a long vowel was a valid possibility at this stage anyhow. Moreover, this seems to be a matter of orthography and does not add to the general argument of this section – as such we would rather leave it out. It is also noted that Thurneysen does not provide any counterexamples here. Finally, we would more generally want to add the pre-forms of these words as well.

² David: -*u̯*- is for the German-speaking elite, -*w*- for the English rabble.

éu- / éui-spellings (§55)

“On the other hand, in final syllables this *é* is generally written *éu*, *éo* or *íu* when it precedes *u*-quality or palatal *l r n*. Before palatal *l r n* the spelling *éui* (cp. *éi* above) also occurs.” We would replace ‘*u*-quality’ with *u*-inflection. Many questions are raised as to the exact nature of this development. Elliott suggests phrasing it as an allophone/phoneme-discussion. Fangzhe asks to what extent these *-u*-spellings reflect spellings from later sources. David notes that in Scottish Gaelic spellings with *-u*-diphthongs take over completely to mark the long vowel; this reflects a different development, but it is interesting to note that they use the same vowel which sometimes occurs in Irish, as seen here. David also notes that one does find early variation of this kind within the verbal system, which is sometimes later obliterated by analogy. Strachan made a collection of relevant forms (‘The compensatory lengthening of vowels’, TPS 1892).

“A similar development before *t* is confined to a few words (see § 209); e.g. *ét* ‘jealousy’, dat. *éut*, gen. *éuit éoit*.” In the German version this is compared to *cét*, dat. *cét*, gen. *céit*. Formally, these forms should behave the same (< **iantu-* and **kanto-* respectively). David suspects that *éuit*, *éoit* is analogical in some sense. Fangzhe notes that the change from Old Irish *rét* ‘thing’ to Modern Irish *rud* is also odd; in that case, perhaps the *u*-stem inflection of the word had something to do with it.

“Such words also show diphthongization in non-final stressed syllables when the following syllable contains *-u* or *-i*... Unstressed vowels, on the other hand, are not diphthongized... Diphthongization does not occur in words which have no form ending in a palatal or *u*-quality consonant...” This is essentially correct. It is noted that the English version has dropped the example *nél*, relative to the German original. The distinction between *-iu-* and *-eu-* spellings should be more carefully distinguished. In general, David notes that the behaviour of these diphthongs warrants further (and quite extensive) research. There are probably very subtle conditioning factors in play here.

-ei# spellings in Wb. (§56)

“In Wb. *i* is often written after stressed final *é*, *e*...” This is, again, a matter of orthography and seems out of place in this section. Perhaps these spellings can be explained on the basis of orthographical analogy with forms with *-ei-* in the paradigms of these words?

“...but always *é* ‘he, they’, *mé* ‘I’, *ro·bé* ‘may he be’.” This is not the same development as this is the result of *ē* being lengthened in absolute, final position. Essentially, this could be considered a third *é*, but that is not to say that it was phonetically distinct from the other *é*’s.

ĩ and í (§57-58)

These paragraphs are irrelevant to our purposes.