

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 22

Records of the discussions in the conference room on 06-11-2017

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Elliott Lash, Fangzhe Qiu, Ekaterina Derevianchenko, Tatiana Smirnova, Romanas Bulatovas, Theodorus Fransen, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Bernhard Bauer, Siobhán Barrett

Practicalities

Apologies for the long break. First the storm Ophelia interfered, then a faculty meeting was moved into our time slot due to the previous week's storm and finally there was the mid-term break. Fortunately, we can now continue.

More diphthongs (§67)

This paragraph is basically diachronic. However, it should have been split up, as it deals with two different diphthongs **oi* and **ai* which deserve to be treated separately. It should also include a sub-paragraph for each of the different sources of these diphthongs.

“**oín óen** ‘one’ (gen. fem. **aíne**...), W. *un*...” The Karlsruhe Beda does indeed have *aine* for ‘one’, but there is no fada in the Thesaurus. It glosses *partem* with *cuit inna aine 7 inna aile*. One could envisage the spelling of *aine* to have been anticipatorily influenced by that of *aile* and it could therefore have been a scribal mistake. This context lessens the value of this gloss as an early example of the merger of *oi* and *ai*.

“**moín main máen** (fem. *i*-stem) ‘treasure, gift’...” This is a genuine example of the early merger of original *oi* to *ai/oi*. However, as the diphthong is both preceded and followed by a nasal, which – as we discussed before – tends to affect vowels, the form is particularly likely to have changed early. Perhaps this is the starting point for the loss of the distinction?

“The contraction of *o* and *e*, *é*, *i*; e.g. **ar·foímat ar·fóemat** ‘they accept’ (*·fo-emat*), perf. 1 pl. **ara·roítmair** (*·ro·fo-étmar*)...” The verb *ar·foím* is a compound of the verb *fo·eim*, *·foím*. However, why does it merge into a diphthong, when this never happens with *ro·icc* and all the other examples of *ro·* before a verb starting with a vowel? Clearly, non-merger, i.e. elision, is the usual outcome and merger the rare exception. We may be dealing with a case of back-formation from forms like *ara·roítmair* (< *·ro·fo-étmar*) with regular syncope of *-fo-*; in that case, the double *-o-o-* form would have been the pivot. But why would that part influence the rest of the paradigm? It is noted that you also sometimes find hiatus with these forms, e.g. *·ro·ēt-*.

It would be interesting to find out what such a form would do in a nominal compound. The name *Fergus mac Roích* (*Roaích* with hiatus in a Middle Irish poem) springs to mind, but its etymology is uncertain. It has been proposed to derive from *ro·ech* ‘big horse’, but this need not be correct and scholars may have been influenced by the image of the horse in the context of fertility and Fergus’ sleeping with Medb. An alternative would be to derive it from *ro·fiach* ‘great warrior’. The Middle Irish form with hiatus implies a reanalysis, perhaps as *ro·ech* with the restoration of hiatus, rather than anything archaic. At any rate, the name is uncertain at best. Other nouns which more certainly include these forms are mostly verbal nouns, which may have been influenced by the inflected verbs.

All in all, it is very uncertain if this merger of *-o-e-* into the diphthong *oi* is in any sense regular. If it is, it would mean that the vast majority of the examples, namely those with elision, are actually irregular.

“**oí óe**, the reduction of *oui*, *oue* after the loss of syllabic value by *-i*, *-e*; also of the earlier triphthong *au*i...” The diphthong *au* should become *ó* in Old Irish; it is wondered whether *au*i becomes /oi/ or /ōi/

in Old Irish. The word *nau* ‘boat, ship’, which later becomes *nó*, dat./acc. *nói* is compared. We tentatively assume that there was no distinction between /oi/ and /ōi/ in Old Irish. The German *Handbuch* also mentions *gáu* vs. *goí*, which, given its frequency, should also be cited in the English.

“The Mid.Ir. confusion of *oí* (*ai*) and *uí* already appears in **tuíssech** Wb. II. 33^b20...” Wb. *tuíssech* is derived from **tuīssāko-* > **tuīssach-* > **tuīssach* > *tuísech*, but it is mainly found as *toísach*. According to McCone, *toísech* < **tuīssach* proves that *uí* and *oí* had fallen together by the Classical OIr. period. In any case, Wb.’s *tuíssech* could be a genuine, highly archaic spelling of the word, or perhaps a fancy spelling, or reversed hypercorrection.

“...and **suír** (sic MS.) Wb. 4^a10, nom. pl. of **soír sóer** ‘free’.” This is not just an adjective, but also a noun: *sóer* ‘freeman’, which has the antonym *dóer* ‘unfree man’. As such, it is attractive to reconstruct this as *so-fer* < **so-ūiro-* and *do-fer* < **do-ūiro-*; one of many contrastive pairs with *so-* ‘good’ and *do-* ‘bad’. This reconstruction requires there to have been hiatus in Old Irish, giving *soēr* and *doēr*, which has long been believed not to have been the case. However, Siobhán looked into the metrically irregular lines in the poems of Blathmac over the summer and noticed that there are three lines, all of which lack a syllable and contain the word *sóer*. Taking this as a hiatus word *soēr* solves the issue and also allows the proposed reconstruction. Of course, there would have been a lot of paradigmatic, analogical pressure to reduce the hiatus (e.g. derivatives such as *soíre* ‘freedom’, *sóeraid* ‘to redeem’ etc., given that hiatus is lost when one adds a further syllable to the word), which would explain why it is only rarely attested with hiatus. The form in Würzburg might actually be another, archaic example of hiatus: **souīrī* > **suūīr* > *suír*.

The diphthong *uí* (§68)

The expected form of *druí* ‘magician’ would actually be *droí* < **druī* < **druūids* (cf. the pre-OIr. merger of **uī* with **oi* mentioned above), but in other forms of the paradigm the *u* would have been preserved: e.g., gen. **druūidos* > **druūəd* > *druäd*. Therefore, the *u* must have been restored to the nom.sg. from other parts of the paradigm. As such, this paragraph can be left out, as this is not actually an example of the development that Thurneysen wants to illustrate.

The diphthong *áu* (§69)

“*áu* in the Old Irish period is in transition to *ó* by way of intermediate *áo*, all three spellings being often found side by side. In medial position this *ó* has a tendency to become *ú* (the quantity of which in hiatus is doubtful...)”. This might be the case, although the reality of the intermediate stage is not certain. In general, it should be said that the effects of intervocalic *-u-* are messy in Irish; cf. Jürgen Uhlich’s long and difficult article on this question in *Ériu* 45. One must at least distinguish between e.g. **...au...*, **...āu...*, **...auV...* and **...auC...*, because each variation yields different results.

The examples under (a) are not very convincing; they also show changes to *u*.

As to (b), this is the wrong etymology for *dó* ‘two’, which actually derives from **duūo* > **dou* (> W. *deu*) > Ir. *dáu* > *dó* (as shown by Warren Cowgill).

As to (c), *·táu* > *·tó*, this does not reflect **tā-u*, but rather **tā* with *u*-infection from an ending in *u*.

Turning to the examples under (d), there is a synchronic change from early OIr. *au* to *o*, which may have been mid-length, or perhaps an open *ɔ*? In some texts this is written *-o-*, sometimes *-u-*, but the distribution is not the same for different words. Might *nóe* reflect /nō.e/ and *aue* /ɔ.e/? Why do some of these *o*’s become *u* and whilst those in other words do not?

As for *áue* ‘grandson’, Ó Máille¹ is very outdated for this, although it should be said that we still do not know the correct way to explain the variants of this word.² The reconstructed form is **aujos*, in Ogam it is attested as AVI, OIr. *áue*. Later on it is attested as *úa*, *ue* and *ó*, the latter being unexpected. In the *Annals of Ulster* the spelling *aue* is only found in a relatively short period in the 8th century; this must reflect the nature of the sources used for the annals.

As to (e), we will discuss this when we get to §72 later on during this meeting.

“For *áu* in loanwords cp. **áur**, Lat. *aurum*, Thes. I. 5.10, otherwise always **ór**, gen. **óir**; **Pól** ‘Paulus’. Later borrowings have *áu*, e.g. **áuctor áugtor** ‘auctor’, **cáu(i)s**, Mid.Ir. **cúis** ‘causa’, etc.” There is indeed one exceptional gloss which has *áur*, this is the gloss *aura est noxia .i. do aur t arcud*. In this case it might perhaps be thought that the proximity of Latin *aura* may have influenced the Irish spellings? Later loan words sometimes show *au* > *u*.

In Vulgar Latin there appears to have been a wide-spread change *au* > *o*, except in the East (e.g. Romanian preserves *au*), but the details are elusive. The British forms of the word for ‘gold’ represent an underlying diphthong, so it is possible that OIr. *ór* was originally borrowed with an **au*.

Speaking of ‘gold’, we do not know what the native Celtic word for ‘gold’ was. In general, the words for ‘gold’ fall in two groups in the Indo-European languages. Some are built on the root **h₂eus-* ‘to shine’ (e.g. Latin *aurum*), but more languages derive it from **g^helh₃-* (or similar), cf. Engl. *gold*, OCS *zlato*, Ind. *haranya-*, whence also Germanic ‘yellow, geel, Gelb’ and also OIr. *gel* ‘bright’. But the native Celtic word for ‘gold’ does not appear to be attested. Blanca María Prósper has suggested that the name of the Hispano-Celtic goddess *Ilurbeda* contains the word for ‘gold’ (*g*)*il-* derived from the root **g^hel-*, but as with most name etymologies, one cannot be certain

The diphthong *éu* (§70)

A few more examples: *éo* ‘salmon’, Lat. *esox* < **esok-*. Also *éo* ‘yew’, ogam IVAGENI < **iuo-*, which is also found in the name *Éogain* > Mod.Ir. *Eoghan* ‘yew-born’ (not to be confused with Mod.Ir. *Eoin* ‘John’) and in *Nath Í* ‘yew warrior’, *Fer Í* (a certain little guy in a tree) and in *Mag nÉo* (> *Mayo*). The etymology of the word *éo* ‘sharp end, point, pin’ is unknown.

“This diphthong is also used to represent Lat. *Io-*, e.g. **Euseph**... later attested **Éoin**... beside **Iohain**...” The name is also found in Blathmac.³ There are also some British kings in the Annals who are called *Hoan*, which might be John.

The diphthong *íu* (§71)

No comments.

The diphthong *óu* (§72)

Sg. *náue* ‘new’ must be hypercorrect, the expected form is *nue*. It is derived from PIE **neuǵios* > PC **nouǵios* > **nuu^heǵios* > **nuǵe* > *nuë*. There never was a diphthong *óu* in this word at all and it should not be discussed here.

The word **karut* > **kaurut* > *caur* ‘hero, warrior’ later turns into *cur*, a result of the *u*-infection by means of which the form *caur* itself arose. Therefore also not a relevant example here.

We try to think of examples of Irish *au*, but avoid many of them, because they are rather complicated. One of these is *dóu*, *dáu*, *dó* ‘to him, to it’. This derives from the (Western) Indo-European preposition

¹ This is Tomás Ó Máille the elder, or prior, or I, who was succeeded as professor of Irish in Galway by the unrelated Tomás Ó Máille!

² David: “We should of course reference Fangzhe Qiu. When do you think you’ll be done with it, Fangzhe?” Fangzhe: “Qiu 2030?”

³ David: “Blathmac confused all the Johns in the Bible.”

**do*, **dō*, which had both a long- and a short-vowel form. In Celtic these turned into **do* and **dū* respectively and both forms are reflected in Irish and British. Welsh has **dū* > Old Welsh *dī* > Middle Welsh *i/y* ‘to, for’. The Irish preposition must also go back to **dū* > Ir. *do*, by means of pretonic shortening of the vowel, followed by the early 8th century loss of the distinction between *u* and *o* in final, unstressed position (evidence for this is found in the conjugated forms *dúinn* and *dúib*, which preserve the *u*). The conjugated preposition *dó* ‘to him, to it’, however, is probably derived from the plain short form **do* in adverbial function, without any enclitic pronoun. As it is a stressed word it was lengthened to *dó* in Old Irish. This means that, ironically, the short Old Irish *do* goes back to **dū* < **dō* with a long vowel, whereas the long Old Irish *dó* goes back to **do* with a short vowel.

In most cases, the conjugated prepositions go back to a preposition followed by an enclitic pronoun, but there are some exceptions. In particular a number of 3sg. masc./neut. forms may continue the plain preposition used adverbially. One of these is the aforementioned *dó* < **do*. One could toy with an alternative explanation for *dó* as **do-sū* > **dohū* > **douhū* > *dou*, *dao*, *dau* > *dó*; cf. *bó* and its early attestations. Now, there are actually some attestations of what could be regarded as the expected early forms for this alternative reconstruction, but these are usually problematic; e.g. *dau* occurs in the ninth-century poem *Pangur Bán*, rhyming with <lau> /lɔ/, meaning that the <au> in *dau* is in fact a hypercorrect spelling. Other supposed early forms are in the rather late *Vita Tripartita* and are therefore also suspect. Further evidence that *dó* really is the plain preposition with the vowel lengthened in word-final position comes from the variant with added nota augens: *dosom* has a short vowel, cf. *mé* (with old short vowel), *messe*. The nota augens here protects the original vowel quantity from lengthening.

Another conjugated preposition without enclitic pronoun is *and* < **andom* < **ṇdom* (cf. Greek ἔνδον), which is the preposition ‘in’ with an adverbial ending (in fact, *-dom* is a form of the word for ‘house’). *sund*, W. *hwnn*, goes back to the neuter demonstrative pronoun *som* and the particle *de*, followed by the dat. *o-/a-* adjectival ending: **sondū* ‘that one there’. *úad* is problematic, it may go back to **au-de*, but there could be a pronoun after the **de*; ‘who knows?’. *fó*, *fou* (the latter variant being the more frequent), which does go back to a form with a dative pronoun **uo-sū*, shows the actual outcome of **osū*.

“In **áugaire úgaire** ‘shepherd’ ML., as opposed to **oí** ‘sheep’... either the triphthong *au* from *oui* has been reduced to *au* before non-palatal *g*, or *owi* has been replaced by *owo-* with a different composition-vowel. **óegaire** SR. 7716 is a later re-compound.” Well, yes, or no, see Uhlich’s discussion of this in *Ériu* 45.

“In **lóu** Wb 6^a30 beside **láu láo ló**, dat. of **lae laa lá** ‘day’... and in **bóu** 30^b6, dat. of **bae baa** ‘good, profit’, *o* is not old: it may indicate that *óu* and *áu* had by then the same phonetic value, or it may be based on assimilation of the *a* to *u* in disyllabic *la-u*, *ba-u*.” Possibly.